



CHAPTER I

“So, I’ve been thinking...”

“Wow, I’m surprised.”

“Yeah, yeah. Anyway, there’s a question I’ve been pondering for a while now: Why are we here? I mean, I was busy with school, and everybody else had their lives... so why did we drop everything and come to join the Jihad?”

“That is a very good question. As it happens, I have a theory.”

“... You do?”

“Of course. I don’t know if it’s one you want to hear, though.”

“That *really* doesn’t give me a warm fuzzy, Mal.”

“Sorry.”

“Still, yeah. I’d be interested to hear your theory.”

“All right, but don’t say I didn’t warn you...”

“There’s a story in Jewish folklore that the world continues to exist because twelve good people still live here. It’s sort of like the old story of Sodom and Gomorrah; when Lot couldn’t find one other good man in either city, God ended up destroying them all. Anyway, the story goes that at all times, there are twelve good people who live on Earth, and as long as they do God can look down from on high and see that humanity is still good enough that he doesn’t have to come down here and wipe everything out like he did during the Flood. These twelve people basically carry the weight of the world on their backs.

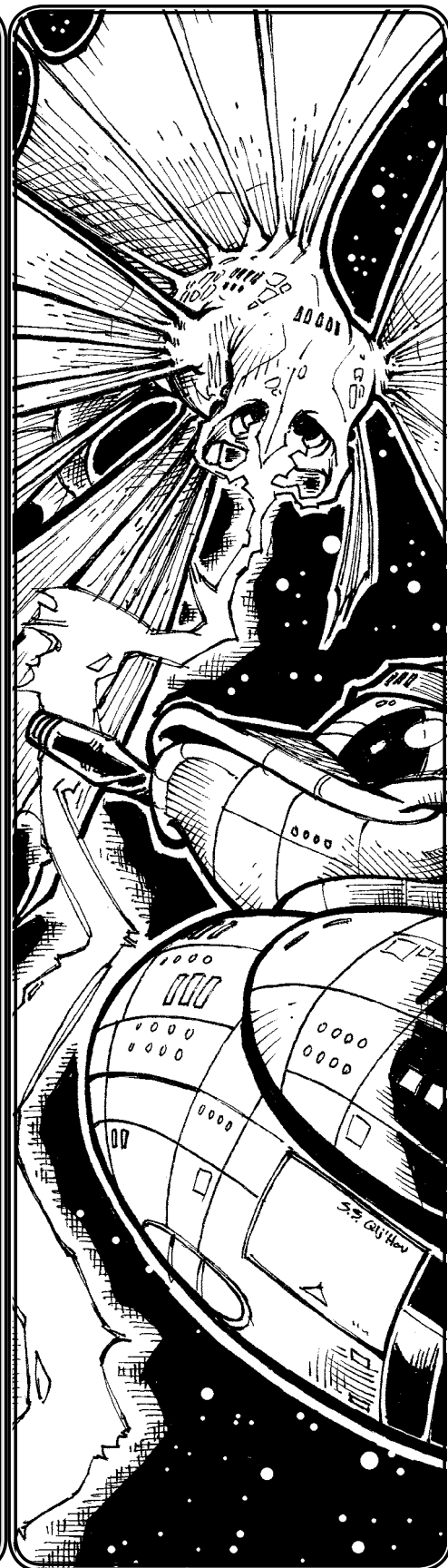
*“Now, the story itself has a few flaws in it, but that’s folklore for you. Still, over the years I’ve seen things that made me wonder if there wasn’t **some** truth to the legend of the twelve secret kings. There are times in history when exactly twelve people get together for some great event or to fight some great menace. It’s not always the same twelve — the identities change at least once a generation — and oftentimes they’re overshadowed by others, but without those twelve people, the cause would collapse or the event would go wrong...”*

“Waitwaitwait, you’re saying that somebody in the Jihad is some kind of... what? Angel? Saint?”

*“More like an immune system. An old girlfriend of mine would’ve called it ‘an automatic heuristic response by the planetary noosphere,’ which is **exactly** what it sounds like. When the world’s in danger, it creates people like us to deal with the threat, and it affords us with... something. I don’t know what, a special reaction to the danger maybe, or perhaps some special ability.*

“One of Aris’ favorite pop-culture shows call it a ‘nexus.’ We turn one way, and the world has a tendency to follow. It’s the one special ability every mundane leader has dreamed about since the beginning of time. But... so far as I know, none of us has any interest in domination for the sake of domination. Which is, I think, why we get the brass ring in the first place.”

THE HIDDEN WAR





THE SECRET KNIGHTS OF EARTH

The following is a transcript of a lecture given by official Jihad historian Dr. Jason Carmichael to the incoming class of recruits at TRES Corps Headquarters on January 12, 1999.

WHO ARE WE?

At first glance, it seems like a dumb question. We're the Jihad! But, if a thoughtful Jihaddi approaches the idea, they find it's not as simple as it seems. We are an organization made up of many different types of sentient beings, recruited not only from the four corners of the world but of the multiverse, and we have a healthy respect for differences. With all this tolerance for the eccentric, how do we manage to keep the Jihad together?

It is simply thus: B'harne must be destroyed, all else is irrelevant.

This is the binding thought. However, a thoughtful man would ask why this is the binding thought. For that answer, gentlemen, you need a bit of a tour of Jihad history, and that is why I am here. I hope at the end of this tour you will have some idea of the nature of the Wyrms we oppose, why we — the Jihad — came to be, and how we got here from there. So with no further ado, let us begin.

We don't know a whole lot about the Beast we oppose. We don't know where he came from or even what he truly is. There is speculation he is a demon from the deepest pits of Hell or some truly malevolent spirit. We really don't understand his nature, or why he chooses to fight the way he does. Any attempt to answer any of these questions or even approach the Wyrms himself has one of three consequences: Either the Wyrms is slain temporar-

ily, or the one approaching the Wyrms has ended up either dead or spongyfied. We can surmise from the above fact that B'harne must be a very private whatever he is.

But some conjecture and piecing together what we do know, we find that first of all he is probably not of this Earth. Second, he has some kind of alliance with the Lyrans — although the details of the alliance are unknown to us. We also happen to know that the Lyrans hate and fear humanity to the point they wish to destroy us, but we aren't quite sure why. Third, B'harne cannot be killed permanently with any weapon we have short of Lord Owsen's Barney-Slayer — and even that is ambiguous as we've never really had a chance to test it. Fourth, he has two associates that are similar to what he is — B'haby B'hop and B'heeJ'hay. It isn't really a lot. But most importantly, we know the effects B'harne has on humanity — and if you haven't seen it, I hate to tell you that it isn't pretty. Luckily for us, he wasn't as much of an issue in the past as he is today... or human history may have taken a different and more unpleasant course.

Perhaps he didn't really get a chance to destroy this world as he so desperately wished because there was no simple way to destroy the world in those days. Communication between parties was slow and painful, and even the dual inventions of the telegraph and the radio still didn't change the fact that it was difficult to get a message out to a lot of people in a way that didn't involve them thinking about what they had just read or heard.

Ah... but then television came into the mix. You've heard all the derogatory names for it, I have no need to go into those. For the first time in human history, we had a medium that instead of encouraging thought, encouraged people to sit and look at the images





Dr. Jason Carmichael

170 points

Jason Carmichael is one of those rare breed of Jihaddi who can claim to have seen the Golden Age. He joined the Jihad soon after its founding, supposedly recruited by one of the members of the Original Seven (although which one has been lost to time, and Carmichael refuses to tell). He served ably in the early skirmishes with the Hell Wyrms, but when the Jihad was forced slightly into the open in the early '90s, he fell into Liaison work (the first documented Liaison), keeping the Jihad safe from the pens of journalists and historians everywhere, a job which he performed ably.

Then came Worldwalk and Phoenix, and Carmichael's life was turned upside down forever. Carmichael had often noted that he was the only one keeping any historical record of the Jihad, and was often invited to different Jihaddi headquarters to lecture on the place of the Jihad in history. One of the days he had been invited to lecture, he had gathered up a few notes, leaving the rest of them carefully filed in his house. Before he could return to his notes, he had been sucked into the events of Operation World-Walk, and when it was finally over, he found one of the consequences of the near-collapse of the timelines was that his house was no longer where he had left it, and missing along with it were his piles of notes and memorabilia from the early days of the Jihad.

When this war was over, he returned to civilian life, only to find that research in the mundane sector no longer held any interest to him. He took a vacation to find himself, and after stumbling around in the mountains of Colorado for a few weeks, he decided that he wanted to become a permanent fulltime Jihaddi. To achieve this goal, Jihaddi higherups created a fiery car crash on the route to a job interview, and to the mundane world, Jason Carmichael perished in that accident, a few days shy of his twenty-eighth birthday.

However, Professor Carmichael remains alive, holding an honorary commission in TRES and a professorship in the MAUL War College, and still lectures newbie Jihaddi on their place in history. There have been recent efforts to commit Professor Carmichael's lectures to print, and the result has become known as the Carmichael Lectures.

Attributes: ST 9 [-10]; DX 9 [-20]; IQ 15 [100]; HT 12 [20].

Secondary Attributes: HP 9 [0]; Will 15 [0]; Per 15 [0]; FP 12 [0].

Languages: English (Native) [0]; Chinese (Accented) [2]; French (Accented) [2]; German (Accented) [2]; Russian (Accented) [2].

Advantages: Acute Vision 1 [2]; Alternate Identity (legal) (James Kimball, reporter) [5]; Ambidexterity [5]; Common Sense [10]; Eidetic Memory [5]; Language Talent [10]; Magery 1 [15]; Military Rank 3 [15]; Patron (the Jihad) 3 [40].

Disadvantages: Absent-Mindedness [-15]; Bad Sight (Nearsighted) [-10]; Duty (to the Jihad) [-15]; Enemy (B'harne) [-60]; Insomniac (Mild) [-10]; Nightmares [-5]; Squeamish [-10]; Workaholic [-5].

Skills: Acting-14 [1]; Beam Weapons/TL9 (X-Rifle)-10 [2]; Bicycling-10 [2]; Brawling-9 [1]; Diplomacy-14 [2]; Driving/TL8 (Automobile)-11 [4]; Electronics Operation/TL9 (Jihadlinker)-15 [2]; Electronics Operation/TL9 (Spongescope)-15 [2]; Expert Skill (Conspiracy Theory)-16 [8]; Fast-Talk-14 [1]; First Aid/TL9-15 [1]; Fishing-15 [1]; Games (Chess)-15 [1]; Hiking-13 [4]; History (American)-17 [12]; History (Jihaddi)-18 [16]; Hypnotism-15 [4]; Intelligence Analysis/TL9-13 [1]; Leadership-14 [1]; Literature-16 [8]; Navigation/TL9 (Land)-14 [1]; Photography/TL9-14 [1]; Research/TL9-17[8]; Shortsword-8 [1]; Sociology-13 [1]; Soldier/TL9-15 [2]; Survival (Woodlands)-14 [1]; Teaching-16 [4]; Typing-14 [1]; Writing-14 [1].

until their brains turned to pabulum. And it's really no surprise that we see the rise of B'harne in conjunction with the maturing of this technology.

Now, before we get into a debate over the merits of television, I want to point out that it is not completely an evil. It does serve a purpose for entertainment and education. However, in the form it has now, there is not much use for the imagination or the intellect. And that is the weapon that the Beast counts on... to be able to invade the

brain and take over without his victim even realizing what is going on.

It's hopeless, right? I mean, there's no way we're going to convince the mundanes to give up their television sets and go back to reading and listening to the radio. In fact, if you tried such a campaign in Mundania, you would be laughed out of your seat. And revealing the true nature of the Beast is an impossibility as well. I mean, c'mon, a children's television character is out to destroy humanity as we know it?

Even if you did get past the absurdity of your postulate, the panic that would ensue would play right into the Beast's hands.

So the war must be secret. But who can be trusted with that secret, and be willing to be the good guys, doing a job that must be done with absolutely no recognition?

ENTER THE JIHAD

Unfortunately for students of his-



tory, there isn't much in the way of actual tangible history left from the early days of the Jihad. While I was present for a large portion of it, even my carefully kept notes were lost in an accident, and I only have the memories of myself and others to rely on. The problem with memory, especially in a literate culture, is that it tends to become myth rather easily, and the distortions from mythologizing something make it harder to make out what the original truth was.

But two facts seem most important in the lead up to the Jihad. First, the Wyrms seems to have decided that the best way to bring about his Purple Kingdom was to reveal himself to the world — not as the slobbering form of evil incarnate that we know him to be, but a sugary-sweet children's television show character. In some ways, this choice of guise turned out to be lucky for us, because it has helped us keep our War out of sight of the mundanes, but on the other hand, it also turned out to be unlucky because the primary audience for a children's television show is the young and impressionable minds of children.

Soon after B'harne's show went on the air, sometime in the mid to late eighties, a man whom we Jihaddi would come to know as the High Prophet, but who at the time was nothing more than your ordinary construction worker, would begin to have the first in a sequence of dreams and visions about some evil loose on the world that would destroy humanity if it wasn't checked. At first, he wasn't sure about these visions — would you have been if you were living a perfectly ordinary mundane life and you started getting odd visions about a kid's television show character being the incarnation of pure evil?

Luckily for the Jihad and the fate of humanity, the High Prophet was willing

to put up with these visions, and as they continued unabated, he began searching out others who might be having these same visions. It was made easier by the fact that his visions seemed to want him to search out these others. Over the course of a couple years, he found them all — a priest, a soldier, a doctor, a teacher, a physics Ph.D student, and an airline pilot, and from that humble Seven came the organization that you are all a part of today.

In 1990, after several meetings with those others who shared his visions, the High Prophet uttered what we know today as the Three-fold Truth, which included the statement I gave you at the beginning of this speech. With the arrival of the Truth, he was finally able to call forth that most noble undertaking. He called a Jihad — a Jihad against the Evil that had come to torment Earth. The war began at this point, the same war you and I are fighting today.

The early days were a pretty heady time to be part of the Jihad. Missions were taken on solo and in pairs. None of the structure that the current Jihad relies on to be able to function existed at that point, and people were pretty much cast to the wind, doing simply what had to be done in those days. Granted, the opposition forces weren't very well organized at that point either, which was probably the one saving grace for the nascent Jihad.

THE STUDIO FOUR

In late 1991, an event happened that nearly broke the cover of the young Jihad, which would have destroyed the Cause. I mean, before, crimes were up as Jihaddi would take on minions of B'harne in less than subtle places and fashions, but this event was different because of the scale of the crime. Four young recruits to the Jihad decided that it was time to take the war to the enemy's lair. They decided that

they would break into the studios in which B'harne's show was filmed and find some way to make it impossible for B'harne to continue to tape the show.

Unfortunately for them, the cops showed up at the studio halfway through this rampage and the four people there were busted for breaking and entering and malicious vandalism. This would not have been so bad for the Jihad if one of the people responsible





for the job hadn't broken down and confessed exactly why and what he was doing there.

This event was, as you can imagine, front page news. Especially when it at first seemed as if the young man who had said this was turning out to be perfectly sane in all ways other than his rather interesting delusion. The other thing is that he knew a few names, and there was some pressure coming down from the other side to book these four away, as well as anybody else who might have been associated with the studio ransacking.

The very first Jihad cleanup crews were used on this mess. Some of us took spots as reporters to swing the reporting of this mess, and even one daring Jihaddi somehow managed to get himself put on the psychiatric team evaluating the Studio Four, as they became known.

There was lots of debate among Jihaddi in those days about what to do with these four young men, as it looked like charges were going to be filed by our opposition, hoping to strike a blow for their side against us. Finally, it was decided that we unfortunately had to abandon these people for the greater sake of keeping the war going. We also had to make it so that in the future, when the Wyrms and his minions tried to accuse us of existing, that it would make them look insane.

To accomplish this, we added notes to the file of the one that told everything that he was known to have schizophrenic breaks with reality, and we let the others know that if they so chose to join their friend in his testimony that we would do the same thing to them. The other three thankfully chose to be sentenced rather than make things any harder for the rest of the Jihad, and the crisis of exposure was over.

But it became clear that the ad hoc structure that we had formed to run the

Timeline

25,000 BC: Rise and fall of Atlantis. The Illuminati is founded after the collapse of the Atlantean thaumocracy.

18,000 BC: Lyran mage Charn'El ascends to demigod status.

1500 BC: Charn'El has vision of human race destroying his people; Lyrans begin concerted effort to locate the threat.

300 BC: Lyran bioship stumbles across Earth; first attempt at conquest fails due to interference from Illuminati and Seleucid magicians.

1776: Adam Weishaupt founds the Ancient Illuminated Seers of Bavaria. Original Illuminati is mildly amused.

1787: First recorded conflict between the Maenads of the Holy Albino and the Lyrans.

1947: Human sorcerers guided by a Lyran magus open the Babylon Road in the California desert; first large-scale Lyran incursions on Earth; Grey ship attracted by the Road crash-lands in New Mexico; first contact with the Greys.

1970: First contact between the Salusian Empire and Earth during the *Apollo 13* mission.

1975: High Mage of Lyra summons demon B'harne as part of long-term campaign to enslave or eliminate humanity.

1987: *Barney and Friends* TV show debuts in the United States.

Dec. 1988: Maenads discover the origins of B'harne, vow to fight it.

1988-1990: The High Prophet and Original Seven Jihaddi begin having visions; gather together.

1990: High Prophet utters the Threefold Truth; Jihad to Destroy Barney formed.

Dec. 1991: Studio Four incident; armed takeover of Barney show ends with Jihaddi in police custody.

Mar. 1992: Studio Four incident resolved; first Jihad Autonomous Organizations begin forming along geographic lines.

Nov. 1992: First non-geographic JAOs, Dobermans and Resurgent Templars, formed.

Jan. 1993: High Prophet and five of Original Seven disappear, Tilden Owsen and Mystic Mongoose remain; WEDJEE research lab founded.

Mar. 1993: Jihadlinker first introduced.



TIMELINE (CONTINUED)

Apr. 1993: Doberman Fleet Commander Serberus named first Leader (later Praetor) of the Jihad.

Aug. 1993: Dobermans become the Glorious Doberman Empire, the first JAO.

Oct. 1993: Midwesterners Against Ugly Lizards (MAUL) declares itself a JAO; Owsen takes command of the Templars, renames the group TRES Corps.

Nov. 1993: WEDJEE incorporated into DE; Legion of Doom founded; mercenary known as Trooper Anhur joins the DE.

Dec. 1993: Blood Jihad founded.

Jan. 1994: TRES Zeta Squad founded to compete with WEDJEE; Maenads discover, join Jihad.

Jun. 1994: Mikey Crawford gets his hands on a Jihadlinker, sets off an abortive invasion of Montreal; Jihaddi arrested by Canadian police.

Jul. 1994: Serberus resigns from the Jihad over the Montreal incident; names DE Commander Augustus as successor; Augustus begins probe into preventing future incidents like Montreal.

Sep. 1994: Augustus endorses probe recommendations; first Jihad spin teams formed.

Aug. 1994: Trooper Anhur chosen to join Maenads, given the name Serp the Feral.

Oct. 1994: Jon Marburger joins TRES Corps.

Nov. 1994: Malaclypse the Seeker joins the Blood Jihad.

May 1995: Malaclypse starts Evil Geniuses for a Better Tomorrow, Inc.

Jun. 1995: Augustus retires, names Samhain new DE Fleet Commander and puts Praetorship up for election; Serp the Feral first (and only) freely elected Praetor.

Dec. 1995: Serp attempts to use Jihaddi as mercenaries in Africa and Central Asia; Samhain resists Serp's requests; Tensions between the DE and the Jihad leadership escalate.

Jan. 1996: Serp called into meeting with Maenad leader Windigo the Feral; Serp vanishes; JAO leaders appoint J. Foxglov as the new Praetor.

Mar. 1996: Operation WORLDWALK.

Aug. 1996: Ariana Mahtash joins the Blood Jihad.

Aug.-Sep. 1996: Operation PHOENIX.

Jihad was quickly being outpaced by the membership growth, and a couple of our founders had expressed an interest in returning to a so-called 'normal' life. It was decided that even though the High Prophet had done much good for the world by uttering the three-fold truth and calling a Jihad, it was time for a different way of organizing ourselves.

Before any of this work in rearranging could be done, though, the High Prophet and several of his closest associates turned up missing and could not be found anywhere. What exactly happened, we still do not know. Some of the more religious members thought that the High Prophet and the other missing had ascended for their role in bringing about the Jihad, some of the more pragmatic thought that they were simply tired of inter-Jihad politics in the wake of the Studio Four and thus had simply wandered back into mundane life without telling anybody, and some of the more conspiracy minded held that the Wyrms and his allies had captured them in a ploy to destroy the Jihad once and for all.

If it truly was the latter, it didn't work. From the original Seven, we still had Lord Owsen and the Mystic Mongoose around. While neither of them wanted to be the man in charge — they had seen the stress on their old friend during the bleak winter when it looked like we were about to lose everything — they did an admirable job holding the Jihad together until somebody else could be found to lead it.

THE RISE OF THE JAO

To explain how the Jihad moved to this next stage, I have to step back a little and tell you of the rise of the proto-JAO. In the wake of the Studio Four incident, some Jihaddi thought it was wise to band together in groups and work towards the destruction of the Wyrms in that fashion. A group



of people had access to more resources than a single person. Also, the Jihad had learned the value of cleaning up after itself, and it was easier to be able to plan missions knowing that you both had a cleanup crew in place and that the cleanup crew was friendly. It also allowed for some flexibility for passing orders from the top to the bottom.

A lot of these organizations were set up around a similar geographical area, most notorious being the band clustered in and around Texas A&M University, which produced a number of well-known Jihaddi, and another band clustered around the upper Midwest that later became known as MAUL.

But a couple of these proto-JAOs took a slightly different approach to maintaining a membership base. First of all, they allowed anybody to become part of their organization, and made it less tied to geography. Second, they picked somewhat of an overarching theme for their membership to consider themselves part of. These two proto-JAOs called themselves, respectively, the Dobermans and the Resurgent Templar, and are the forerunners of today's Doberman Empire and TRES Corps.

It should be noted that some of this ability to transcend geography was in part due to the introduction of the Jihadlinker. Before, when one had to rely on ordinary methods of communication, there was less ability to coordinate what was going on with your fellow members when you had to rely on the plain old telephone service. But even at the basic stage, where Linkers acted as glorified pagers, there was a tremendous freeing of resources, and it allowed for the non-geographically linked proto-JAO to come into ascendance.

All of this leads to the leadership race which Owsen and Mongoose were overseeing, since neither of them

TIMELINE (CONTINUED)

Oct. 1996: Operation PACIFICA; Owsen declared missing in action; Jon Marburger becomes TRES Grand Admiral.

Dec. 1996: Foxglov retires from Praetorship; Triumvirate formed by Windigo the Feral, Marburger and Shardik the Feral.

Jan. 1997: Blood Jihad leadership vanishes under mysterious circumstances; Verthandic Rangers formed from the remnants of the Blood Jihad and Evil Geniuses.

May 1997: First Triumvirate resigns, replaced by VR Professor Malaclypse, TRES Commander Shaharazad and TRES Captain Shadur T'Kharn.

Jul. 1997: Operation HOMEFRONT; VR incursion into alternate universe results in first enemy holding known to be totally freed from B'harnate influence.

Aug 1997: TRES Grand Admiral Marburger vanishes after an attack by spongin in San Francisco; TRES Admiral Melanie Davies named as successor.

Apr. 1998: Jihad Praxeum Veneficus founded to foster magical studies.

Jul. 1998: Admiral Davies takes extended sabbatical; TRES Admiral Kirk Felton named as successor.

Nov 1998: Malaclypse the Seeker resigns official positions in the Jihad, remains on as Civilian Advisor Emeritus.

Mar. 1999: Marburger returns to the Jihad and is court-martialed and demoted for dereliction of duty.

May 1999: Now.

wanted the job. And although they looked at the geographically based proto-JAOs, they took a longer and harder look at the two that were managing to transcend geography. Of the two, the Dobermans were both older and larger, and their leader, Fleet Commander Serbeus, seemed the wisest choice to lead the entire Jihad.

Thus Owsen and Mongoose named Serbeus the new leader of the Jihad. Serbeus, besides leading the Dobermans, was also somewhat a student of classics, and his first act was to rename his office to the Office of the Praetor, perhaps to confer upon the Jihad the

majesty of the Romans. Soon after he was named Praetor, Serbeus would add the appellate "Empire" onto the name of his organization. It is pretty much from the addition of this appellate that we declare the first fully fledged Jihad Autonomous Organization, the Glorious Doberman Empire.

The entire period I refer to here is now referred to as a golden age, though as a member throughout most of the period in question, I fail to see what is so golden about it. It was most definitely not as idyllic as later Jihaddi would make it out to be. This is probably partially due to the tendency of



memory to make myth, and the golden age is a time that has fled into myth. We have a little better idea of what was going on in the next period of history — a point in time that a current Jihaddi might actually recognize what's going on, a time of the first JAOs and the first attempts at working globally.

We have already discussed somewhat the rise of the Doberman Empire, so let us concentrate on what other major JAOs existed about this point. Those are, in no special order, TRES Corps, the Midwesterners Against Ugly Lizards (MAUL), the Blood Jihad, and the Legion of Doom. Also, at about this time we had the rise of a couple small R&D shops and the emergence of the Maenads, both of which had an interesting effect on the Jihad as we know it.

GOING GLOBAL

As I mentioned, this is the first period where we were able to work beyond the borders of the United States in any coherent way, which is good because the Wyrms was starting to eye territory elsewhere. One of our first missions out of country was the Montreal Incursion in 1992, which is important for two reasons — it was one of our first missions outside the boundaries of the United States and it was the first time we met a certain sponge minion by the name of Mikey Crawford.

However, in late 1993 and early 1994, not only was the Jihad starting to attract recruits from other continents (most notably Europe and Australia), but we began having the manpower to stage skirmishes in those countries. Unfortunately for us, our adversary had found his way to England and Australia before us, and got somewhat of a head start in working his evils on those populations. Thus, we had to make up for lost time. Probably our worst blow came in 1994 when the Wyrms

announced that he would be translating all his shows into Spanish, French, German and Portuguese which meant that his influence would be spread that much further. With this threat, some of the JAOs tried to boost their capabilities to respond into Europe and Latin America, the two biggest targets for the Wyrms.

The Hidden War had grown from something ran out of a few American cities into this worldwide response team in just under four years. Divine interference or manifest destiny aside, this accomplishment is something for which the Jihad should be proud. The Doberman Empire was conducting operations in Australia, Europe, Brazil, the United States and Canada simultaneously in the Spring of 1994. The Doberman Empire was definitively the best equipped and largest fighting force the Jihad had ever fielded, and they were very good at their job. We'll come back to this thought in a second.

TRES Corps, which had emerged under the leadership of Lord Owsen from the struggling band of the R-surgent Templar, was less able to be involved in world straddling missions of great importance, so they decided to concentrate instead on being able to respond quickly to any threat in North America, and having good intelligence in place to be able to respond to those threats. When the DE picked up a formerly independent R&D shop known as WEDJEE, then headed by a man known simply as Captain Midnight, but who would later become Fleet Commander Samhain of the DE, TRES responded by starting their own in house R&D group that would gain the appellation of Zeta.

The Blood Jihad, from its very founding by a couple of the oddest people to ever grace the Jihad's presence — a pair known as Arsenal the Lone Warrior and Uplink — had an interest in

both space and R&D, and soon became known as the place in the Jihad to go if you had an interest in the mix of those two subjects. We are still not entirely sure how they managed to get their stuff in orbit, or just how they managed to establish a moon base without anybody noticing, but somehow they did. There are guesses that there were deals made with Russia, who, for cold hard American greenbacks, was willing to pass off Blood Jihad launches as their own, but this is a subject upon which the Blood Jihad High Command kept utmost silence.

The Legion of Doom prided themselves on their special operations skills. They also prided themselves on being one of the more extensively cross-trained troops in the Jihad. If you needed somebody who had an obscure skill-set, chances were that they called the Legion home. The Legion also excelled at desponification techniques, being one of the first groups to establish a division specifically devoted to studying ways to clean Barney's influence out of people's heads. They worked in small groups, and were masters of striking hard and fast — and were also among the first JAOs to really excel in cleaning up after themselves.

Lastly, there were the Midwesterners Against Ugly Lizards, or MAUL. The thing to keep in mind about MAUL is that they were the only JAO to survive from the time in the Jihad when people banded together because of their geography. Thus, they had a very strong association that the mid-western United States was theirs to protect. The other interesting thing about MAUL is that they refuse to use anything better than current technology in the mundane world — they really like their tanks — and they don't have much clue in the meaning of the word 'subtle'. Thankfully for the Jihad, the few times MAUL has gotten on



the wrong side of the cameras, they've been mistaken for the United States military.

And that is a brief look at how the Jihad stood going into the summer of 1994, unafraid of the world, taking on the Hellworm wherever he might strike, and thinking that nothing could seriously harm them. They had managed to avoid the news cameras for years, and perhaps it was hubris that caused the next big crisis of exposure. It started with a lost prototype Jihadlinker.

MR. CRAWFORD'S LINKER

A Canadian member of the Doberman Empire was doing some normal work in Montreal when he put the prototype Jihadlinker he was entrusted with in his bag and then failed to zip the pouch he had put his Linker in. Of course, as he was wandering through Montreal, the Linker fell out of his bag.

Normally, this wouldn't have been a big problem, since Linkers were arcane things to use back in the day, but this was a new prototype with the simple to use interface and the bright shiny green Send button. It was simple enough that a spongie could figure out how to work it, and I suppose you can guess what happened.

Yes, the prototype Jihadlinker ended up in the hands of Mikey Crawford. Now Mikey was already starting to gain a reputation among both Jihaddi and his fellow spongies as a fellow who always walked away from Jihad operations, ever since his first appearance in the Montreal Incursion a few years back. Mikey typed out something along the lines of "hI al yu evul juhadee" and punched the shiny green send button. Little did any of us know at the time that this one action of Mikey's (somehow sent to the 'entire Jihad' distribution list) would very nearly lead to the end of the Jihad.

Mikey's message triggered a flurry of activity as to where a spongie had gotten a hold of a Jihadlinker, and how a spongie would have been able to figure out the arcane interface. Within a day, the Dobermensch who had lost the linker realized what had happened and pulled out his old one, only to find a flurry of activity over a sponge minion on the link. Wisely, or maybe not so wisely, he kept quiet for a few more days before he reported the prototype missing.

One mystery was solved when the prototype was reported missing — the question of just how a Sponge Minion figured out how to use a Linker. The prototype was much easier to use. However, there was the bad news that it was a prototype and thus contained the latest encryption schemes and other gadgetry that we didn't really want in the hands of the enemy. Thus, the Doberman Command decided that they would do an all-out raid on the McGill campus (which is where the signal from the Linker was consistently coming from — Mikey had decided that talking to Jihaddi was a pretty fun activity and was pretty consistently sending messages extolling the virtues of the Wurm) and take the Linker back from the spongie who had it by force.

Unfortunately, there were a lot of Dobermensch who wanted to participate in this raid since they were rather angry at the Sponge Minion who was polluting their link. Serbeus probably both invited too many soldiers along and assigned the wrong type of mission. This was definitely a case where a snatch and grab carried out by a small team would have been best, but Serbeus decided that Mikey was probably hiding in a Purple Forces safe house, which would mean rather a lot of manpower to take out.

Thus a large contingent of heavily armed Dobermensch were ordered





around the McGill campus one sunny June morning and ordered not to fall back until the Purple Forces base was found and cleaned out, and especially not to return until the prototype was back in their hands. Not only did the mission fail as Mikey Crawford was not where we expected him to be at that time, but two Dobermensch were less careful than they probably should have been as to whose face they waved their weapons into. The civilian couple they mistook for spongies were actually undercover RCMP officers who didn't really appreciate having illegal weaponry waved in their faces.

To be fair to the two Dobermensch who were not exactly as careful as they should have been, most of the invading force weren't exactly careful as to who they were frightening — enough so that several Canadian papers were screaming about the attack on McGill.

But the two Dobermensch caught by the RCMP were in a lot more trouble than their buddies, and the trouble doubled when the RCMP discovered that both of the terrorists they arrested carried American passports.

This fact, as you can probably imagine, caused quite an international uproar. Canada was not pleased with the prospect of terrorists slipping over the border to conduct operations against Canadian citizens, and there was some diplomatic tension between Ottawa and Washington over the whole matter.

Inside the Jihad, things were even more tense than they were in the relationship between the United States and Canada. There were two reasons for this — first, if either of the two that were caught in Canada decided to speak about what exactly they were up to, the entirety of the War would be put at risk.

Plus, there was a lot of finger pointing going on over whether MAUL (who had explicitly refused to jump in when the Dobermans realized they were in some trouble, stating a lack of jurisdiction) and TRES (who came up with some intelligence that Mikey may not be where the Doberman Empire expected him to be, but couldn't get anybody in Doberman High Command to listen) should have tried harder to stop the events that lead to crisis.

As the summer dragged on, we found that Canada was willing to drop the book on the two caught Dobermensch, which rather worried many of the higher ups in the Jihad, for all it would take is one person spilling the beans. Luckily, the two had learned something from earlier history, and they knew to keep their mouths shut as to why exactly they had been at McGill with heavy arms. Nobody, by some





freak miracle, had been killed, nor had anybody been shot. After some negotiation with liaisons in State, we managed to get the two a very good lawyer, and they were summarily found guilty, given a suspended sentence, and escorted out of the country with word that they were no longer welcome in Canada.

While the diplomatic crisis between the US and Canada was resolved upon the return of the two Dobermensh to the United States, the internal repercussions of this raid would resonate through the Jihad for months to come. The biggest of course, was Serbeus' retirement from both the Doberman Empire and from the Office of the Praetor. As his replacement in both, he named Commander Augustus, the one man in the DE high command that had recommended not going after Mikey Crawford in Montreal.

Augustus' first move was to start an inquiry into how the McGill raid could have occurred and suggestions as for how to keep it from happening again. His second was to court martial the two Dobermensh who had been unlucky enough to get caught, but to make the point very clear, he also court martialed their commander. Augustus was quoted at the time that "I want it to be known that this war is first and foremost a *secret*, and officers within the Jihad are to conduct themselves with that thought above all others."

The task force on how to prevent this sort of incident from happening again came up with a few very good solutions. Unfortunately, they also came up with one solution that would cause problems down the line. Among the good solutions they had is that we need to strengthen the Liaison program, which was working well in the US, to other countries in which there is a large chance the Jihad would conduct major operations — and first and foremost on

that list is Canada.

Second, it was recommended that there be spin teams in place to clean up after these sorts of messes. While every Jihaddi I've talked to hates spin duty, most of them acknowledge the importance of the job in keeping the world ignorant of their war. They know quite well that while they would love to expose their enemy for who he is, this is impossible, and that it takes just one piece of stupidity for their own cover to be blown.

Third, there were a few hints that the disaster at McGill could have been prevented if either TRES Intel had been able to get their findings to the DE or if MAUL had gone ahead and provided the backup requested. Thus, Augustus thought it might be all well and good to weaken the 'autonomous' part of the acronym 'Jihad Autonomous Organization'. It seemed like a good solution to stop a McGill crisis from occurring again, but the ramifications of this would soon play out for the Jihad. We'll come back to this in a minute.

RISING STARS

I had meant to talk to you about two groups that would play an important part in the Jihad — the rise of the small R&D shop and the Maenads of the Holy Albino. Both reach their heyday in the period between the Second Great Exposure and the rise of Serp, so it is instructive to talk about them.

I have previously mentioned WEDJEE, the incorporation of which into the Doberman Empire gave Fleet Commander Samhain his original DE rank. I have also mentioned TRES Corps' Zeta Squadron, their own in-house group. The Blood Jihad also had their own R&D crew, known as the Skunk Works. The last of the independent R&D shops, a small operation known as the Evil Geniuses for a Better

Tomorrow, was started by my esteemed colleague, Professor Malaclypse.

The independent and JAO-based R&D shops play an important part in the rise of the Jihad. It dates roughly between the beginning of 1993, when WEDJEE was first formed to Operation WORLDWALK in March of 1996, a good three years, and those three years are best summed up by Professor Malaclypse when he once characterized them as 'The Age of Amuck Scientists'.

It was, from what I understand not being a techie-type myself, a wonderful time to have been a Jihad scientist or technician, for ideas were springing forth from all corners. Sometimes their inventions were useful — these were the folks who originated your Jihadlinkers, among other things. But sometimes, they were just silly — Admiral Keith's Mathattackius gun is probably the example you're most familiar with, but there were other crimes against science committed in this period.

Of course, the most vibrant period for the techies is the Fall of 1994 to WORLDWALK, in which thousands of oddities were produced randomly for the Jihad, some as desponge tools, some as sheer 'what the hell were you thinking?' curiosities. It should be noted that the brilliant minds most associated with their respective JAOS R&D shop — Admiral Svartalf of TRES, Professor Malaclypse of VR, and Centurion Ceberus and Fleet Commander Samhain of the DE — all got their starts during this time period.

As our opponent has no appreciable R&D shop whatsoever, but amazing adaptability to take on whatever we throw at them — or in the case of the Lyrans, to sometimes transcend it — our R&D shops have been one of the things that have kept us in the war for nearly as long as we have been fighting it. Even if they do have the occasional flight of fancy that leads to some tech-



nological atrocity.

Oddly enough, the other group that came to the forefront in the halcyon days of 1994 were the Maenads of the Holy Albino, a group that is nearly as diametrically opposite the pursuit of science as you can get and still be in the Jihad. I say this with some tongue in cheek, of course, as some of our best R&D minds are also Maenads, but the mysticism of the Maenads seems to collide in interesting fashions with the focus on science to fight the Hellwurm that the Jihad seems to have.

Thus, it is interesting to note that at the same time the High Prophet was beginning to have his first inklings of visions, so was the Chosen of the Holy Albino, as the story goes. For six years, they hunted the Wurm and the Lyrans on their own terms, but as time progressed, they found themselves running into more and more Jihaddi. As there were few in the Maenads, they realized an alliance would be beneficial and Windigo the Feral, aka now-Commander Inagei of the DE, led the Maenads in making themselves known to the Jihad.

Since then, they've been violent but effective warriors for the Jihad, and whether their mysticism is correct and they are selected by the Holy Albino, or if the skeptics are correct and they are simply picked by Windigo, it is mostly considered an honour to be invited to join the Maenads.

THE RISE AND FALL OF SERP THE FERAL

Part of the reason I bring this up is that the Maenads play an important part in the next big event of the Jihad, which is the rise and fall of Praetor Serp. Serp was his Maenad name; his full DE rank and title was Centurion Anhur Spartacus Hades. He was, at the time of his induction into the DE

in December 1993, one of the Jihad's brightest young stars. He had served a good proportion of time as a mercenary, hopping between African bush wars before finding out about and joining up with the Jihad.

Once he was in, he demonstrated his knowledge of tactics to Fleet Commander Serbeus, and so impressed the Fleet Commander with his knowledge that Serbeus gave him one of the fastest promotions to Warrior that we have on record in the DE. He performed ably in all the missions he was assigned, and managed to bring back all his men from every mission. His biggest coup was during the Second Great Exposure, when his command was the only one to even somewhat succeed on the mission. They surrounded the safe house, entered, found it empty, and retreated. While this was technically in violation of his orders, it impressed both Serbeus and Augustus at his responsibility in a situation where everybody was losing their head, and his promotion to Centurion was both the last act by Serbeus in the DE, and confirmed as the first DE act of Augustus.

He continued serving as Augustus' tactician through the fall and winter of 1994 and doing a very good job at it. His promotion to Commander seemed all but assured once a spot was opened for him, as his only real competition he had was fellow-DE Centurion Manticore, and Serp was sure that his tactics and strategy would win him the position over an R&D geek. Besides, that very same winter, he had been inducted into the Maenads, something which Centurion Manticore had not managed to do.

While he was biding his time, waiting for the promotion he knew that he so richly deserved, his tactics skills were often requested for use by other JAOs, and so he would often go to help them do mission planning. Remember, the

task force studying the McGill Incident had recommended that JAOs be a little less autonomous, and part of that was involving high ranking officers of other JAOs in your battle planning. Thus, Serp found himself well-recognized throughout the entire Jihad.

In May of 1995, Augustus, proud of the work he had done for the Jihad, decided that it was time that he stepped down and went into a well-earned retirement. But before he did that, he announced that there would be a Jihad-wide election for the Praetor position in June, after he stepped down. The second thing he did was name a new Doberman Empire Fleet Commander. Much to the shock of Serp, his bitter rival, Centurion Manticore, was named Fleet Commander Samhain.

Worse, when Serp angrily brought up the unfairness of it all to Augustus, Augustus told Serp the reasons he had picked Manticore over him — mainly that Manticore was much more competent at the two tasks of dealing with lower-ranked officers and having a head for details that was important to the position of Fleet Commander. Augustus also made a point of telling him that if one of the two Commander slots had opened up, that he would have been the man, but that Augustus honestly believed that he wouldn't make a very good Fleet Commander.

Serp thought for a while about everything Augustus had said, and then decided that he would get the one position that could tell even the Fleet Commander of the Doberman Empire what to do — Praetor of the Jihad.

We now know that if Augustus had kept Serbeus' tradition of naming his successor, we probably would have never had Praetor Serp in the first place, as Augustus probably would have named either Samhain or TRES Admiral J. Foxglov to the position. But Augustus had a quiet love for democ-



The Adhocracy

On paper, much of the Jihad is structured like a military or a fairly hierarchical corporation. In practice, this only fools the newbies. As often as not, the Jihad is that ultimate paradox - a large, capable military force *composed almost entirely of individualists*. Aside from direct combat situations or the occasional TRES Corps martinet, most Jihaddi view the rank structure as somewhere between “vague, unifying framework” and “polite suggestion.” This simply should *not* work, but it does.

This has its ups and downs. On the one hand, talented junior members can have impacts way out of proportion to their ranks or even age, leading to weird situations like Serp the Feral, a.k.a. *Centurion Hades*, having *Fleet Commander Samhain* as adjunct, or Katze Brenner joining the Triumvirate at less than half the age of many of its members. On the other hand, the lack of structure often causes nasty situations when two strong personalities dig in against one another. Over time, some rough mechanisms have evolved to handle this.

Most inter-officer snits remain just that as long as they don't affect the stability of the larger organization. When they *do*, things get serious very quickly. In at least two cases intra-Jihad conflicts have led to (apparent) loss of life - a solution which was seen as acceptable, if regrettable, both times. The current climate doesn't make a third such case likely - but the senior Jihaddi have never discussed ruling it out entirely.

racy, and he honestly believed it was truly the best way for the Jihad to pick its leaders. Unfortunately, the problem with democracy is that everybody gets to pick, and people often end up with exactly the government that they deserve. Such was the case here, as Serp was well known to the lower ranks in other JAOs, and they went overwhelmingly for him, despite the DE not really voting for him at all. Perhaps this should have been a warning sign to the rest of us that Serp may not have been the wisest choice. However, we were pleased that we made it through an election and we had our first elected Praetor, and Serp looked as if he would mend fences with his commanding officer as he named Samhain his adjunct.

And at first all seemed well with Serp. He was genuinely liked by the lower ranks, and he started a number of projects to make inroads on the Hellwyrms. Some of these were massive multi-JAO projects, and the practice in collaborating would come in handy sooner than anybody imagined possible. The assault had the Hellwyrms retreating. For the first time it felt as if the Jihad had the upper hand against their Opposition, by what seemed to be

their daring Praetor's doing.

Serp had a few good ideas as well. He was the first to think of the monetary aspects of running a huge war, and the International Jihad Treasury, the bane of Jihaddi everywhere, was one of his innovations. He was consistently looking for ways to make money for the Jihad as well as fighting the Wyrms, and given his background, he hit upon the obvious solution — sending Jihaddi as mercenaries into the wars he had once fought in.

Unfortunately for Serp, an angry and violent reaction to this plan came from his commanding officer, the man he thought he could control by becoming Praetor of the Jihad. Samhain was so angry with Serp that he resigned his position as adjunct right then and there and blistered Serp's ears with invective that none had ever heard from Samhain before or since. Instead of taking no for an answer, Serp got the bright idea to try to oust his old rival from the Fleet Commander's chair in the DE so that he could take the job. The month of December was spent in a Jihad version of chicken — both Serp and Samhain trying to see who would blink first.

As the rest of the Jihad began to understand why Serp and Samhain were in this bitter feud, it was obvious which side they began to side with. None of them thought that sending their JAO's soldiers to fight in wars that didn't even have to do with the Hellwyrms, whether it was for money or whatever else they could get in trade, was a very good idea. One by one, all the other leaders sided with Samhain. Serp, of course, tried to excommunicate all of them, but before he could name replacements, Windigo asked for him to come to her office for them to talk.

Serp walked into the office with Windigo, the door closed, there was the sound of raised voices, and then the door opened and Windigo was the only one to walk out. An inspection of the office behind her showed nobody in the room and no signs of the Praetor. The only comment anybody could get out of Windigo was, “Offended me, he did,” and to this day we have no idea what happened to Serp except that he was gone.

It was January 1, 1996. In a few days, the high command of all the JAOs got together and decided that they would first not repeat Augustus'



failed experiment in democracy, and they unanimously named Admiral J. Foxglov of TRES Corps their new Praetor. That was the beginning of the year that seriously got Weird.

OPERATION WORLDWALK

Why was it weird? Well, in March of that year, the Hellwurm decided he was tired of this tickytack war of attrition with us and decided to bring it all to an end by collapsing all the known universes into one that he figured would be more favorable to him and not to us. He planned to accomplish this by the means of a device that would do this collapsing of timelines. Our attempt to stop this fiendish plot is recorded in Jihad archives as Operation WORLDWALK.

I will warn you, before I head into this section, that some of the stuff I am about to describe may not make much sense, but I assure you that the events I will attempt to relate to you really happened, and wasn't the result of the entire Jihad taking a hit of LSD all at the

same time — even if that's what it felt like at the time.

It was a sunny day in mid-March when things went haywire suddenly and without warning. I know most of you have probably seen the Matrix, when Neo experiences his bout of deja-vu, and that is how the first few permutations felt, as if we'd seen this before. But not realizing what we were up against yet, the Jihad dismissed these odd cases of deja-vu as nothing more than deja-vu and continued in our normal routines, which turned out to be the dumbest thing we could have done.

Since the whole episode is difficult to describe in any meaningful way in the third person, let me tell you what I was up to, since I found myself drug into this war. At the time, I was a young professor at Indiana University in Bloomington, and I had agreed to spend my spring break at the Doberman Empire headquarters so that I could talk to their young recruits in much the fashion I'm speaking to you all now. I had started out early in the

morning and made good time, and arrived at DE HQ about two hours before the first queasy feelings of deja-vu were reported.

I consider myself one of the lucky ones. DE HQ, along with several of the other Jihad bases had, in the age of Amuck Scientists, installed some equipment that nobody was really sure was going to work exactly as predicted. I suppose there's something to be said for preparedness, as the gadgets worked exactly as they were supposed, isolating Jihad bases in the storm the Wurm had cooked up.

What was that storm? Well, none of us had a clue what was going on except for the odd senses of deja-vu until suppertime. I recall having just sat down with Fleet Commander Samhain and the rest of the DE command staff when a young Dobermensch came running into the room with the news that they were getting a transmission from the Wurm. We were eating in a private dining room, so I was privileged to watch said transmission. It was typical Wurm insipidness, but the plans he detailed silenced the entire command staff of a JAO for five whole minutes.

What did he say? Well, he told us about his shiny new machine, that he had buried in New Mexico, and he told us that he was in the process of getting us out of his hair for the last time, because his shiny new machine was in the process of compacting the multiverse into something that would be more tractable to him than this one was. And he very specifically mentioned that there was nothing we could do to stop the Jihad from becoming obsolete and if we were to try, it would do no good, so we shouldn't even bother to stop him, and we might as well live our last few days in peace.

It was hubris at its finest, but as I said, the statement stunned the entire command staff of the DE, and I'm sure

Wait a minute... when did this happen!?

Breaking kayfabe for a minute... at this point, if you're a well-heeled Jihaddi or have been reading through the fiction archives on jihad.net, you'll have notice that a lot of the stuff related in this potted history of the Jihad doesn't have a lot of evidence to back up that it actually happened. There's a reason for that.

You see, most - by which we mean 99 percent or more - of the original Jihad fiction that was written before *Operation Phoenix* has been lost thanks to a combination of poor archiving, authors getting bored and wandering off, and the vagaries of Usenet. Most of us have vague memories of the storyline for *Operation Worldwalk*, but nothing of the actual *content* of the story has survived to this day. This has led us to pretty much just recreating the entire backstory for the Jihad *ex nihilo* and in a manner consistent with the revisions originally planned for the *Jihad Universe RPG* project.

So, if you see something in here that doesn't jibe 100% with the story archives, that's why. The effect is probably most noticeable in Phoenix, and a little bit in Pacifica. And if you have a complete or even a semi-complete archive of Worldwalk or older Jihad operations, please please *please* contact us at mrfnord@amigo.net and share the bounty.



it had the same effect on other command staffs throughout the Jihad. A frantic teleconference was arranged by the Praetor, and the entire high commands of all the JAOs was frantically called together. It was a relief to see so many of the highest-ranking Jihaddi still around, but worse news was to follow when other Jihaddi reported that they hadn't heard from people who had been sent out on missions over the last few days and hadn't been under cover when the Wyrms flipped his machine on.

You see, when the Wyrms announced his plans to contract the entire multiverse into one universe that was much more favorable to him, he released a string of reality quakes. The first few were subtle, hence those odd sensations of *deja-vu* folks had been reporting all afternoon, but they were about to grow in both number and

magnitude. Somehow, by sheer luck and mad geniuses doing the science, the majority of the Jihad's bases had been equipped with dampeners that reduced the effect of these reality quakes on the folks inside. We didn't really know what would happen when we sent folks out into it, but of course we had to give it a try.

The boys in both TRES and Doberman Intelligence placed the signal around Carlsbad, New Mexico, probably somewhere in the massive cave systems nearby. So now the Jihad had an agonizing decision to make. Did they send people out in that time storm knowing that they might not be able to make it through, or did they hope the collapse of timelines would play out in their favor? The Jihad, being who we are, chose to go with the slight glimmer of hope, and organized a quick inter-JAO exploratory team to meet up near

Carlsbad and spelunk into the caverns from there. Warrior Ashur Galand (now Centurion Ceberus) was chosen to head this last ditch effort at stopping the Wyrms' evil plans, and they were sent out into the time stream with the hopes of the entire Jihad behind them.

Those who fought in this force tell me it was quite the experience, as they moved across country trying to get to where they belonged, with scenery changing in odd fashions and even their very transportation and clothing changing depending on which quake was rattling through. The scariest part, some of them told me, was when people would change or disappear in front of their eyes, as one time stream made it more likely that one person would be there instead of another. Somehow they fought through the geography and the quakes and what appeared to them as quite the acid trip and somehow





made it in one piece. One battle later, in which the opponents kept changing along with everything else, they were filing into the system of caves which is Carlsbad Caverns, desperately searching for the machine that was doing this all.

Now the thing was, as they had been making their way to Carlsbad, the machine had been speeding up as it had less and less universes to incorporate into the flattening, so the rest of us were seeing things outside as careening from universe to universe to universe in a rather quick fashion, almost like flipping through a TV set with millions of channels. Only it was the universe, and we had no control over the rate of channel-flipping.

The exploratory team found the Wyrms in the deepest cavern at Carlsbad, watching his machine near the end of its task, and gleefully celebrating that the Jihad would not pull a rabbit out of its hat this time and stop his nefarious plans. Unfortunately for the Wyrms, Galand and his company stepped out of the shadows just as he finished gloating to whoever could hear.

In the fiercest battle the Jihad had ever fought to that time, the machine was destroyed just before it could finish crushing the universes into one, and B'harne found himself temporarily inconvenienced. One of the more interesting unsubstantiated pieces of this battle was the conviction of some of the Jihaddi present that the Wyrms had killed Warrior Galand, but that Galand had somehow come back to life and returned the favor to the Wyrms. Reports like these were dismissed as the remnants of the acid trip like nature of the expedition, but it gives you an idea of the oddity of both *WORLDWALK* and the Jihad.

When Galand destroyed the machine, it unleashed one last massive reality quake that put things mostly back

the way they were as the timeline tried to heal itself from the damage the Wyrms had done. It wasn't perfect, though, as TRES Corps immediately reported in surprise that they had a small space fleet and Space Station *Ithaca*, and the Blood Jihad reported that Luna Base had somehow gotten larger.

Plus, there were many Jihaddi who had been in the world when the quakes had occurred and hadn't been heard from since. Occasionally, you'll find some older Jihaddi recognizing a friend who had battled next to him prior to *WORLDWALK* only to go missing in the chaos, only to later show up rejoining the Jihad but not remembering their prior Jihad career, which causes a lot of awkwardness on both sides. Thus, if you get recognized by an old-timer, be kind to him or her, for you might be their long lost friend — even if you don't remember it.

After the psychedelic mess that was Operation *WORLDWALK* came the aftermath. Most folks were fairly sure it the Wyrms' attempt to find a more tractable universe, just as he said when he was gloating to the Jihad's various commanders, but some of the more conspiracy-minded among the Jihad suggested it was the Lyrans attempting to make an end run around humanity. The collapse of the timelines might have simply caused us no longer to exist, and since the Lyrans want to see us dead, this would have worked just as well as killing us off.

It was time for a break from the Wyrms and it felt nice to know that Galand had iced him for us so that we could concern ourselves with preparing for the next war. For some reason, the Legion of Doom decided that they had to get in space now, and threw all their resources into creating a space fleet. The rest of the Jihad went on training and drilling, proud of how well they'd come out of *WORLDWALK*, and think-

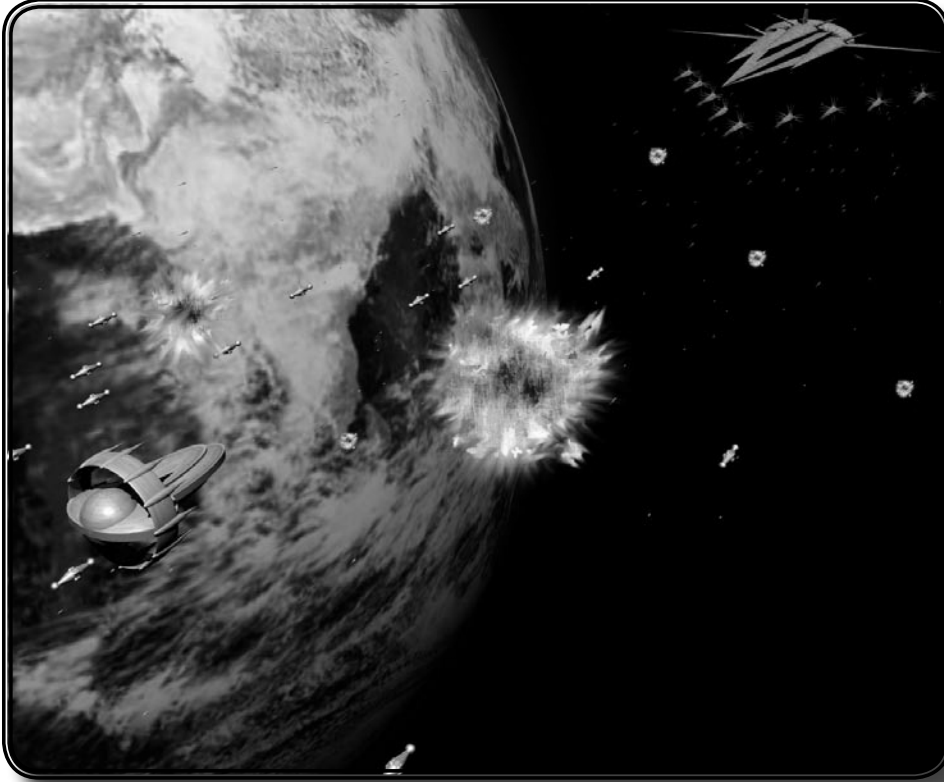
ing there would be absolutely no way the Wyrms could top what he'd done.

So we went through the spring and summer of 1996, blissfully content that we could take anything the Hellwyrms could throw at us. Thus, it came as a horrible surprise when we found ourselves under attack once again in mid-August — and this time the Hellwyrms had found allies. On top of it, the Wyrms, with help from the Lyrans, had put some sort of mystical spell on the top dozen of our leaders at the time that made it nearly impossible for them to hide.

OPERATION PHOENIX

For the second time in the year, we were taken by surprise by the enemy. When the Wyrms returned to earth with his new allies — an alien race known simply as the X'hirjq — we were nearly sunk in the war before we started. The X'hirjq seemed impossible to beat because they were more technologically inclined and they were stronger, faster, and more adept than the humans they were fighting. And to make things worse, they had joined up with the Wyrms of their own free will, which meant that they had lost none of their faculties to spongification. Plus, at the time, we didn't know that the Wyrms had cast his tracking spell, so they kept popping up around the most important Jihaddi. It is a surprise that as many of them survived Phoenix as did, given the focused attention upon them.

It has been said that Jihaddi do not know the meaning of the word 'quit'. At the worst, when it looked as if many had been killed in their attempts to fight the X'hirjq, the Jihad still picked up and continued to fight ever onward. However, the losses racked up all over — in Scotland, in Atlanta, in Louisville, in Iowa, in San Juan, in space, all over the place, the Jihad was losing and losing bad. It was a bad time to be on



the home team. Somehow, despite all this, the Jihad kept fighting, sacrificing everything it could in a desperate attempt to make the impossible happen.

One of the most notable sacrifices made in the War Against the X'hirjq was that of Admiral Michael Davis and Captain Patrick Stewart of the Blood Jihad, and all the crew of their ships *Lexington* and *Defiance*. In the middle of the war, when it looked as if all hope were lost, the two ordered their fighters to do as much damage to the X'hirjq mothership as possible. Then, when it looked like they were about to be swatted, the two proceeded to make a kamikaze run on the mothership with their own ships, killing everybody aboard both the *Lexington* and the *Defiance*. It had about as much effect in the long run as a gnat colliding with an elephant, but for them even to attempt it showed the bravery of these two men and the crew of their ships.

The turning point for the Jihad, however, was probably the battle for

the new TRES Corps headquarters starting September 10, 1996. It started much as many of the other battles had — very badly for the Jihad — and got much worse before it was all over. The X'hirjq smartly sabotaged our communications medium before they started the attack in earnest. To make things even worse for the Jihad, the weather, which had been sufficiently odd since the start of *WORLDWALK*, delivered a surprise blizzard to Colorado the same night the X'hirjq and the Hellwyrms decided to bear down and take out TRES HQ.

The morning of the tenth dawned overcast and cold, with heaps of snow on the ground from the prior night's blizzard. It also looked like more snow was on the way. The fighting started out on the highway, but the Jihaddi fighting were pushed back towards the headquarters. It did not look good for the Jihad, and if the X'hirjq and the Wyrms were allowed to take TRES, the war would be over. Surprisingly, then-

Commodore Marburger showed his courage under fire by trying his best to keep the Jihad fighting and just not fleeing against an overwhelming show of strength by the opponent. The day progressed with the blizzard dumping more snow on the heads of those fighting, and the fight wore on.

About sundown, the Jihad managed to briefly turn things its way when it unleashed the artillery it had on the B'harnate heavy infantry on the field and a contingent of Dobermensch showed up to help spell the weary TRES soldiers who had been battling all day, and this combined force finally finished off all B'harnate troops on the field. But the battle was still far from over. The next morning, the morning of September 11, the X'hirjq took their spots and fiercely began attacking the TRES and Doberman soldiers on the battlefield. But in a miracle, the blizzard broke, and the sun shined through on all the snow and ice that had accumulated on the battlefield, and the X'hirjq put off their attack plans until nightfall because they were blinded from the reflection of the sun off the snow and ice.

The night of September 11, and the morning of September 12, the Jihad contingent at TRES HQ fought as hard as they could, but there wasn't much they could do against the tactical and numerical superiority of the X'hirjq. Finally, the Jihaddi retreated back to the base itself, hoping that it could hold against the mighty force advancing against them. But the force overpowered the Jihaddi even at the gates of the headquarters, the power blew, and all was lost for the Jihad.

Except that the power had only flickered and not died, and when the power came back up, the Jihad guns at the gates were able to finish off the last of the X'hirjq. The sun rose on the morning of September twelfth with the



Jihad in possession of the battle that turned the tide. The battle for TRES HQ had carried a costly price for even the victors, as a large contingent of Jihaddi had perished trying to deliver a victory. This battle still remains to this day the costliest in Jihad history in the number of Jihaddi killed or injured in the fighting. It was, in all senses of the phrase, a Pyrrhic victory for the Jihad.

Strangely enough, three days later, many of the Jihad higher ups would fight perhaps the oddest battle they'd ever fought. They ended up fighting against B'harnate friendly copies of themselves, and after our guys defeated them to a man, we discovered that the X'hirjq had been conning both us and B'harne. We discovered that the X'hirjq weren't here to destroy us, but that they were here to test us. They had only joined in an alliance with the Wyrms as a way to get here and pull off this test because humanity meant something special in the X'hirjq belief system. So the bloodiest war the Jihad had ever fought was pretty much for nothing. Let me repeat that, nothing. All the sacrifice, all the bloodshed, all the fighting was for nothing more than a stupid test. If that doesn't make you angry...

In the end, the final toll was thousands of Jihaddi dead, thousands more wounded, the Legion of Doom all but destroyed, the Blood Jihad nearly without a command staff, the DE lost most of its worldwide bases, and TRES was forced to rebuild a headquarters mostly leveled to the ground. To make things even more interesting, the X'hirjq had oh-so-helpfully blasted humanity with an industrial-sized psychic blast, so that it would not remember the events of Phoenix, which was good for us in one fashion because it meant that the War would stay a secret, but combined with the events of Operation *WORLDWALK*, it meant quite a mess in terms of the

psyches of the mundane world.

Given a disaster of this scale, one would expect that the Jihad would take a large amount of downtime in order to rebuild, right? Nothing is ever that simple in the Jihad.

OPERATION PACIFICA

In mid-October, roughly a month after the X'hirjq invasion, a young lieutenant in TRES Corps who was helping get JihadNet back on its feet noticed an odd anomaly out in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Anomaly seemed the best word, because sometimes the structure would be there and sometimes it wouldn't, and this seemed awfully odd. So, he reported it to Admiral FoxGlov, who took an interest in the anomaly.

After closer investigation, it was confirmed that there was an island out in the middle of the Pacific Ocean that was not connected to the Earth in any significant fashion. Not only that, but it was full of sponge minions and Lyrans — and in another shock, life signs that matched up with a Jihaddi who was missing in action in Phoenix.

But before Admiral FoxGlov could report this to his higher ups — Admiral Marburger and Grand Admiral Owsen — Owsen went missing in a fight with the Hellwyrms that Marburger witnessed. Before Owsen was taken, he handed over the Slayer and his pistols to Marburger, which meant that the one weapon that might just be able to kill the Wyrms stayed in Jihad hands. Shaken by this, Admiral Marburger assumed the Grand Admiral's chair in TRES Corps — only the second Grand Admiral in that JAO ever — and as his first action determined that TRES would send an expeditionary force to the island.

However, since TRES didn't have a navy, he had to call in a favor. Luckily for the Jihad, the Doberman Empire

maintained a small navy, and the Pacific branch of the DE Navy, based in San Francisco, had seen very little damage from the X'hirjq invasion. Nobody was really quite able to explain how San Francisco had been rendered exempt from X'hirjq attacks, but explaining it took a back seat to just being thankful that there was a naval fleet to transport them in the first place.

So the Jihad descended upon Doberman Naval Base San Francisco for the long trip out to Pacifica, which is what the island had been dubbed. A large portion of Jihad higher-ups felt some obligation to make this trip, and it was probably the closest thing we have had to an all-star cast heading out to battle the Hellwyrms. This is probably the dumbest mistake the Jihad has ever made, and the Jihad has made quite a few mistakes over the years.

Of course, the war started out well. While there was some resistance, the trip out was relatively quiet, and the spongies in the city provided no challenge to Jihad troops. To make things more interesting, the Hellwyrms were culled from the battlefield early by an angry young TRES Corps officer, Lt. Geier. It was the first time the Jihad found itself with the upper hand early in a battle. Of course, the Jihad would quickly learn that early successes made the fall all that much harder.

You see, we found out too late that Pacifica was a trap set up by the Lyrans to lure Jihaddi to a place where they could be captured and destroyed — using MIA Jihaddi from the X'hirjq invasion as the bait in the trap. And we gave them a very large chunk of the command staff of all the remaining JAOs. To give our commanding officers the benefit of the doubt, it should be pointed out that they weren't going to leave MIA officers to rot, as that's never been the way the Jihad has operated when given a choice.



Given the mission objective — that is, find out if there were any of the Jihad's missing in action on Pacifica and if so, to rescue them — we were relatively successful in achieving those goals. PACIFICA turned out to be much less of a disaster than PHOENIX had been, and we were able to find out more about the Lyrans, that shadowy race that seems to be associated with B'harne.

The reason we're aware that it was a trap is that the Maenads, bolstered by the addition of four more to their ranks — Grand Admiral Marburger, Fleet Commander Samhain (which is ironic considering the role Maenadship played in the story of Serp), Admiral J-Rock of TRES, and then-Captain Felton, also of TRES — fought their way to the Citadel, where they took on Charn'El, the High Mage of Lyra.

The people who were present are notoriously reluctant to talk about it, given the death of their comrade, Lord

Tilden Owsen, at that battle. However, despite Owsen's demise, we were able to recover the Barney-Slayer, and it is being held in a safe location for when it might be needed again. The Maenads also, somehow, managed to banish Charn'El from this plane. Unfortunately, without Charn'El's power to hold up the island of Pacifica, it began collapsing into the sea, and the Maenads were barely able to escape with the Slayer and some Lyran books and artifacts.

In the end, PACIFICA occupies an odd position in Jihad history. It wasn't a victory per se, but it wasn't a defeat either. In the end, I suppose stalemate would be the best word. We lost some of our best in the fighting, but managed to deal a blow to the Hellwyrms and the Lyrans, and for good or for worse, Pacifica is the start of what we can now safely call the 'modern Jihad'.

THE TRIUMVIRATE

After the events of PACIFICA, Praetor Foxglov was tired. He was tired of fighting pointless wars, tired of losing people, and the Praetor was probably reeling from the loss of Owsen on top of everything. He resigned from the Jihad which left the office of the Praetorship open again. A hastily convened conference of Jihad higher-ups decided that the office was too much for one person, and decided to dissolve the Praetorship and replace it with a Triumvirate. After a bit more deliberation, they decided the first Triumvir Praetors, the official title of those holding seats, would be Grand Admiral Marburger of TRES, Windigo, and Shardik the Feral (also known as Warrior Hephæstus of the DE).

The Triumvirate was a bold new direction for Jihad leadership, and it was one that was probably needed, because the Jihad had grown much more complex than it had been in the days when Owsen and Mongoose had chosen Serbeus for the job. There were more demands on their time, and although JAOs had winged back to being slightly more autonomous than they had been in Serp's time, people still looked to the Triumvirs for many things involving funding and general direction.

And the Triumvirate was needed pretty much right away when Blood Jihad Commander Theodore Brock (aka Arsenal the Lone Warrior) went, as best we can tell, absolutely and totally nuts. To understand this, you have to understand that it had been a very bad year for Arsenal. He had a reputation for being secretive at the best of times, and Admiral Davis had privately reported some concern about the mental state of his commanding officer after the events of WORLDWALK.

A total break with reality didn't occur until after the kamikaze run of Admiral Davis and Captain Stewart in

Leading from the Front

The Jihad is a meritocracy, and an effective one at that. Jihaddi with clear talent are noticed and rise through the ranks *very* quickly, assuming they survive. Authority and ability scale with one another, which quickly leads to a large body of (still quite capable) troops backing up a small cadre of *extremely* dangerous senior Jihaddi. The problem is, the other guy has something similar going on.

The Jihad's rank and file can deal readily enough with their counterparts in B'harne's forces, but when more powerful servitors, Lyrans, or B'harne himself appear on the scene, most of the grunts are completely outclassed (Lt. Geier's experience notwithstanding). This effectively turns the senior ranks of the Jihad into a type of ordnance: if high-level foes are going to be present at a target, at least some of the Jihad's finest *must* along to face them. Not doing so would be as foolhardy as keeping armor or aircraft at home when an opponent is known to have them.

Jihad strategists have argued that Charn'El became aware of this tendency by Pacifica, and transformed the operation into a *double* lure. While the missing Jihaddi were brought there to draw out the bulk of the Jihad's conventional forces, Charn'El and several of his senior mages may have been present to draw out all of its most powerful members in particular. The Jihad's strategists continue to discuss how this should affect the Brass' roles in future major operations.



Phoenix. In the same battle, the ship that Arsenal had been commanding had been disabled and left for dead by the X'hirjq. By the time Arsenal and the people on his ship were able to bring the systems up and running again, the war with the X'hirjq was over. The combined guilt of being unable to help his officers fight the X'hirjq combined with the mental state that Admiral Davis had been concerned about led to a full blown psychotic break, and while the rest of the Jihad was out cavorting around Pacifica and, later, working on cleaning up from the mess of the X'hirjq invasion, Arsenal started making plans to, in his eventual words, 'get help'.

There was many odd requisitions for some types of experimental gear, which were somehow gotten without comment. This probably happened because there was so much going on in the Jihad that nobody really had much time to pay attention to what Arsenal was doing, and probably, in all honesty, nobody much cared. The Blood Jihad had become a broken shell of its former glory, and the fact that it was hanging on at all was somewhat of a minor miracle. The only reason anybody had any thought of the Blood Jihad at all is that the *Andromeda* remained our only significant space presence after Pacifica and there were more important things to worry about.

So, on January 18, 1997, Arsenal went to the *Andromeda* to make what he called 'a surprise inspection visit'. Within the hour, TRES Ithaca reported that the *Andromeda's* engines had fired up and she had left Earth orbit. They also noted that they had tried to hail the starship and got no response. Given this strangeness, and fearing the ship had been taken by enemies, they launched interceptors. The *Andromeda* wouldn't let the interceptors get too close, and repelled any that did with

non-lethal force, and so the TRES craft dropped into escort to watch what the *Andromeda* did.

After a few hours of escort duty, the *Andromeda* suddenly and without warning opened a portal in front of itself and dove in. It was all the TRES pilots could do in their surprise to take the readings, and in debrief, seemed as if they were almost unsure of what they had seen.

At four o'clock Eastern time, Lt. Colonel Ariana Mahtash, ranking Blood Jihad officer, who had been left in charge of Base One while Arsenal made his inspection trip, received a delayed message from Arsenal. It was in this message that he stated that he had gone to find help, and that she was to serve as ranking officer of the Blood Jihad until such time as he could return. She contacted the Triumvirate and was told to wait for a few days to see if Arsenal returned, and if not, then she was by all rights the commanding officer. The days passed, and on January 23, 1997, Ariana Mahtash, who had been a Jihaddi for maybe eight months at that point, became the new commanding officer of the Blood Jihad.

VERTHANDI ASCENDANT

Things were in chaos. Mahtash knew that she needed some help. The base systems were in a mess, and she needed somebody with a head for detail. Luckily for her, she knew somebody who might be able to do the job, and her first act as the commanding officer of the Blood Jihad was to ask Grand Admiral Marburger to reassign her friend, Lieutenant Katze Brenner, to the Blood Jihad. Brenner, who had taken leave for two weeks to get es-

tablished in the semester, had already headed for Base One to see what she could get done unofficially, but the two friends were glad when Marburger acquiesced to this request.

The other piece was, when Mahtash and Brenner were trying to find out who was left in the Blood Jihad (the records at Base One were in a shambles after Phoenix), they were presented with the sudden surprise that Professor Malaclypse not only still had a Blood Jihad commission, but that he wanted to help them get the organization back off the ground.

For their parts, Mahtash and Brenner were glad to have him around as they both were relatively new to the Jihad and didn't always know what was useful and what wasn't.

While Brenner, Mahtash, and Malaclypse were putting in all this effort to upgrade and reform a JAO which sorely needed it, the Lone Warrior's close friend and former Blood Jihad R&D chief Uplink showed up, which surprised all parties because it had been assumed that he had gone with Arsenal. After some questioning, it was ascertained that he had been in South America investigating a slight rise in spongification rates in Rio de Janeiro, and the only way he could think of fixing the problem was to, in the words made famous in Vietnam, "destroy the village to save it." He was shouted down by both Mahtash and Malaclypse, but decided that the Blood Jihad was legitimately his command, and thus attempted to put his plan in action.

Luckily for the entire Jihad, Mahtash and Brenner had been working overtime to reform the Blood Jihad's requisition system, and the second Uplink's attempt to requisition the

RUMORS...

Some of the senior Jihaddi listed as KIA or MIA in Operation PHOENIX aren't really dead or missing. The other senior officers know exactly where they are...



material and troops he would need to pull off his Rio scheme crossed the system, the new Blood Jihad command knew about it. When confronted with the evidence, Uplink still talked about the rightness of his crusade and how this would strike a victory against the Wyrms. Enraged, Malaclypse invited Uplink to “settle this in private.” What exactly happened in that meeting is unknown except to the parties involved — Uplink has not been seen since and Malaclypse refuses to discuss it — but it is believed that the Professor dispensed proper justice for Uplink’s crime.

In the wake of the Uplink incident, it was decided unanimously by Brenner, Mahtash, and Malaclypse that the Blood Jihad was better off being left in the past, and decided to merge its functions with Professor Malaclypse’s independent R&D shop, the Evil Geniuses. The Triumvirate, never overly fond of the old Blood Jihad in the first place, agreed to this change and the Verthandic Rangers came in existence, with Brenner, Mahtash, and Malaclypse leading in a structure very similar to the Triumvirate. They became known as the High Council, and Brenner and Mahtash both took the title Director. (Malaclypse preferred — still prefers — the title ‘Professor’ and was known to berate recruits who call him Director.)

The Rangers, as they became known around the Jihad, quickly established that they were, along with TRES Zeta and WEDJEE, home to some of the best R&D minds in the Jihad, and the Explorations staff became known as one of the quickest response teams in the Jihad despite their overly casual attitude towards command structure. The other thing they added to the Jihad was an ability to strike across dimensions, given Professor Malaclypse’s research interests. All of these pieces would come in handy in a few months.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

The time between early February, when the Rangers threw off all the old trappings of their Blood Jihad days and July, when things heated up again, was relatively quiet for the Jihad. The only interesting thing that happened during that time span was that in May the first Triumvirate stepped down, saying they were proof of concept only, and it was time for more permanent members to serve. The first triumvirate suggested Professor Malaclypse of VR, Captain Rens Houben of TRES Zeta, and Commander Shaharazad of TRES to serve as the new Triumvirate, and the heads of all the JAOs agreed to that. The three respectively named Commander Aris Merquoni of VR, Director Brenner of VR, and Captain Jones of TRES to serve as their respective adjuncts.

This brings us to July, in which excitement happened. Granted, the summer of 1997 wasn’t as exciting as the entirety of 1996, which had brought us *WORLDWALK*, *Phoenix* and *Pacifica* all in one year, but it was the summer of 1997 which brought the events of *Marraketh* and *Homefront* to our attention.

The events of *Marraketh* are less important than that of *Homefront*, but chronologically it comes first, so let’s touch upon it briefly. When I was interviewing the principals in this event for their take on it, Director Brenner laughed a bit and said, “You have to ask about the most embarrassing event in my life, don’t you?”

And Director Brenner is right, since the events of *Marraketh* begin with her indulging her curiosity and being kidnapped back to her homeland — the aforementioned *Marraketh*. The problem is, at the time of this event, *Marraketh* had been under the influence of the Wyrms for nearly twenty years of our time. So VR scrambled a team together and went into *Marraketh* af-

ter their wayward director. Of course, the team also happened to be Professor Malaclypse’s first beta of his machine, and the machine acted predictably under the circumstances, scattering the Rangers across *Marraketh* and the next country over.

However, everybody managed to get themselves to Rhye, where Malaclypse had scouted ahead, and things ended up turning out for the best for all concerned. They rescued Director Brenner (indeed, in the reports, it seems as if Brenner came through the ordeal rather well, which is probably why she can laugh at the whole thing now) and liberated *Marraketh* from the Wyrms’ thrall. Not bad for a few days’ work.

OPERATION HOMEFRONT

Compared to *Marraketh*, *HOMEFRONT* turned out to be a much more difficult problem. For the first time in the Jihad’s history, we were confronted not with the Wyrms himself, or the Lyrans, or any real metaphysical threat at all. This time, we found ourselves dealing with one of B’harne’s elite Wyrms Minions — a group known as the Liasons (which are not to be confused with our Liasons). This particular Liason was named Rhyn, and the guy was a technical genius. Yes, there are geniuses working for the other side, as surprising as it might seem to you.

In fact, one of the ironies of *HOMEFRONT* is that for a brief time the Jihad and the Lyrans were on the same side — at least in the goal of shutting down Rhyn’s operation. The Lyrans were even less amused at the idea of some ingenious human coming up with a way to pacify the whole planet without using any magic whatsoever than the Jihad was at the idea of the whole planet being spongified. Thus, both wanted to do whatever they could to stop Rhyn’s plan.

Of course, the question is, what



was Rhyn's plan? It was really rather ingenious despite being overly complicated — technological solutions to create what is basically a psychological effect tend to be these days. He planned to spongify the world with technology. He stuck these devices that were like crystal radios all over the world, and what these devices would do is pick up a signal broadcast from their main base in Kansas and relay it to the next station. They would also amplify the signal over the local area, so that everybody within range would become spongified, thus achieving the goals of his Lord, and letting him be in a position to rule the world.

The Jihad made it a priority to take out as many of these array devices as possible when they discovered that the Lyrans were doing the same thing, and they discovered they were up against a time constraint. That and there were simply too many array devices to stop. To kill this thing, they had to descend upon Rhyn's base in Kansas and destroy the generator.

The leaders of this expedition were then-Commander William Keith (now Admiral) of TRES and Warrior Persephone (now Centurion Selene) of the Doberman Empire. These two were the first to scout out the problem, both did some individual work on taking out elements, and then both of them lead a team of mostly young and inexperienced Jihaddi into Rhyn's base and managed to take out both the generator and Rhyn.

While it didn't have the sheer total-war elements of PHOENIX, Operation HOMEFRONT goes down as one of the more ingenious plans the Wyrms or those allied with him have ever pulled off, and it has made us more interested in the Liaisons and what exactly they do. This is one of the more interesting things going on in Jihad intelligence at the moment, and it's something that I

strongly urge you to pursue if you find that you have any interest in that sort of thing.

THE STRANGE CASE OF THE MISSING MAENAD

There was a month of relative quiet after the events of HOMEFRONT before the Jihad was confronted with yet another crisis. This was a smaller crisis than any of the operations, but any time a head of a JAO goes missing, it is a small crisis for that JAO. TRES Corps, by this time, had become the biggest JAO in the Jihad, taking the mantle from a struggling Doberman Empire still attempting to recover from its blow in PHOENIX and PACIFICA. And when the biggest JAO in the Jihad somehow comes up with a missing leader, the entire Jihad is somewhat affected.

We don't exactly know what happened, which seems to be a common tale to all these disappearances. All we know is that Grand Admiral Marburger had gone off to vacation in San Francisco, one of his favorite spots. When TRES needed to reach him on some matter of relative importance, and couldn't hail him on a linker, they sent one of the local TRES officers into San Francisco after him.

The TRES officer reported back that Grand Admiral Marburger was nowhere to be found, but that he'd left a trail of sponge minions on the way to wherever he went. It could have very easily been another mess of exposure except that the officer was very quick on her feet in coming up with a cover story on the spur of the moment, and she had some help in the form of a Jihad Liaison who worked in the San Francisco Coroner's office. The disappearance is still filed as an unsolved mystery with the San Francisco Police Department, and we duly hope it stays that way.

Soon after these events, Captain

Shaharazad would resign from her Triumvirate position and Captain Jones declined to replace her and stepped down from his own adjunct seat. In another near-unanimous decision (with one abstention, seeing as how she was the subject of the vote), the respective JAO heads named Grand Admiral Davies to the Triumvirate, and Davies named Commander Nolan of TRES her adjunct.

MYSTICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Now, I've talked a lot about Jihad technology in this speech and not as much about magic, despite the Jihad being involved in fighting something that is pretty much a mystical war. While many Jihaddi over the ages have been mages, and some of them have been pretty adept at the magical arts, the study of magic has lagged behind. With the chief allies of the Wyrms being the Lyrans, a race of magic-users, you would have thought this lack of proper study would have become apparent to Jihad leaders early in the battle.

Sometimes it takes fresh eyes to point out the obvious, though, and that is exactly the case that led to the forming of the Jihad Praxeum Veneficus (or the Prax, as it is often referred to by its members.) It took a new Jihaddi in TRES Corps, one Lieutenant Joe Schneider, to make the point that what the Jihad really needed was a place for the mages of the Jihad to learn and gather information.

Lieutenant Schneider took his idea to Grand Admiral Davies, and Davies was delighted at the thought, and brought it over to the Triumvirate. Davies, Houben, and Malaclypse all agreed that a 'college of magic' such as Lieutenant Schneider was proposing was a good idea, and a vote was taken for Schneider's proposal. It passed easily, and the JPV became the newest organization in the Jihad, with Schneider



Please Leave A Note Next Time, Sir

The senior staff put the best possible face on losses, but the disappearance of Arsenal and Marburger frankly frightens them. Marburger satisfied his colleagues' concerns that he at least stayed on the right side during his absence, but he has yet to say what he was actually doing during those two years. TRES Corps Delta, Minerva and DobIntel are keeping tabs on the rear admiral for the time being - completely off the record, of course.

As for the matter of Arsenal, things *feel* more settled, yet remain more ambiguous, despite the bureaucratic apocalypse of a six-week, inter-JAO inquiry chaired by Admiral Davies. In Malaclypse's final report to the Davies Commission, it was concluded that the *Andromeda* used a makeshift portal generator similar to VRDET's Gateway to seek out an alternate timeline undamaged by WORLDWALK. Since such a timeline no longer exists, Arsenal's mission is almost certainly a one-way one, assuming the ship even survived the jump in the first place.

On the other hand, the Commission could be wrong. Arsenal - and his materiel - could be anywhere, from oblivion to the laps of the Jihad's enemies. Officially, he is considered MIA, presumed dead. Unofficially, his ambiguous status plagues the Brass like a bad tooth.

bearing the title of Archchancellor and Admiral Keith of TRES Corps and Operative Lorin of VR as the two second in commands.

While the JPV has existed for about a year, they have already made a huge contribution to the magic knowledge of the Jihad in much the same way that the research and development folks made a huge contribution before WORLDWALK. While we hope there will be no 'Age of Amuck Mages' to go with the 'Age of Amuck Scientists', the mages of the Jihad have benefited hugely by being able to work with each other, and the Jihad has benefited from having its top magical minds working together, just as they had by letting its top technological minds loose. And JPV scored quite the coup when the Triumvirate decided that the Barney Slayer should be with the mages so that the mages could attempt to figure out how exactly it works.

In January of 1999, just after the new headquarters was finished, the Triumvirate called Archchancellor Sch-

neider and told him to get an honour guard together from JPV to escort a package from the airport. The honour guard did the job it had been called there to do, and the package turned out to be the Slayer, moved under secrecy to the new JPV base. The Slayer has been there since, in a heavily guarded room.

CHANGES UPON CHANGES

During the summer that JPV was building their campus and expanding the horizons of thaumaturgy in the Jihad, Grand Admiral Davies grew tired of commanding the Jihad's largest JAO, and wanted to have the freedom to do other things. She talked with Admiral Felton, her second in command, and the two agreed to swap spaces. Felton became Grand Admiral Felton, only the fourth in Corps history.

In the fall of 1998, Professor Malaclypse also decided that it was time that he spent more time on his research, and he resigned all his Jihad commissions.

However, it turns out that the best place in the world for him to work on his research interests is his old JAO, so you can often still find him around VR HQ. For the first time since the Triumvirate had been formed, the adjunct agreed to take the vacated seat, and Commander Merquoni joined the Triumvirate. She named Grand Admiral Felton as her adjunct. At the same time, Davies named Archchancellor Schneider as her adjunct, as Nolan had resigned his adjunct position.

That brings us to the here and now. What history I will be talking about next year is the history that will be made by each and every one of you. Remember that relatively new folks to the Jihad, such as Grand Admiral Felton, Director Mahtash, Rear Admiral Brenner, Admiral Keith and Archchancellor Schneider have made huge contributions to the Cause, and while those five might seem rather imposing to all of you now, I once remember all five of them — all of them TRES Corps recruits — sitting where you are now, listening to me tell them about the past of an organization of which they would contribute the future. And their future became the past I now tell all of you about.

The future is yours. Make the Jihad proud.

Thank you.

THE TRUE HISTORY

The history of the Jihad as presented by Dr. Carmichael is very thorough, but it doesn't cover the entire story. This section covers in brief the bits of history that haven't been uncovered just yet.

ATLANTIS

The whole story began 27,000 years ago on the island city-state of Atlantis.



The Atlanteans were the first humans to figure out how to use advanced technology to manipulate magical energy, and using their synthesis they prospered.

At the high point of Atlantis' power and influence, something went drastically wrong. Surviving traditions suggest that somebody accidentally summoned an extradimensional entity of greater power than Atlantean mages could contain, and the ensuing conflict destroyed the city. What is known is that whatever happened, Atlantis was swallowed up by a reality quake that erased almost all traces of the city and the island from the earth.

When Atlantis vanished, the combined release of mystical and not-so-mystical energies triggered a sudden ice age. (If you've ever seen *The Day After Tomorrow*, you have our sympathies, but that's close enough to what happened.) The few surviving Atlanteans moved into central Asia and formed the core of what would become the Illuminati.

APOTHEOSIS OF THE HIGH MAGE

The next important event in the saga happened several thousand years later, in the Eta Carinae star system. While Earth's population was in the process of rediscovering the whole "agriculture" thing, the alien race known as the Lyrans were engaged in their last big war of unification. That war was led by Charn'El, the most powerful sorcerer in the history of his species. When the dust settled, Charn'El had assumed the position of ruler and living god of his world.

A few thousand years after that, Charn'El had a rather disturbing vision



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of an alien race destroying his people. Seeking to do unto them before they could do unto him, Charn'El sent his people out into the galaxy to find and conquer the race from his vision: humanity.

The Lyrans first arrived on Earth in the middle of the Selucid dynasty in Persia. Their initial probing attacks were defeated by a combination of Persian magi and Illuminati mystics. Sensing that there was indeed a chance that humanity could be an existential threat, the Lyrans continued to make probing attacks down through the centuries. Most of these attacks were repelled, the few which succeeded adding to human lore about evil giants, magicians and monsters.

THE WHITE DEATH

Nobody's entirely sure when or where the Maenads of the Holy Albino

originated; their own myths and legends suggest that they're a form of recurring nature-spirit, protectors of the ecosystem. Whatever the truth, it is known that the Maenads have existed in their current form since the fall of Troy. There have never been many of them, and it was only until they joined the Jihad that there was ever more than two Maenads in the same place at the same time.

The Maenads first became involved with the Lyrans in the late 18th century, when one of their own was sucked into an extended Lyran plot to convert a tribe of Native Americans into servitor creatures. It was this encounter (which ended with the very messy death of all the Lyrans involved, including a high-ranking 7th Circle) that enshrined the concept of the Cubs of White Death in

the minds of Lyrans everywhere. The High Mage, during an agonizing reappraisal of the whole scene, decided that since humanity gave birth to the White Death, this was the core of the threat, and the Maenads were to be priority targets.

Easier said than done; the Maenads and Lyrans only crossed paths rarely, and as a result conflicts between the two, while violent, were rare.

THE BABYLON ROAD

For most of the first phase of the Lyran assault on Earth, the key strategic goal for the Lyrans was a way to create easier access from Lyra to Earth. While the Lyrans had starships, they didn't have many to spare, and Lyra was still a good 9,000 light years away. Previous attempts at creating a stable portal between the two worlds were stopped, usually by either the Illuminati or the



Maenads, before the portals could be finished or stabilized.

In 1947, a 7th Circle Lyran posing as a human archmagus successfully managed to keep his activities under the Illuminati/Maenad radar long enough to succeed. The Lyran convinced a small cabal of American magicians to go out into the California desert and conduct a series of rituals intended to “change the world.”

They did, although the magicians’ circle that conducted the ritual wasn’t quite expecting what happened. The spell - named “the Babylon working” by the magicians - opened up a portal that led straight from Death Valley to the capitol city of Lyra. With their new anchor point firmly in place, the Lyrans began to operate more freely on Earth. The Babylon Road wasn’t meant to transport armies, but the unrestricted flow of materiel and Lyran servants allowed agents in place to work without worrying about shortages.

ESCALATION

The opening of the Babylon Road caused a serious stir among the Maenads when they finally discovered it in the 1950s. The fact that the Lyrans had managed to manipulate humanity into casting the spell concerned the White Death, as did the disturbing realization that the Maenads were unable to successfully close the portal.

This new situation caused the Maenads to come to a new strategy. In the past, the Maenads and the Lyrans had only crossed paths on an occasional basis; with the coming of the Road, the Maenads made the collective decision to seek out and destroy any and all Lyran operations they came across.

For the next three decades, the Maenads waged total genocidal war on the Lyrans. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Lyran presence on Earth dwindled rapidly. For a brief period

during the Summer of Love, the Lyrans had been completely driven from the planet. However, the continued inability of the Maenads to close the portal to Lyra meant that no matter how many Lyrans they killed, the High Mage would simply send more through to replace them.

On the other end of the Road, Charn’El watched the escalation in the Maenad conflict and decided to kick his own operations up a notch in response. In 1975, the High Mage of Lyra began a summoning ritual, in order to call up a powerful entity capable of destroying the Maenads once and for all.

SUMMONING

Charn’El’s ritual worked far beyond his expectations. The first entity he summoned tried to resist, and when the High Mage made his displeasure known, the creature arrived in several fragments. The summons, still active despite - or perhaps because of - the condition of the first target, whipped out blindly and found a powerful demon sleeping in the void.

This creature, woken by the force of the spell and the first demon’s death throes, let the summoning ritual take it up and deliver it to Charn’El. The High Mage, sensing the power of the second demon, agreed to a deal: If the creature would help him destroy his enemies and subjugate humanity, it would get what was left of the species when they were finished. The creature agreed to the terms, and the new alliance was born, between the High Mage Charn’El and the demon lord B’harne.

It took a few more years, but once the alliance was ready to fight, they dove in with a vengeance. Using B’harne’s unnatural powers of influence, humans were hypnotized into becoming followers. This provided a base of operations that didn’t require expensive (and risky) Lyran sorcerers or servitors to run. The

new legion of minions were used to infiltrate the world of television, using the arcane human technology to spread B’harne’s influence far and wide.

SHOWTIME

The TV show *Barney & Friends* debuted on American public television in 1987, followed shortly by a marketing blitz that spread the show from humble beginnings in Texas to nationwide success in only a few short months. The show presented a dumbed-down version of basic children’s educational fare, along with an equally dumbed-down message of universal peace and love. Children lapped up the bright colors and simple, repetitive music while adults were simultaneously attracted and repulsed by the show.

To the Maenads, the show blazed like a neon beacon of pure evil. It didn’t take them long to discover that the dopey mascot “star” of *Barney & Friends* was in fact a demonic creature. Sensing that their enemies were behind the creature, the Maenads added B’harne to the target list. Attacks on B’harne were infrequent, as the creature very rarely opened himself up for attack by lone agents like the Maenads. The Lyrans took advantage of B’harne’s protection to secure their own forces away from Maenad attack, further confounding the White Death.

PREMONITIONS

At this point, greater powers began to intervene in the situation. From late 1988 through 1990, seven people from across the Western world began to receive precognitive dreams, showing them in detail the nature of the creature B’harne and his plans for the human race. These dreams increased in intensity and in detail, until the seven people “called” finally started meeting one another.



As they met, more and more people began to congregate around them. Many of these new people had paranormal powers, others had unorthodox scientific and engineering talents. Led by the Seven, these people began organizing into a force that could fight B'harne on an even footing. One of the Seven brought with him a magical sword that he claimed had the power to destroy B'harne. With this weapon at their head, the loose group of humans and paranormals set up shop and prepared to attack.

In 1990, the leader of the original seven dreamers proclaimed the three axioms that every member of their group would hold true, and then gave the group its name. After some thought and debate, the group became the Jihad to Destroy Barney the Dinosaur.

CURRENT EVENTS

The Carmichael lecture provides plenty of history, but it's not very useful in terms of figuring out what's happening now. So for your use, here's what's going on as of the start of the *Jihad RPG* baseline campaign in May, 1999.

THE JIHAD

Despite Dr. Carmichael's fairly optimistic picture of the Jihad, things don't look all that good for the group. The breaking of the Barney-Slayer in 1997 during Operation PACIFICA has left the group at an effective stalemate; without the one weapon capable of ending the war in their favor once and for all, the Jihad is forced to fight a series of holding actions. These holding actions, while small in scale, continue to erode the Jihad's ready supply of forces and equipment. From a peak membership of 60,000 just before the X'hirjq invasion, the Jihad has lost two-thirds of that force to combat or simple ennui in the last three years.

The lack of decisive action is slowly eroding morale in the lower ranks, particularly in the "grunt" groups like MAUL and the Dobermans. These older military operations lost most of their manpower, materiel and prestige during the one-two-three knockout punch of WORLDWALK, the X'hrijq invasion and the Pacifica mission. As a result, intra-Jihad disputes between MAUL and TRES, or the Dobermans and VRDET, are becoming more and more common as the stalemate wears on.

At the same time, shake ups at command level are keeping the more stable organizations from acting at full capacity. The recent return of former TRES Grand Admiral Jon Marburger to duty, and his equally swift demotion for dereliction of duty, has caused difficulties within the Admiralty as Marburger attempts to reestablish his old power base. The de facto resignation of Professor Malaclypse from VRDET has also caused problems; his new emeritus status, and his continued presence, has generated friction between the Professor and Quentin Wyatt, his successor.

With the combination of unrest in the ranks and the lack of a decisive method of winning the war, the Jihad is stuck fighting a slow war of attrition, hoping that they can regrow the Barney-Slayer before they're worn down into nothing.

THE PURPLE FORCES

If the Jihad's in bad shape, then the enemy is in worse. The Pacifica debacle damaged the Jihad's secret weapon, but at the cost of losing the High Mage of Lyra himself. With Charn'El out of the picture, the Purple Forces' strategic ability is reduced to pretty much zero. Barney is, frankly, utterly useless when it comes to long-term plans, and Charn'El's protégés are all too busy maintaining Lyra and making sure no-

body finds out the High Mage is missing to devote much thought to running the war.

On Earth, the majority of the Purple Forces operational planning is done by mid-ranking Lyrans and the Liaisons. Unfortunately, neither group is terribly interested in working together as a coherent unit. An aborted Lyran attempt to steal the Barney-Slayer from the JPV set off a round of purges and mistrust in both the Lyran and Liaison camps. Complicating matters, the Liaisons aren't fully united themselves; while the HOMEFRONT situation eliminated the most traitorous of the Liaisons, the majority are still more interested in carving out their own minor empires than trying to present a unified front to the enemy.

Worst of all, the primary recruitment tool of the Purple Forces is finally starting to fail. Ratings for the Barney & Friends show have declined over the last year, as newer and shinier children's programming becomes more popular. While the show hasn't been cancelled as such, its popularity is dropping to the point where it will be of only minimal use in collecting new sponge-minions and merchandising revenues.

The result of this mess is that the Purple Forces are relying solely on their numerical superiority when engaging Jihaddi targets. Spongin are spent like water on even the most basic of combat operations, and the damage shows. Barney is more and more prone towards flying into berserker rages whenever the subject of the Jihad is brought up, and Charn'El is still trapped in his prison.