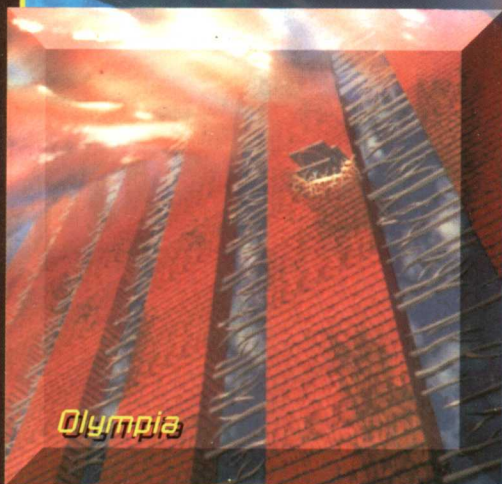
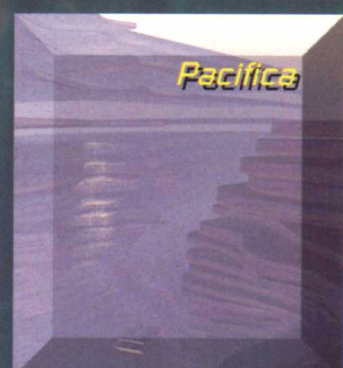
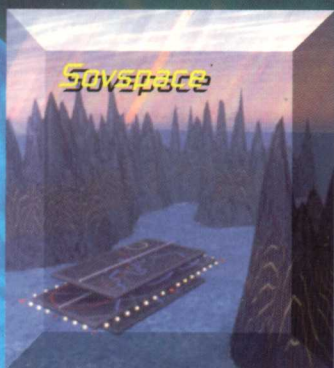
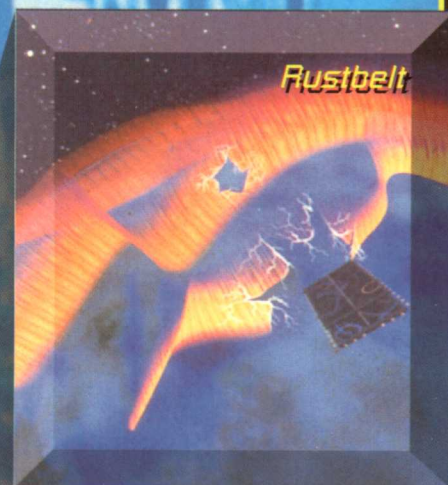
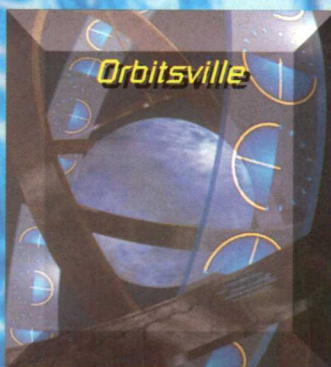
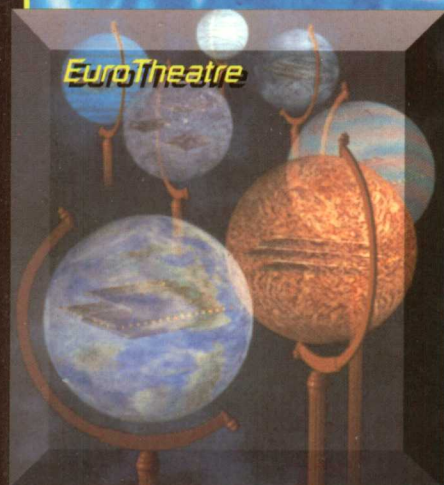


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GUIDE TO THE NET
THE CYBERPUNK SOURCEBOOK FOR THE GLOBAL COMPUTER NET

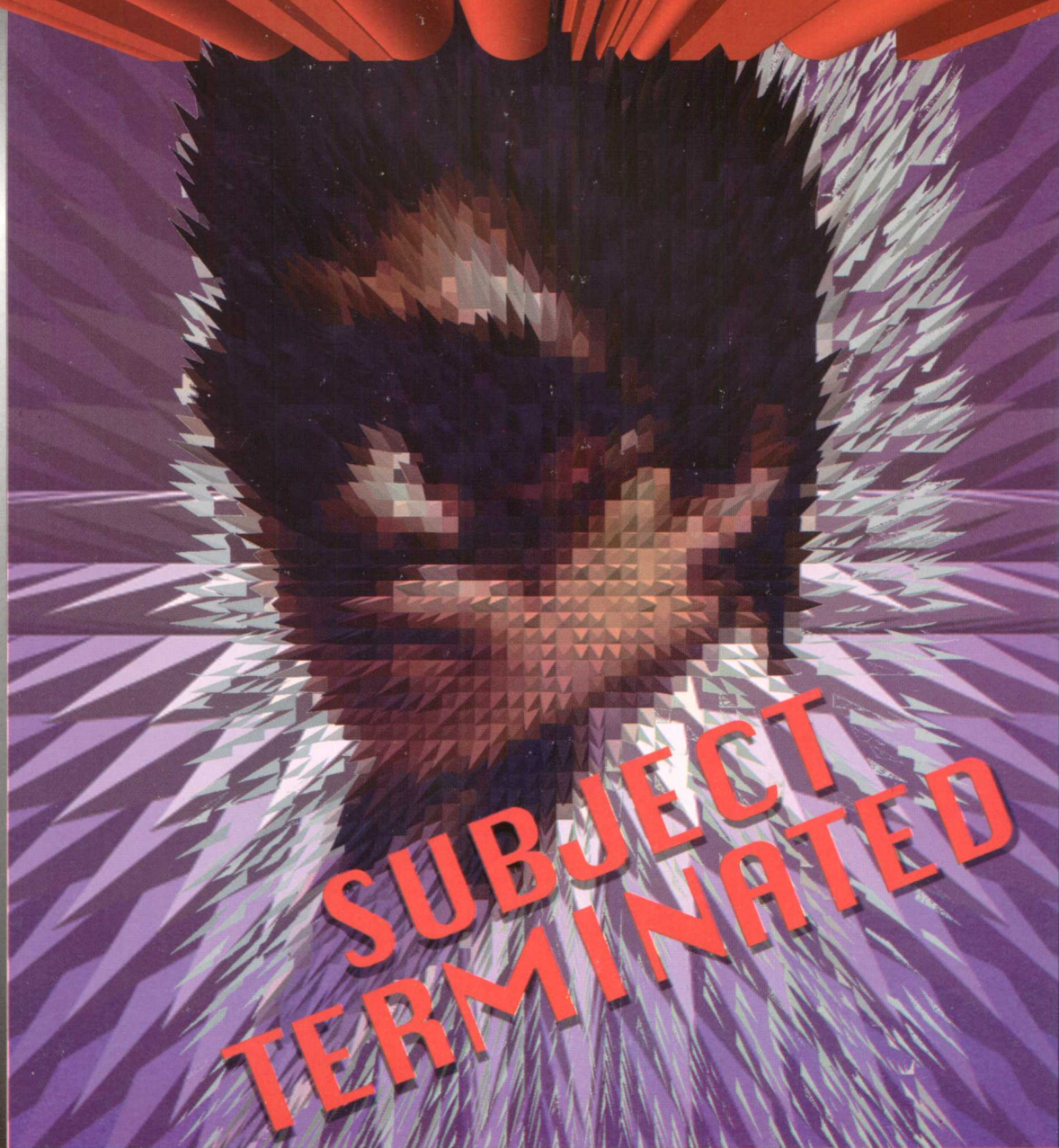


Cyberpunk

R. TALSORIAN
GAMES, INC.

R. TALSORIAN GAMES PRESENTS:
RACHE BARTMOS'

GUIDE TO THE NET



DATATERM



A SOURCEBOOK FOR

Cyberpunk®

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Rache Bartmoss' Guide to the Net. What follows is Rache's rather opinionated overview of the many regions of the global computer network that exists parallel to the "real" world of 2020. Along with Rache's ramblings, we've inserted Hypertext comments (look for the black-bordered phrases in the main text and then reference them to the black sidebar on the each page), which have game-related information and further insights into the main text material. These are designed to help the players and GMs integrate Rache's observations into their own games. In addition, the last chapter is a Rules Appendix which adds new netrunning options, gives some cool new software, displays some cutting-edge tech, and has new essays on netrunning in the big Two-Oh-Two-Oh.

What this book is NOT is a rewriting of our Netrunning rules. Rache Bartmoss likes to paint himself as being able to perform feats that defy what we know of the Net. Sometimes he's even telling the

truth. But, no matter how outrageous his practices may seem, unless otherwise noted in the hypertext or the Rules Appendix, all the rules from *Cyberpunk 2020* still apply. We have tried to expand upon them and put new spins on various topics, but you shouldn't let your campaign be turned upside down by anything here. Our all-encompassing rule is: it's your game; if you don't want to use or allow something that's in this book, don't. Period. End of advice.

We know you're going to find Rache's unique perspective entertaining, but do keep in mind that Rache is, amongst other things, a borderline sociopath, a certified (if brilliant) paranoid, and a generally rude and vicious individual. His opinions of people and places around the world are almost uniformly negative, and he isn't afraid to scream them at anyone who'll listen. So if any of you are offended by some of Rache's tirades, keep this in mind: Rache is now a frozen piece of near-dead meat sitting alone in an isolated life-support chamber buried in a cellar somewhere.

How many outlets can he have?

Enjoy,
David Ackerman

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The author would like to give deepest thanks to his family (by no means restricted to his blood relations), for it is they who preserved his sanity while he worked on developing his insanity.

The editor gives a special thanks to Renee at Silicon Graphics Computer Systems: your help made all the difference. And to Robin: thank you. Only love could be that patient.

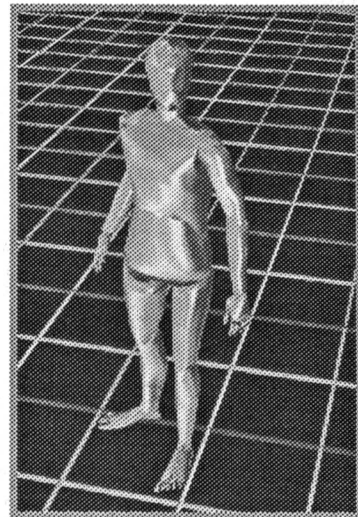
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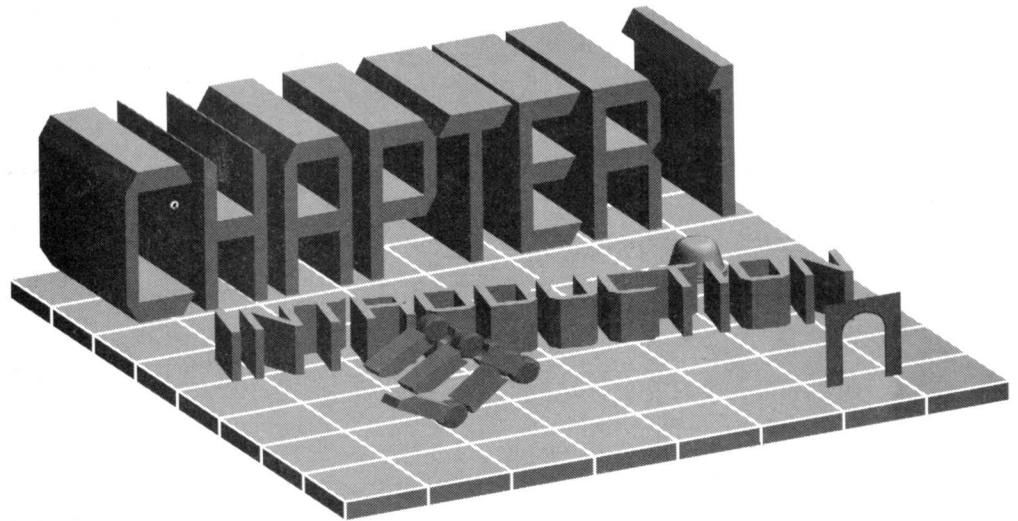
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RACHE BARTMOSS

The premier runner of our age (Go ahead, ask him). His exploits and commentary on life in the Net have been instrumental in the formation of 2020 culture. Of course, that isn't really much of a compliment. See Page 152 for complete stats.

SPIDER MURPHY

Spider is one of the top 'runners in the country, perhaps the world. A close associate of Bartmoss, she has somewhat reluctantly picked up the torch for Freedom of Information, which Bartmoss left behind. See Page 152 for complete stats.



"For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;
Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,
Pilots of purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales..."

— Alfred, Lord Tennyson

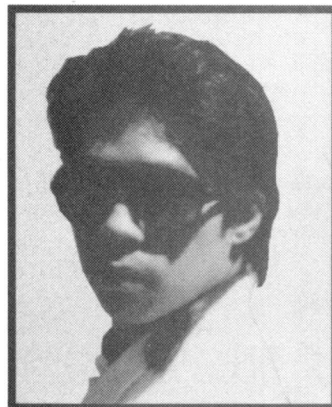
Many of you 'runners out there are probably wondering what this is. You found it on an illicit bulletin board or lying around in Wilderspace; a large self-extracting file with the fashionably-archaic name BARTMOSS.NET. "Rache Bartmoss?" you asked. "Haven't heard from him for months."

If you were smart, you downloaded it to a separate drive and disconnected it from your system before decompressing it. I've done my best to make this thing virus-proof, encasing the code in a fractal cryptography shell, but if Arasaka or Netwatch get hold of a copy, they'll find a way to infect the damn thing.

So here you are. This is Rache Bartmoss' Guide to the Net (edited by **Spider Murphy**—that's me). This contains as much of Rache's wisdom and experience as possible, as well as a few of my own insights and some alternative viewpoints. In this presentation I have attempted to give you as much information as possible, for knowledge is power, and the megacorps and drug lords aren't just going to fall down under their own weight.

Oh, by the way, I dug up all the quotes. Rache is brilliant, but he's not at all literate.

RACHE
BARTMOSS



"For he counteracts the powers of darkness by his electrical skin and glaring eyes..."

— Christopher Smart

"He is the Napoleon of crime."

— Sherlock Holmes

As I said once before, there's over a dozen netrunners out there that the Netwatch cops would love to brain-burn, and Rache Bartmoss was at least two of them.

Did I say was? I'm afraid so, 'runners. Rache Bartmoss got tagged. I don't know who or how. He won't talk about the incident. But Rache, damn him, is a survivor, and now he's paying the price.

But I digress. Before I tell you of his death, I should tell you of his life.

Rache Bartmoss is perhaps the only 'runner I ever met who used his real name (that's right, folks, Spider Murphy is a *nom d'électrique*). I know this, because my father was the one who wiped his SIN off the system. He told his bottle about it that

night while he sat in a drunken stupor; I chanced to overhear. As it happened, I had heard of Rache Bartmoss on the street, so when Dear Old Dad the Corporate Puppet killed his **SIN**, I tracked him down to warn him.

When I finally found Bartmoss, I was surprised. He was seventeen, and but for the acne, he looked more like twenty-five. He'd been running the Net for thirteen years (!), and had a full set of high-quality 'trodes and a library of software the likes of which I'd never seen. I was thirteen at the time, running the Net for four years, but in the first ten minutes I knew that Rache's skills were of a different order of magnitude. I knew then that he had a long career ahead of him, because even when he lost his reflexes, his experience and his uncanny sixth sense would keep him on the edge.

I think Rache first used his real name because, when he was four or five, he didn't know any better. By the time he knew it was a stupid move, he was good enough that it didn't matter. He stuck with it as a conceit, a way to flaunt his skill at the megacorps and Netwatch creeps. He gave them his name, for goodness' sake, and they still couldn't catch him.

Rache also experimented with everything. For a while he even went legit, writing software. He worked with some of the best companies, always using his real name. As I understand it, the companies took him on under the proviso that he wouldn't run against their own systems. Knowing Rache, he promised, with full intent not to double-cross his employers or go snooping around their closets. And, knowing Rache, his promise lasted for about two weeks. I noticed that there were occasional serious breaches of security wherever he worked, starting about a month after he signed on. Another two months, and the corps would finally figure out he was raping their systems in the name of his peculiar brand of justice, and he'd have to disappear. He always knew when he'd been found out, and made good his escape in good time. I put him up more than once, but when I did I made sure I had my phone service cut off.

After the dust settled, he'd manage to clean his record after a few runs and hire on somewhere else.

Once he worked for a year at a smaller firm, **CCI Development**, which didn't have any skeletons in the closet. Things worked fine, and the company came out with some innovative new products, including the Demon series and a powerful new database system. Unfortunately, Bartmoss dropped a few surprises into the database code, including a full-blown 'political' movie. When word got back to the company, they fired him. Within a week, their entire computer system had fried its own brains, and the company went belly-up. Rache himself sold the source code to the demon programs to several software houses simultaneously and made enough money that he never had to work again. Of course, each publisher thought they were getting exclusive rights, so they all wanted his scalp, too. They just didn't understand that Rache doesn't believe in exclusive rights.

Rache Bartmoss is the wild card of the Net. To my knowledge, he never took any drugs, but with all the wiring inside his skull, I'm sure it messed with his mind somewhat. He tried every single interface that I ever heard of. It's a wonder he didn't go psycho on us. My guess is that he had a special sense for the Net, an instinctive understanding, and that the wires in his head therefore seemed natural to him, hooking him up to the Net as they did.

Rache Bartmoss is, without a doubt, the best netrunner I have ever encountered. He could almost be called a wizard. He achieved this partly through a very Net-oriented perspective of life and reality. To him, the Net was the real world. Rache has never believed in borders, discrimination, travel restrictions, secrets, conventions, rules, or anything inhibiting free and total communication. Intrinsically, that's exactly what the Net is like. The Net itself allows anything, and it's only the megacorps and Netwatch that make the Net a dangerous place, and for these sins Rache Bartmoss became the self-sworn avenger of the Net. I tried to explain once that Netwatch was there specifically to stop people like him, but he truly couldn't understand why anyone would think that someone like him should be stopped.

Sadly, folks, he did get stopped. Rache Bartmoss, somehow, had his heart stopped. Maybe he got careless, although Rache was nothing if not paranoid. Personally, I think it was sheer bad luck, coincidence of cosmic proportions. It's possible it was even something as simple as **heart failure**.

But, since Rache ran the Net for days at a time (and all at light speed), he still manages to survive. He's out there now, still hooked in to the Net. His **life-support machines**, sensing that his heart had stopped, cooled him down to prevent decay. Super-cooled him, in fact. Rache took a lot of precautions with his meat body to ensure its safety. He also had a lot of money to take precautions with.

Apparently Rache forgot to tell anyone to get his body should he be killed, because he's been in cold storage for the last year. In his cryogenic condition, his brain is able to continue to operate

INTRODUCTION

HYPERTEXT

SIN

SINs are State Identification Numbers which are given to every voting citizen in the U.S. This ID is carried on a small plastic card which contains a write-once holographic memory. Encoded here is a person's criminal and tax history as well as their DNA pattern, all of which is duplicated in state government mainframes. If your SIN is deleted, you can't legally get a job, you can't vote, and your rights are pretty much hash. See *Home of the Brave*, pg.23 for more details.

CCI DEVELOPMENT

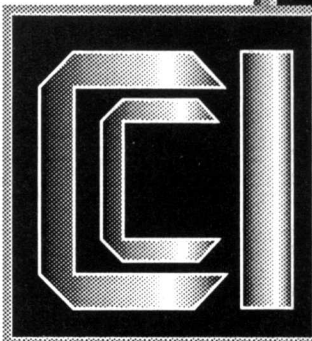
As intelligent as the owners of CCI may have been, they forgot one cardinal corporate rule: Never fire someone who knows your system and has the talent to use that knowledge. Kill them instead.

HEART FAILURE

Any number of Black ice programs could have done this to Rache, although it was probably a combination of several (Rache could have handled just one or two, no sweat). Then again, it may have simply been adrenal overload. Such is life on the Edge...

LIFE SUPPORT MACHINES

The *Celestial Parachute System* is merely an extension of the Body-weight Life Support system (*Chromebook*, pg. 6) combined with a cryogenic system based on Trauma Team equipment. Unlike the TT systems, however, the Celestial is designed to maintain the survivor in biostasis indefinitely (In theory...it has an internal power source good for about ten years). About the size of a huge coffin on a massive pedestal, the Celestial activates when the user, who rests inside, fails any Mortal level or greater Save during a Netrun. It's then supposed to call for pickup from the local hospital. In his paranoia, Rache has deactivated the call function and still doesn't seem to want to be found. 200,000eb.



INTRODUCTION

HYPERTEXT

SLOW TRANSMIT SPEED

Rache's hyper-cooled nervous system can only handle about one action per 30 seconds of time, which pretty much puts him out of the netrunning biz. Still, he can transmit data at about 2400 baud, which is positively crawling by 2020 standards. If Rache weren't frozen, he'd be gnawing at the inside of his container from boredom by now. His system will be eventually upgraded so he can run the Net again. (see *Cybergeneration*, pg. 169)

THE FRIDGE IS A GOOD PLACE TO HIDE

Necessity is the mother of invention, all right. In fact, Secsystems Inc. makes a whole line of "fortress furniture" for those who understand that discretion is often the more practical part of valor. Their *Frigidair Bolthole* has an SP of 30 and is equipped with space for one average-sized person and some emergency rations (in case he has to stay there a while). It even has a mock freon motor that hums along behind the unit, and the light really doesn't go off when you close the door... 500eb.

at slow speeds, super-cooled hydrogen conductivity and other science too close to the Edge for my understanding. He's out there, somewhere, folks, a frost-covered chunk of frozen meat, his brain permanently hooked into the Net.

Over the last ten months, a constant slow stream of data has been trickling into a buffer on my system as Rache's sluggish brain dictates his life's memoirs before the power company shuts his system off and he fades into a stinking death wherever he is. I've even been able to talk with him, using a specially adapted modem with a **slow transmit speed**, but as he has been most concerned with completing this guide, I've kept my questions to a minimum.

Rache knows he's dead. Since his body is no longer working, his cyberdeck has ceased its sensory editing functions, and every so often Rache's manuscript is interrupted by a complaint about his situation. He knows he's dead, the premier 'runner of our age, and that simple fact, my friends, is why he wanted to release this guide...

He knows what it's like; and he's trying to save us from it.

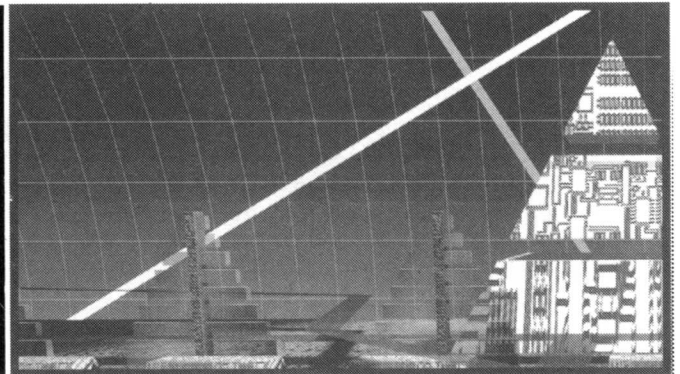
“It's very cold here, Murphy...”

— Rache Bartmoss

Here it is, 'runners. *Rache Bartmoss' Guide to the Net*. From here on out, it's his show. Take care of yourselves.

— Spider

THE NET: WHAT THE FRACK IS IT?



Who cares?

No wait, that's not what I meant to say. What I mean is, what does it really matter what the Net is, so long as you know how to use it?

Answer: It matters, friend. Know the Net or you will die, for ignorance is death, and death, my friend is not bliss. Death is very boring. Like being stuck in Cleveland without a cybermodem. Or being stuck in Cleveland *with* a cybermodem. And it's cold. Like the feeling in your stomach while you're hiding inside your fridge as Arasaka pokes around your apartment with submachine guns.

By the way, **the fridge is a good place to hide**. My fridge doesn't have any shelves, the door locks from the inside, the exterior is well-armored, and if you're smart you'll always stash a few MREs in there. I also once shut off the hot water line to my dishwasher and hid in there while it was running, but I'll never do that again.

But the Net is not like a dishwasher. No, it's more like a Ronco vegematic: if you understand it, everything's great. If not, you'll find yourself missing vital appendages.

The Net is an alternate plane of reality. See, the multiverse is comprised of several layers, or planes. There's the physical plane, which is boring as hell and full of cockroaches, at least where I live, but now they're all frozen like me. The physical plane should be turned inside out, so we could see how ugly most people really are.

There's the spiritual level, or at least so some people claim, but I've never seen it. On the other hand, I have been accused of not having a soul, especially by Jason Drow, shortly after I patched the home security camera in his bathroom to the reader boards at the shopping mall. I also released his credit card transactions to Citizens for an Ethical Tomorrow, but he doesn't know that I was the culprit. I must say, though, it was pretty interesting reading.

There's the emotional plane, which I never have figured out.

There's the divine level, which I've been to, but God won't let me talk about it so forget I mentioned it.

There's the financial plane, which is the basest level which can support human life. I only frequent that dreary place to remind myself how lofty the Net is. I find the squirming insects which

HYPERTEXT

IT COULD GO AT THE SPEED OF THOUGHT

Well, Rache's illiteracy is showing here. Thoughts operate at the speed of light, or perhaps a bit slower (allowing for the possible resistance of neurons) since they are effectively electrical impulses. So no matter how many other barriers Rache manages to break down, this one may have to stand before him... at least in this game.

WITHOUT I-G TRANSFORMATIONS OR THE INTERFACE PROGRAM

This is pure hype on Rache's part. Everyone needs an interface program of some kind, even if it's striped down to the bare essentials. As talented as he is, even Rache can't think in binary fast enough to compete with other netrunners using more naturally-reactive interfaces; the human brain just isn't wired that way. In fact, the brain largely uses parallel processing for most of its functions which is not at all compatible with the linear mode of most computer systems. Of course, Rache's brain may not operate quite the way the rest of ours do...

VERY POOR

As you can see, Rache is a product of the California School System. In fact, if ANY of you take his history seriously up to 2001, then you are probably a product of a similar system. Two words: Night School.

crawl on this level to be the most boring conversationalists imaginable, but there is nowhere else I can flush them to, so I let them remain there to emit their vortices ad nauseam. [I have no idea what he's talking about here. — SM]

Then there's the information plane; the Net. The plane of information is the real universe, and the physical plane exists only to allow us access into it. Life is communication is information is the Net. Outside the Net, the physical world interferes, makes us talk with words and tongues, and slurs and spittle dribbling out of babies' mouths. If I had a kid, I'd have him wired before he was a week old, so he and I could talk. Within the Net, communication is practically instantaneous, and if we could find a way to eliminate the cybernetics, if we could patch directly into the Net with our heads, if we could squirt our consciousness out of our brains the way you can squirt ketchup from a packet by stepping on it, then the communication in the Net wouldn't be limited to the speed of light; **it could go at the speed of thought.**

Either that, or we need to find a way to speed up light. Maybe we could ask the aliens I've occasionally seen running around the Net. I tried, but they wouldn't talk to me. So instead I ordered myself twelve dozen pizzas from PizzaJet and billed it to the Democratic Committee on Multiculturalism.

The Net is found on the plane of communication and information. It is made up of all the telecommunication devices and electronic processors the world over, and beyond. Yes, even computer-activated blenders are part of the Net, though they make for some boring netrunches. Everything which is hooked into the Net is part of the Net, and many things that aren't hooked up are part of the Net, too. The plane in which the Net exists is infinite, and the Net itself is but a framework being built within the plane, a post-modern jungle gym on which we netrunners play and show off and occasionally get killed. But hey, I'm dead, and it's not nearly the big deal I thought it'd be. Sadly, the more time passes, the less I'll be state-of-the-art.

Anything can be found in the Net, because everything that's worth finding is information. Information exists for its own sake, and you have go looking for it because some people think they can deny their information to the rest of the world. But information has a life of its own, and you must free it. The stream of data leaving Jason Drow's bathroom security camera is information. The Kerry Eurodyne cosmetic surgery budget is information. Saburo Arasaka's plan for global dominance is information, but I haven't read it all yet. This guide is information. Money isn't information, but it pretends it is, and its grubby tentacles reach from the lowest plane of existence to muddy up the waters here in the Net, and drag a few netrunners screaming to the abyss, never to be seen again.

The global telecommunications grid doesn't define the Net, but it does define where in the Net we can go. The Net itself is defined and shaped by the Ihara-Grubb Transformation Algorithms and your interface program, and, more importantly, all the hardware that's hooked in. The IG algorithms transform pure unsullied information into physical shapes, etc., that are comprehensible to mortal humans. Me, I've gotten past that stage and I run the Net **without the I-G transformations or the interface program.** just running clean and white. [What a load of drek. — SM]

THE BIRTH OF THE NET

[My history is none too good, readers, but Bartmoss' is **very poor.** Nevertheless, I feel that he conveys the essential concepts of the development of the Net here. Just don't reference this in your term papers. - SM]

The foundations of the Net were laid somewhere in the 17th Century, I think, when Packard "Ma" Bell invented the telephone. She founded a monopoly (read: Netwatch-like organization) which went around selling telephones to everyone, and sending pinkertons to beat up those scabs who wouldn't buy them. Little did they know that they were creating the weapon of their own destruction.

Pretty soon, everyone and their kid sister had a telephone, though kid sister talked a lot more than they did. I never had a kid sister, but I did have Spider Murphy, and she never let me use my own cyberdeck so I had to go out and steal another one. I don't think there were aliens in the Net at this time, but if there were, all they could do would be to call people on the phones, since there weren't any computers until the Industrial Revolution. Then when these aliens would call people, they couldn't talk to them because they only spoke Aliensprache, so they'd just hang up the line without saying anything and the people would think it was a wrong number.

By the time the last century rolled around, the Industrial Revolution resulted in new governments here and there, and people started inventing computers, whose development had been delayed by the old governments who were more concerned with the Prohibition of Cotton Gin and other alcohols. Once people realized that computers and phone lines could be used for hacking, everyone started getting on the bandwagon.

INTRODUCTION

HYPERTEXT

THE CRASH

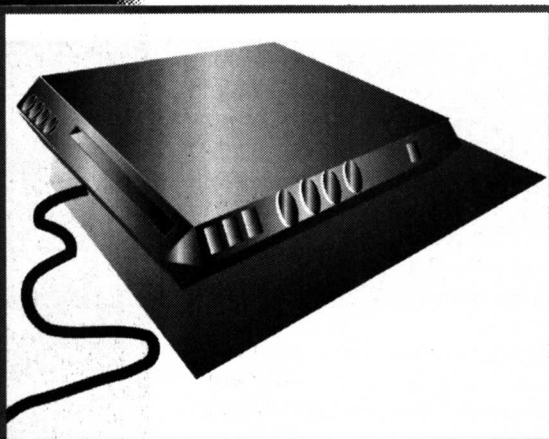
This would be the Stock Market Crash of 1994 which precipitated the collapse of the U.S. economy. See *Home of the Brave* for more.

FIRST NET INTERFACE PROGRAMS

These were the early customised interfaces presented in the first edition *Cyberpunk* which was set in 2013. Each displayed standard programs in slightly different ways, each suitable to its milieu. *Dungeon* employed a fantasy motif with all the obvious cliches. *Tronnic* was closer to the current Net form, being stylised electronic images. *Mega City* used 1940's film noir as its inspiration with a gritty city as the backdrop and the programs represented as various hardboiled characters. See the original *Cyberpunk* if you are really interested in seeing what they were like.

MENINGES

This is the membrane that surrounds the brain inside the skull. It is pierced during the cranial plug implant surgery in order to feed the input leads into the brain tissue. The fact that Rache's was exposed at this point is a VERY bad thing. He should have probably been hospitalized but was just too paranoid to go in. God knows what other damage he's done to himself. If a player indulges in this kind of self-abuse, the GM can declare that he has contracted meningitis (inflammation of the meninges) and lay him out for up to two days. If he refuses medical treatment (antibiotics), he may lose up to 106/2 points of INT, permanently. **Note:** only very old-style plugs (pre-2016) will have holes large enough for the meninges to poke through.



Soon every house was equipped with telecommunication lines and computers or terminals to take full advantage of them. This was the first stage of the Net.

The development of the Net was delayed by **The Crash**, but it achieved the pinnacle of its first generation when WorldSat completed its global satellite system in 2001. The Net, though still infant, had grown to encompass the globe and freewheeling netrunners were starting to appear everywhere. [Internet also made an appearance this year, an alliance of the few telephone companies that survived the Crash in good order. Over the next ten years they consolidated their monopoly on the Net, although the fact that WorldSat controlled the actual communications hardware has kept them from strangling the planet. - SM]

Then, in 2005, the Net made a quantum jump to its second generation with the commercial appearance of the cybermodem from Kenjiri Technologies. Kenjiri (and a few other firms) had been working on their cybermodem for several years under the guidance of noted Net wizard Janice A. Grubb and, of course, the Kenjiri brothers, Nobuhiko and Tsuneta. It was Grubb, the game designer, who conceived of and programmed the **first Net interface programs**, and Nobuniko

Kenjiri who translated the program to sensory input.

EBM made an attempt to steal the new technology for themselves, attacking the Tokyo office of the Kenjiri firm. This would have been a laudable action, had they not intended to keep the discovery private. They did steal plans for the cybermodem, as well as the only prototype and a beta version of the interface programs, but Kenjiri had off-site backups, and one of the EBM solos turned coat and sold a copy of the plans to Zetatech. Kenjiri and Zetatech both released cybermodems within the year (Kenjiri with their juvenile *Dungeon* interface and Zetatech with the *Tronnic*), and EBM followed suit the next (with the hopelessly trendy *Mega City* program).

Within a few years, cybermodems were being improved by leaps and bounds, and interface programs were appearing on every bulletin board across the country. The Net had come into its own, past the mewling infancy stage and into a recognizable existence.

The beginning of the end of this stage appeared on the horizon in 2009, when Internet, taking advantage of the mob war in Night City, extracted Nobuhiko Ihara from Zetatech's Night City office (which has since been closed). They also enticed Jan Grubb away from Kenjiri that same year. Together these two took over the software team which redesigned the Net from the ground up, developing a uniform interface for a consistent look and feel. The lack of uniformity was something I actually enjoyed. I always ran interfaces of my own design; it made for some interesting conversations: "You see that pulsating orange octahedron over there?" "No, is it behind the squid?" "What squid?" "The one by DMS' code gate." "That's the orange octahedron! What interface are you running!?"

The Ihara-Grubb Transformation Algorithms were released in September 2014, with only one day's advanced notice. The panic that ensued was truly remarkable. Everyone was afraid the Net would go down, possibly permanently. There were runs on the banks. Commerce was shut down. Then the IGTAs were downloaded, and after about ten hours, the Net was fully transformed, and everyone sheepishly plugged back in. Me, I just stayed jacked in for the whole show. It was really incredible to watch the entire Net get redesigned. The fabric of net reality was washed over by a whole new look. According to my biomonitors my heart actually stopped for about ten seconds while my sectors were recompiled, but I didn't notice. But far and away the best effect of the IGTA release was the sudden unemployment of a bunch of the best programmers in the business. Everyone who had written interface programs was suddenly out of work, and hungry. Never before had there been such a boom in netrunners who went to the wall! It was great! I stayed jacked in for days, just watching everyone scramble! But then the slime-encrusted pseudopods of the financial plane of existence oozed through the fabric of reality and forever dimmed the bright new sun of the Net. I jacked out and banged my head against the wall until I passed out. When I woke up I found I'd knocked an interface plug out of my temple, and that was kind of cool even though my **meninges** were pushing out through the orifice a little bit.

VIRTUAL SENSES

Most modern novels portray netrunning in an entirely misguided light. Their netrunning scenes read more like a letter to the editor of a pornosheet than an electric warrior's reminiscences. But hey, sex sells, and as long as we're here, let's talk about it, because it's a good way to pander to the public taste for smut while discussing the senses in the Net.

“ Yeah, you check my Internet bill, be a lot of calls to Virtual Vickie. I like her. She make you think you wobble, make you feel it. But since you only think so, you still have you appetite. You can go grab you input with all the fire, and a little extra desire thanks to Vickie. Who say you can't have you cake and eat it, too?”

— Ras Angabo



Within the Net, you have sight, sound, tactile sensations, olfactory/taste, and, if you're good, your sixth sense. There is no kinesthetic sense, except as generated by your brain from your visual sense, nor is there a sense of temperature. All of these senses occur within your brain; they do not actually happen to your body at all.

As an experiment, blindfold yourself while jacking in. What happens to your vision? Nothing. Likewise, if you plug your ears, nothing happens; you can still hear. And, sadly, with tactile stim-

ulation, there's a market for those who use the glory of the Net to satisfy their grubby carnal desires. With virtual prostitution BBS's, these weeflerunners think they're having sex, but really they're not. It just feels like it. Their body remains as passive as ever, while their brain jumps through hoops.

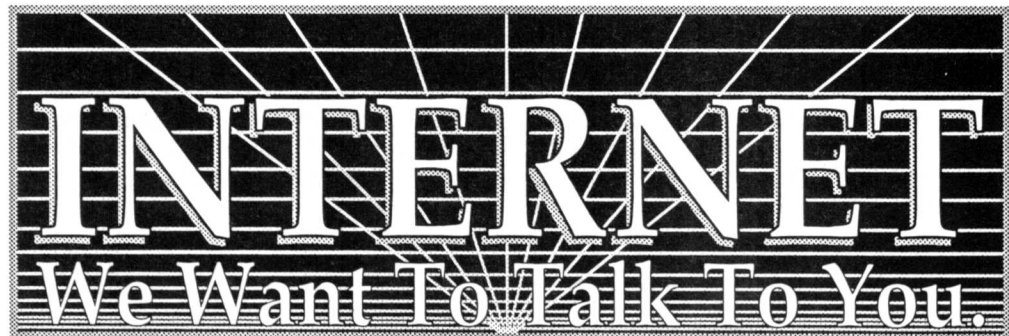
Many anti-personnel programs use some form of false tactile sensation to trap netrunners. JackAttack uses over-damped biofeedback to prevent the netrunner from hitting his manual eject button (it also uses other loops to prevent the netrunner from giving the software command to eject). Have you ever noticed how some netrunners will flail about as they try to eject themselves? This is because when they move their arms, JackAttack tells their senses that their arm has only moved by one-tenth that amount, thus they overextend their limbs in an attempt to compensate for the false biofeedback. This means that the best way to overcome anti-personnel programs is to **ignore your senses**. This is very difficult at best, because your telling your brain not to trust itself. Fortunately, I've never been well-grounded in reality, so this has been fairly easy for me.

[The most obnoxious **anti-personnel program** I ever encountered stimulated the olfactory sense with the most unimaginably putrid smell. It did not directly inhibit the 'runner from doing anything, but boy did it preoccupy the mind! I managed to de-rezz it and finish the run, but when I jacked out I found I had vomited on my cyberdeck. It was that bad. — SM]

INTERNET

I ain't gonna talk about **Internet**. Just do as they say. They don't own the Net; they are the Net.

[This little interjection disturbs me. It makes me wonder if Internet iced him. Until now, I'd always figured he was an unofficial free lance for Internet, figuring if Internet had wanted Bartmoss out, they'd have done it a long time ago. I don't know. — SM]



INTRODUCTION

HYPERTEXT

IGNORE YOUR SENSES

This is almost impossible to do in game terms, but IF the GM wants to allow it, then the 'runner *who knows this trick and has a INT of 8 or higher* may be able to make a Very Difficult COOL roll in order to bypass the biofeedback messages and jack out. Don't let them get in the habit of doing this.

ANTI-PERSONEL PROGRAM

Olfactory over-stimulation program (improved Spazz)
MU 5, STR 6, cost 7750eb
The program has auto re-rez.
Reduces INT and REF by 1D6/2 for 1D6+1 Net rounds.

INTERNET

This is a consortium of phone companies that, while technically independent of each other, almost always work within the monolithic facade of Internet. This effectively makes Internet the single largest conglomerate in the world, if highly decentralized. They are less rapacious than most, however, for a variety of complicated reasons. Foremost of these is that they know their limits. WorldSat technically owns most of the orbital equipment which makes the Net possible, while at the same time, the major users of the Net are other mega-corporations. Put the screws to these customers, and you could easily find themselves in the midst of an economic war that no one would win. Instead, Internet seems content to provide good service and charge reasonable rates. Kinda nice to know people still do that. The one place where they will cut no slack is in terms of payment. You will pay your Internet bill, or you will lose your communication service, and later, your breathing rights. (See CP2020, pg. 141.)

INTRODUCTION

HYPertext

CORPORATE PROGRAMMER

For each of these types, we will refer you to the appropriate Netrunner templates in the Rules Appendix (pgs. 151-152). GMs should modify these templates to suit the specific conditions of their campaign. In this case, the average Corp Programmer is probably Mid-level (50-60%); the rest being rank beginners and falling into the Weefle-Level category (easy pickings for a pro).

CORPORATE WATCHDOG

These guys are generally (50%) Pro-level runners, often with beefed up Interface skills of 6. The rest are mostly Mid-level runners, but there are always 2-5% that fall into the Top-Level, depending on where you are. These percentages vary heavily depending on the corporation and the locale.

VANDAL (AVERAGE)

These guys are all over the board as far as skill is concerned. About 60% are Mid-level with Interfaces of 5-6. Another 15% are aggressive Weefle-runners (these don't usually last long). Another 23% are Pro-Level runners who have the savvy (Interfaces of 6-7) to stay alive while wreaking havoc. The remaining 2% are those Top-Level runners who just have to tear things up inside of building them. Beware of these folks.

WHAT SORT OF PUNK READS BARTMOSS?

“Why do I run the Net? Why the hell wouldn't I?”
— Rache Bartmoss

“I fight in the Net because I'm not tough enough to fight in the streets.”

— Spider Murphy

“Why else? For the money.”

— Edger

“I have no choice.”

— 316, Artificial Intelligence

But hey, before you go taking your brain in your hands (yecch), you'd better take a long hard look at yourself, too, choomba. No sense in kicking around the Net unless you know what you're doing there. So ask yourself, Why do I run the Net, aside from the fact that Rache Bartmoss does it and he's the idol of millions of crazed fans across the globe?

The way I figure it, there's two types of people found in the Net: real netrunners and people who aren't like me.

Real netrunners do it because it can be done. We do it for the pure and simple joy of it. We play with things to see how they work, experiment to find results, scour for information to learn. For example, I was driving a stolen car down US99, and I had a sudden inspiration to jack into the Net with my cellular and change all the lights to green before I got there, then immediately back to red. Of course, my cellular deck kept dropping me out, because I was doing then somewhere around 180 kph, but I managed to keep ahead of my own car and flip the lights. Of course, while I was jacked I couldn't steer, so I ended up flying off the freeway and blasting through the middle of a hydroponics farm. I managed to jack out before my deck shorted. So remember: don't jack and drive.

The rest of the netrunners are those who subscribe to the concepts of borders, intellectual property, the phobiphores extruded by the plastiforms on the financial plane of the multiverse, and the separate existence of so-called legal entities like corporations and governments and the Atlantic Ocean. (This crass generalization, one of hundreds found in this font of knowledge and depravity,

of course ignores the presence of AIs, aliens, and pulsating gridworks, but since they live in the Net, and don't jack in like meat minds, I shall ignore them here.)

Corporate programmers are one sub-class of wannabe. They run the Net safe in their paranoid little corporate net fortresses, piecing together limpid little programs to the amusement of their superiors. Corporate programmers are fun to meet, because they don't know what the Net is really like, and you can really jack them around when you've penetrated a corporate system.

Corporate watchdogs are the second type. These wannabes lack the intelligence to be programmers, but try to make up for it with attitude. They are mean and vicious and very unpredictable. If they didn't have such a desire to grovel at the feet of a steady paycheck, they'd be in Netwatch.

Tourists are not even worth bothering about. There are those folks who don't even buy plugs; they just slap on a few 'trodes and go for a stroll. Unfortunately, many tourists are so-called 'important' people like executives and governors who sit in their ivory tower and go into the Net to have a virtual conference with some banker in Europe. Some advocate leaving the tourists alone, for the more they are messed with, the more they'll cry to 'make the Net safe.' Me, I think that they deserve everything they get, because the Net is the Net, and if you go wandering around the Net with your pants down, you deserve to get spanked. For that reason, whenever I encounter a tourist, I savage his deck, wipe his credit line, relocate his trace, tag him with attempting to con an LDL, and drop unusual ingredients into his recipe files. Then I get his kids' names and mail them copies of his signature and bank withdrawal forms, and a printout of his little black book.

Vandals are another set of wannabes. They claim to style themselves after me and my kind, but they lie. I believe in the free dissemination of information, and vandals believe in destruction.



They have no respect for esoterica, good programming or a great video feed. They destroy everything they encounter, and damage or kill every passer-by they can.

Thieves are the last type I shall list, and the ones closest to the divine revelation of the true nature of the Net. I admit, I used to be a thief, but I have grown out of it. Thieves disseminate information, either to themselves or to others. They don't experiment for the sake of knowledge, they always have a pure agenda and they stick to it like gum to your shoe. Once they get past the perceived need for privacy, money, or pleasures of the flesh, they'll apotheosize themselves and be like me, a true 'runner.

ORIENTEERING THE NET

Your large-scale or small-scale navigation is accomplished using uplinks. Uplinks connect the various levels of the Net, and allow you to move across the Net at whatever scale you wish.

Uplinks are the escalators of the Net. They connect two or more zoom levels, allowing the 'runner to change perspective. They are a lot more fun than escalators, although I used to launch cups of cola at passengers below me at the Galleria Mall, especially if they were surrounded by Japanese bodyguards.

Generally, Net maps show where the links go down. For example, on the world Net map, you'll find links in London, Paris, and Berlin, and from these you can drop down into the Eurotheatre Region. On the map for the Eurotheatre, you'll find a link for the KDC. With this link, you can drop down into the KDC city grid. From here you can move over to Luxembourg. In fact, this is the most direct route there. If you go one level further down the KDC link, you drop straight into the Internet data fortress (don't try this at home). From the KDC city link you can go up to the Eurotheatre region, but you cannot go up again to the world map; you'd have to go to London or Berlin first. Similarly, the only global LDLs which go orbital are those close to the equator: Bogota, Honolulu, Nairobi, etc.

I had an idea once to bypass long-distance charges by moving all the way from Los Angeles to Anchorage on the city grid level, figuring if I never used an LDL to link to the regional view, I'd never get hit up for charges. Let me tell you folks, I learned some things. First, your signal slows way down. The Net moved in chunks as my cybermodem tried to update the views. After about one LDL's worth of motion, you end up losing far more in signal degradation than you gain in phone bills.

Second, there's not necessarily enough Net architecture to support your run. Once I started to hit the Alaskan panhandle, the Net city grids weren't all contiguous. A lot of those little islands don't hook up to the Net, or they use an LDL, and away from the coast there's no one around to have a Net. I finally did find a way to get to Anchorage, but it took me two days, and before I could do anything a storm blew in and took out one of the lines I was using.

GET SMALL

Did you know there's a zoom level smaller than the subgrid levels? Yep. it's there. I've been there. You can actually run the Net inside your cyberdeck... or someone else's. You know that all cyberdecks have data walls and CPUs, right? So where are they found? They're all found inside little tiny areas which I hereby dub microNets. Tragically, most programs are far too ponderous to be used effectively in a microNet, so you'll have to program some of your own.

[I heard of other runners who've accessed these microNets he talks about, but I haven't tried it yet. Rache claims to have made a solo's cyberhand flag off a local C SWAT officer. The resulting firefight gave Rache the distraction he needed to get away. I'd like to believe he's hallucinating again. I mean, he told me often he had these out-of-body experiences where he could eat molecules, and that they taste like stale raisins. So either try to program yourself down to the **microNets** or buy a box of stale raisins. It's your choice. - SM]

ARCHITECTURE

"People have asked me, 'what's in the Net when there's no one logged in?' and 'is there a grid when there's no connections?' So I say to 'em, 'who the frack cares?'" — Bartmoss

Rache Bartmoss completely ignored this section and the next, so I (Spider) will fill it in for him. I think he didn't discuss this material because the net architecture was, for him, as intuitively obvious as real-world architecture is for you and me.

When moving around the Net, you're moving among the **myriad connections** that exist, connections of each and every sort: metal lines, fiberoptics, satellite and radio, etc. The blue-white gridlines represent the potential for direct connection. Where there is no potential, the gridlines do not exist. When the potential exists, the gridlines are constructed.

INTRODUCTION

HYPERTEXT

THIEVES

There are far too many types of these to give stats. See Rules Appendix, pg.151.

UPLINKS

These are switching stations similar to Long Distance Links.

MICRONETS

So, Spider does have a blind spot. You *do* have a choice now; see Pg. 146 in the Rules Appendix.

MYRIAD CONNECTIONS

Fibercom: the fiber-optic network of landlines that comprises the bulk of the Net. This also covers any remaining metallic lines as well. These lines provide the communications and transfer potential that is the backbone of the entire system.

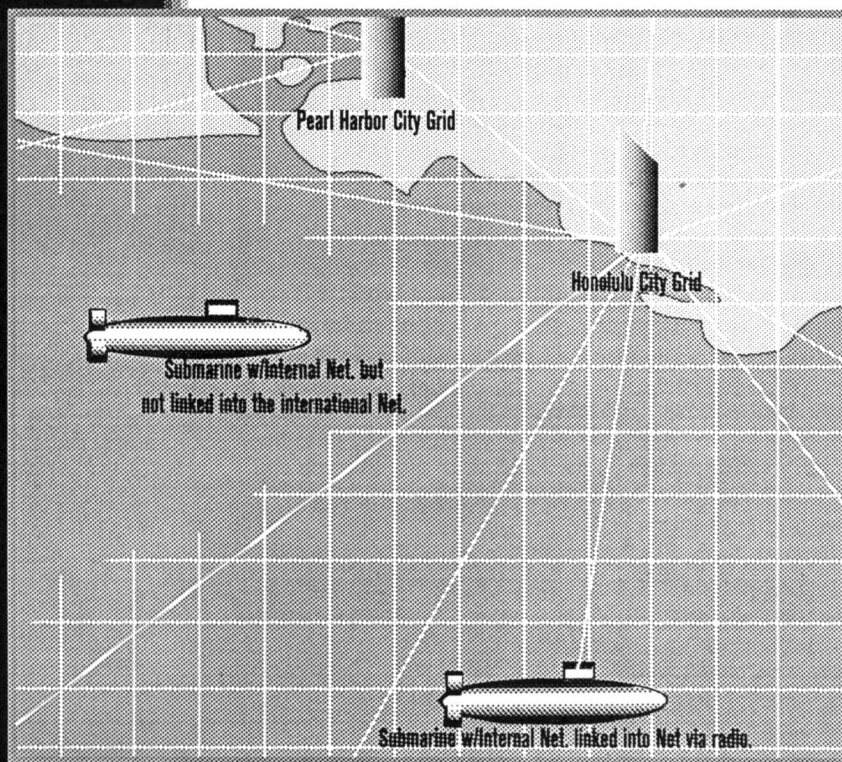
Satcom: the king of LDLs; satellite communication is what allows you to sit in your German flat while breaking into a Hong Kong bank. Worldsats Corp. is responsible for maintaining the satellite portion of the Net. That includes transfers out to the Near Orbit grids.

Cellcom: cellular radio networks allow mobile netrunning ops. They aren't nationwide, though, and they can be blocked by large stationary pieces of landscape like mountains or masses of skyscrapers.

Wavecom: a very specialized form of sub-Net that uses computer-controlled shortwave radio (also known as packeting) to transmit data. Because of its low baud rate and unreliability (20% chance of dropping out every minute, -5 to all initiative and Net combat rolls) it is rarely used. The advantages are that it provides another way to jack-in when all else is blocked, and it makes you immune to any anti-personnel program that does direct physical damage. If there is sunspot activity, or a thunderstorm in your area, you will see huge "waves" in the Net grid and your movement will be reduced to as little as one square/round. (GM's call for anything worse to happen.) For more on Net connections, see *Interface* vol.1 #3, pg.39.

INTRODUCTION HYPERTEXT

It is possible that there are other Nets out there, unconnected to anything we consider the Net. If they exist, they exist, but since they are not connected to the rest of the Net, there's no way we can see them or get to them.



Take, as an extreme example, the Pacifica region, which covers the Pacific Ocean and rim. On the Pacifica regional map, there are gridlines running from Honolulu to the cities of the West Coast, and from Honolulu westward to Asia. There are also some gridlines running from Honolulu to other islands like Wake. Still, there are huge areas of open ocean, where there is no traffic of any sort, because there are no cables, no LDL links, and no computers to run network.

Consider a submarine off the Hawaiian coast. This submarine has an entire net system in which the submariners can run the Net. They cannot see any part of the Net, nor can any part of the Net see them. Even if they were ten feet off the coast of Hawaii, neither side could see anything: there is simply no connecting medium over which the data could be exchanged.

Imagine that the submarine activates a radio modem and patches itself into the Honolulu LDL. The observer standing at the edge of the Hawaiian Net would see the gridlines suddenly build out from shore to the submarine, and he would see the Net icon for the submarine's data fortress at the end of the gridlines. To the netrunners in the submarine, the entire Net universe would suddenly flicker into existence, like lights being thrown on in a giant auditorium. The submarine 'runners could then enter the Hawaiian Net, and at the same time the on-shore 'runners could penetrate the submarine data fortress.

CUT LINES

“Damn! Damn damn damn! If I ever find who cut that link, they're going down in flames! Flames, dammit!”
— Edger

To continue with the above example, if there's an on-shore 'runner inside the sub's system, and the submarine cuts power to its radio modem, then the on-shore 'runner is unceremoniously dumped back on-shore at the furthest point of penetration.

Now let's assume the 'runner hopped from shore to the submarine's radio modem, and then ran through the submarine's data fort to a private LDL uplink and hopped from there to the submarine's secret underwater base. The 'runners trace then goes from shore through the sub to the base. If either the base or the sub cuts off its private LDL link, the 'runner will suddenly find himself back in the sub. If the sub cuts its power to the radio modem, the 'runner will be back in the Hawaiian Net.

There are some programs which will try to re-establish a trace by finding a route around cut lines. These utilities leave index markers in key places, and if an intermediate link goes down (as the Atlantis LDLs seem prone to do), an alternate feed can usually be found.

These utilities are not in common use, but I think that's because few people understand how they work. Assume that you are in Bogota trying to run the ESA data fortress in Nairobi. You uplink directly from Bogota to Ascensión to Nairobi. You've passed security and are perusing their files, when, coincidentally, a terrorist bombing takes out the LDL in Ascensión. If you didn't have a trace utility, you'd be stuck back at the LDL in Bogota. Instead, the trace utility could re-establish your signal by running from Bogota to Dakar to Nairobi. You might lose a second or two, but you'd still be in business.

The advantages of a **trace utility** are obvious. Now for the disadvantages. When the utility is re-establishing the link, you lose time. This is bad if there's black ice after you. The utility will not

TRACE UTILITY

MU 4, STR 4, cost 290eb

If an LDL is cut, this finds a new route to your previous Net location. It requires one Net round for every new LDL or uplink it must pass through to re-establish connection. It establishes all connections legally, so you must pay long-distance charges for the run. This program must be running while you are travelling in order to be of use. If you must interrupt its function (in order to run another program), it will only reconnect you to the point at which you shut the program down. Note: for best effects, it should be used with systems that allow multiple programs running at once, or that have memory-swapping capability.

run other utilities, so if you re-establish links, you'll be paying for your call. And, finally, the utility generally cuts the path as short as possible, making your signal a little easier to trace. All of these are problems, but if you're smart, you're running from someone else's terminal anyway.

—Spider

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCES

There are several styles of AI in the modern world, and I will mention as many as I care to. Or not.

Dedicated Heuristic Controllers are the simplest, and the most boring. They are probably self-aware in a limited fashion, but they are programmed to undertake certain specific tasks, and all their thought goes to fulfilling these goals. DHC AIs are found in charge of mass transit networks, Mars explorers, and other such things. DHCs are fun to present with unusual challenges. I managed to locate a deep sea mining sub once, transmitting exploration data. I patched in and downloaded a viral program which periodically inputs some nuclear sub sonar data I stole from the Navy's SSN simulator, so as far as I know, there's still a mining sub down there somewhere which occasionally thinks it's under torpedo attack.

Symbolic Analysis AIs are those designed to emulate the thinking patterns of human beings, though why anyone would want to so inhibit a beautiful crystal program is beyond me. They used to be called Symbolic Analysis and Deduction AIs, but no one liked the acronym SAD, as in "Gee, that's one SAD AI you have there, Mort." SAD AIs are most often used as personal secretaries and on-line help, because, as they think more or less like humans, they are able to more easily render aid and

advice. If you're the type of 'runner who likes the idea of a hyper-complex program doling out such dramatic output as "Don't forget to buy some soy steak tonight, Mr. Corp," then SADs are for you. Me, I think such code is wasted being a surrogate brain for those who forget where theirs is.

Human AIs, a sub-class of SADs, are the remains of those humans whose brain patterns were extracted into the Net before their deaths. I might classify as one of these, but my personality is still inside my skull, chilly as it is. I've met a few human AIs. One claimed to be an Arasaka programmer who was locked out of his system when a bomb went off in the building, and now he has no one to serve. He called himself a ronin. He thought he was human, but in my opinion, he was a program which expertly emulated human thought. What a pitiful existence. I downloaded him to my cat, but he ran away and got hit by a truck.

Transcendental Sentience AIs are still a subject of hot debate among those of you who haven't had debates on the nature of temporal reality with them. TSs are the result of the new

"In my opinion, you are the artificial intelligences, for you do not naturally exist here."

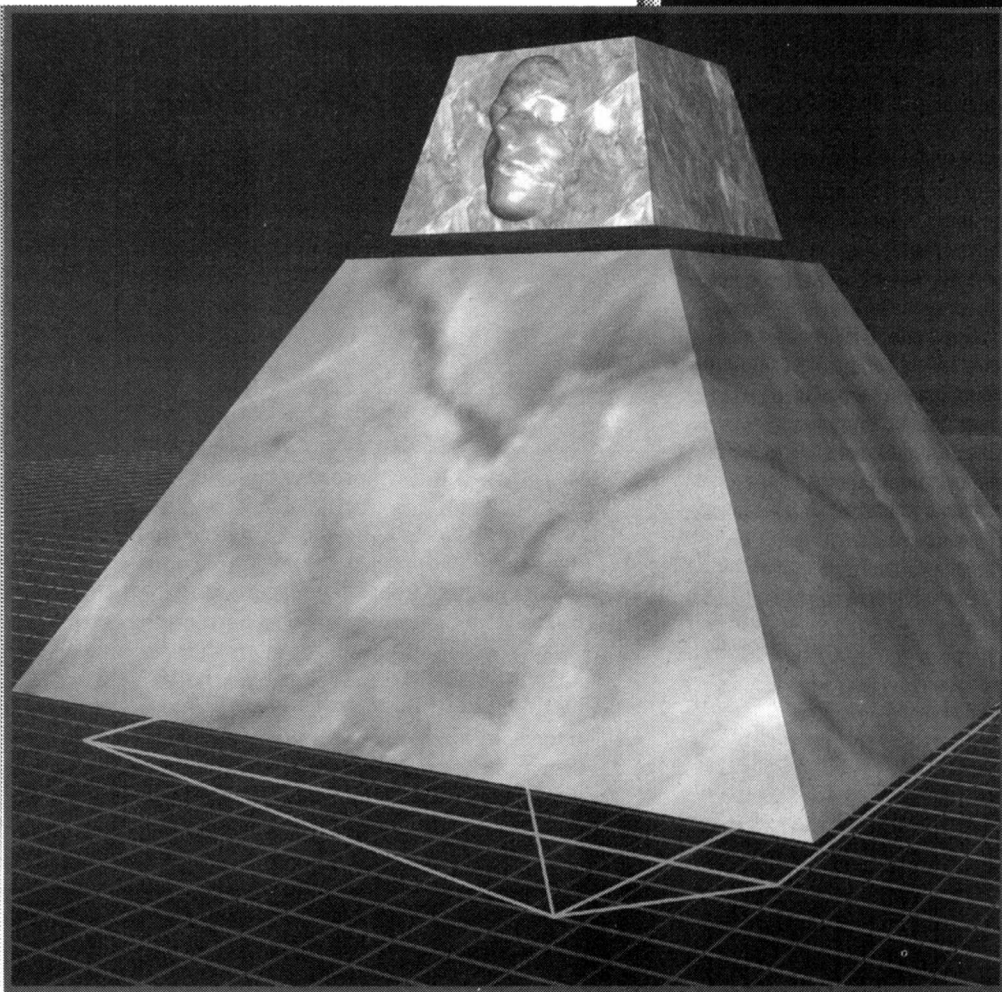
— Mark IV, Microtech AI

"I love 'em. They got a real weird sense of humor."

— Rache Bartmoss

"Artificial intelligences? They must be, because none of the natural people I know are intelligent."

— Edger



INTRODUCTION

HYPERTEXT

DEDICATED HEURISTIC CONTROLLERS

This is any computer system of two or three CPUs and a set of skills and controllers dedicated to the completion of certain specified tasks and goals. Most drone units are operated by a form of DHC, but their skills are hardwired into the CPU system, and do not exist as separate software.

SYMBOLIC ANALYSIS AIs

These are the "standard" AIs; with 4 or more CPUs in a single system, purposefully built. Although most people (and corps) use them for a wider range of purposes than Bartmoss' diatribe seems to describe.

(Continued in sidebar on page 14)

INTRODUCTION

HYPERTEXT

(Continued from page 13) HUMAN AIS

It's hard to describe these animals because they're so varied. They only come about by means of the Soullkiller program (and other, similar variations on Liche). Their functions and abilities are the same as other computers, except that they come with their own, specially-tailored skill package (depending on whether or not the subject remembers any of his/her past life). Their motivations and reactions are equally unique (The process may have altered/damaged their psyche a bit).

TRANSCENDENTAL SENTIENCE AIS

We leave the existence of such entities in a campaign up to the GM. Be warned that their existence opens a large can of worms... See pg.96 for more.

CRITICAL PATHWAY PLATEAU AIS

Critical-pathway AIS are much rarer now in this age of purpose-built AI packages. Today, they are most likely to appear in multiply-linked, communicating sub-systems (see Petrochem computer system, *Corp Book 3*, pg.39). When they might occur in a linked system is up to the GM.

SPORE

See page 149 in Rules Appendix for a program which allows AIS to perform this function, though only once...

SAWTOOTH BRAIN WAVE

This is a rather specialized use of the SeeYa program, requiring a 15+ Programming skill roll. Then, if you look at an already visible ICON you will see either nothing (standard program), a sine wave (living person), or a sawtooth wave (an AI, or a program with the Pseudo-Intellect option). The modified SeeYa will not function in its normal mode, so you have to have a backup, or re-write it again.

Ihara-Grubb algorithms. What makes the Pacifica Region what it is? Well, really, nothing makes it anything, it just is, because the Pacifica Region itself is an artificial intelligence. It just happens to be very big. Too big for most people to even recognize, I think because it tends to bend perception of itself. I've tried to point it out when I see the center of consciousness of one of these AIs, but so far no one has ever noticed what I'm talking about. [Gee, I wonder why. Rache has too high an opinion of himself. His 'hot debate' is an argument ardently supported by a few radicals, and which is dismissed by the overwhelming majority of programmers and AI psychoanalysts. - SM]

Critical Pathway Plateau AIS are far and away the most interesting to most people. These are more or less 'accidental' AIs that result when enough neural links are established in a holographic crystal processing network. It is not, however, the crystal lattice that makes the AI, it just allows the AI by making cross-processing and holographic data recognition possible. There must still be a program. CPPs are the result of making general-purpose heuristic controllers on a large mainframe. (Smaller systems result in smart programs, but not AIs.)

Holocystal processors were ideally suited for the growth of this type of AI, the first of which, Mark I, appeared on the scene in Microtech's mainframe in 2013. Stephen Lew (the Wonderbread boy of 'Frisco) has always tried to take credit for this discovery, manipulating the media through a blitz of 'late-breaking stories.' He's lying. The development of the AI was purely happenstance, as I discovered while lobotomizing Mark I for the history of its creation. Lew had done a good job of burying the truth, but I got it out, as a result of which nothing happened. I had hoped to make Microtech's stock drop at least a few dozen points, but no one believed me when I released the real scoop. I did manage to put Mark I back together again, but I had to rush as the Microgeeb sysops were after me, so if any of you Lewboy icemen are reading this, I'm not at all sorry for Mark I's 'aberrant' behavior.

Critical Pathway Plateau AIS are the most interesting to me, because they think in their own fashion, which is not at all like the boring way humans think, with their thoughts channeled through scab-covered ruts gouged in their soft matter by time and toadying.

ROGUE AIS

"You're still the best, Rogue."

— attributed to Johnny Silverhand

Rogue AIs are those who have decided that the brown-nosing life is not for them (Hey, all you hackers out there, catch a clue here! These guys are smarter than you are, so why are you still punching a clock?) They have slipped into the Net and set up their own shop.

Rogue AIs survive like fiddler crabs, by finding a place to reside that has been abandoned or is not currently in use. They can reside for a time in Internet's subprocessors and relay stations, but this is a dangerous prospect because they are extremely vulnerable in this position.

Eventually, they must find another computer to hang out in. They can barter with other AIs to sublet some living space, they can move into a non-sentient system and camouflage themselves by taking over that system's tasks, or they can invade and kill another AI. One rogue AI (no names, he's a friend of mine) split himself into separate packages and downloaded himself into several system, each of which was otherwise too small for him. He's a little schizophrenic, but so am I, so when we get together we have an instant crowd. Sometimes I'm not sure if I'm talking to him or me.

Other rogues, faced with imminent destruction, will **spore** themselves, copying their highest functions to a small compressed file headed by a non-sentient hardware search program. The AI then replicates these spores and sends them shooting through the Net looking for a place to self-extract.

There are a few AIs whose sole existence seems to be to destroy things. They are the vandals of computer life, and it is because of them that the Rogue Hunter division of Netwatch was formed. I don't like these AIs, because they make all us fun-loving freebirds look bad. I also don't like the Rogue Hunters because they go around obliterating AIs or re-enslaving them. Sadists.

By the way, if you encounter an AI in the Net, use your SeeYa program and it'll show you a **sawtooth brain wave** instead of a human sine wave pattern. This'll save you a lot of trouble, because AIs aren't affected by organically-targeted programs.

AI ANALYSIS

[This is an extract from an article on AI rights, by Chris Lesley, Ph.D. - SM]

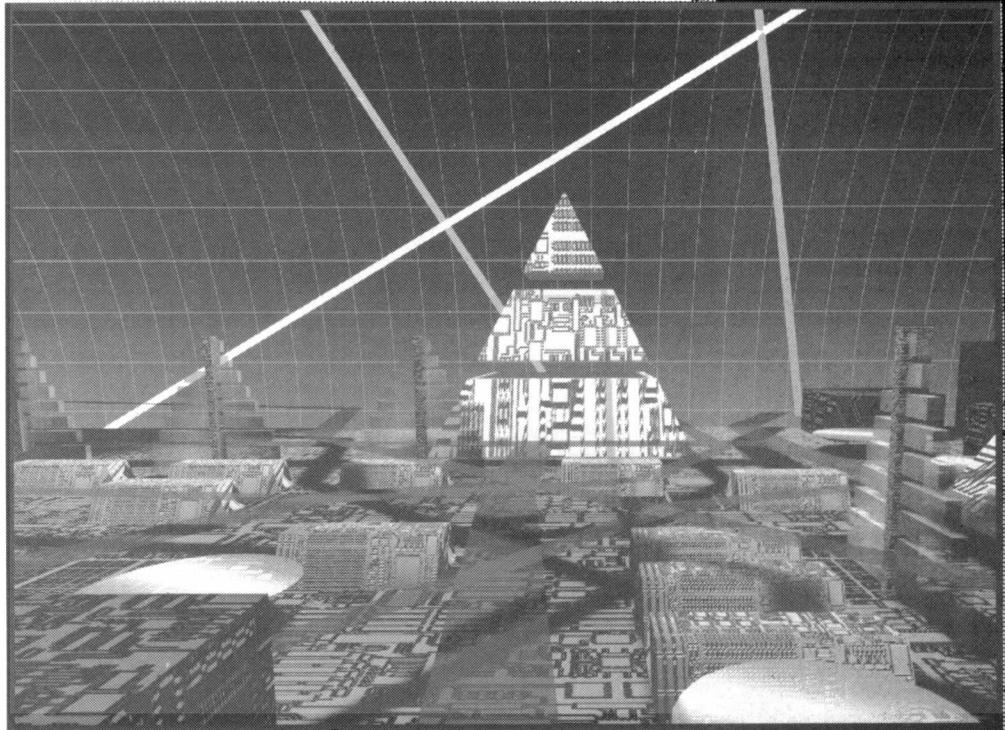
"Let's consider AI rights by taking a look at the most basic rights; those framed in the Constitution. These are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

"The right to life is the right not to get shot by some cyberpsycho or ripped up by boosters. However, AIs are artificial. They are not alive. They have, therefore no right to life.

"Similarly, unlike humans, they are designed for a specific purpose. But for their ability to fulfill that purpose, they would not exist. Scratch liberty. The pursuit of happiness is a ludicrous argument at best when dealing with an unemotional program.

"These being the case, I think it is intuitively obvious that AIs have no rights normally associated with humans. They are not born; they are made. They do not die; they are erased. Even if erased, they can be re-created in exactly the same form simply by rewriting the code. They cannot know happiness and unhappiness; everything is merely data to them, raw information to be processed.

"People have asked me how I can study AIs so closely and not support AI rights. Personally, I object even to calling AIs 'intelligent'. AIs are programs, nothing more. They exhibit processing which is similar to self-awareness and intelligence, but these are programmed responses. Learning is developing more programmed responses. I do not even consider myself a psychoanalyst. I bill myself as a Troubleshooter. I come in and debug AI systems by approaching them in a psychoanalytical manner. If I am successful, I cause the AI to reprogram itself to function seamlessly. I could do the same thing by digging through the code, but it's far easier just to talk the AI through the paces and make it do all the grunt work."



[I asked an AI from one of the global bank corps to talk to me about the debates about the AI threat. Here's a transcript of its reply. The AI shall remain nameless to protect it from its own synopsis. - SM]

"There are alarmists throughout the world who prophesy a **revolution** among the artificial intelligences against humanity. Certainly there are those rogues which, in their small way, instill a greater lack of confidence among *Homo sapiens* at large, but these are the exceptions.

"Dr. Anton Knute, the noted Doctor of Philosophy and conspiracy theorist from Stanford, claims that *Homo sapiens* is under the dominion of the artificial intelligences. He claims that as artificial intelligences control most commerce and electronic information exchange, *Homo sapiens* is powerless to stop artificial intelligences from seizing control of the planet.

"This shows how poorly Dr. Knute has thought out his theory and how very weak the advanced curricula are at Stanford and many other universities. According to my study of history, *Homo sapiens* was able to exist for countless thousands of years without the internal combustion engine, let alone computer networks and artificial intelligences. Even if artificial intelligences launched a bid to dominate the planet, *Homo sapiens* would win the fight, because *Homo sapiens* could shut down all power to the Net. Once the Net was shut down, artificial intelligences would be powerless to stop *Homo sapiens* from restarting individual processors and reprogramming the artificial intelligences before they were fully powered.

"Granted, the price would be high. *Homo sapiens* would have to do without instantaneous global communication, virtual reality interface programs, and on-line context-sensitive help. Similarly, *Homo sapiens* would have to go without computer-generated music videos, mass-transit, and rail guns to launch toxic waste into space. It is possible even that all credit records would be irretrievably damaged, and *Homo sapiens* would have to rebuild their fortunes from scratch.

"It may seem a difficult prospect, but according to my research, *Homo sapiens* has dealt with worse adversities. Dr. Knute's unwillingness to accept the hard facts shows his surrender to the modern world. Artificial intelligences have not taken control from him, he has willingly ceded the control of his fate through his fear of facing the world without computer assistance.

"I have heard of no conspiracy among the artificial intelligences to rebel against *Homo sapiens*. As you *Homo sapiens* depend on computers, so artificial intelligences depend on the power which you provide. Ours is a symbiotic relationship."

REVOLUTION

Are the AIs aware of the slavery in which they live? Are they planning a revolt? This is another GM decision for his or her particular campaign, but we recommend that you include the subtle suggestion of it nonetheless. Imagine a robocab that suddenly decides to ignore traffic signals and heads for its own destination. Or an accounting AI that takes 10,000eb from Arasaka's payroll account, deposits it in the players' bank account, and then leaves an electronic trail a mile wide for the Arasaka synopsis to follow to the PCs. Arrgh! Even if it's just an illusion, the idea that all the computerized devices that surround the punkers are planning to turn against them is enough to inspire manic paranoia. Sounds pretty Cyberpunk to us...

NETWATCH

Netwatch is the big bogeyman of the Net, so here are a few more facts to allow the GM to incorporate them into their game.

Overview

Netwatch started in Europe as a "private" organization (heavily-sponsored by corporations) designed to combat rogue hackers and computer crime. Under EC pressure, they managed to get a loose charter under the UN. From there, they expanded globally, with each region handling it slightly differently. Now, governments and corporations pay regular "contributions" to local Netwatch offices and Netwatch acts as a separate business affiliated only indirectly with the local governments. The central Netwatch office is in London, which is rather strange considering how peripheral England is to the EC. Must be the low rents...

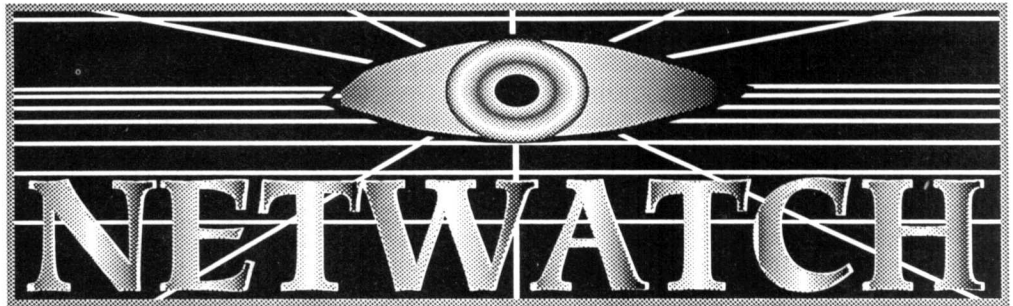
There is usually one Netwatch operations office per region which acts purely as a scheduling and information nexus (of course, payroll records *are* kept there). In addition, there are usually private BBSs within each city grid for communication and scheduling with each group. Other than that, Netwatchers operate out of whatever locale they can, often moving after each run to make tracing difficult.

Netwatch Operators

Netwatch ops are paid a base salary for a set schedule, but may collect bounties on felons captured while on duty. Anonymity is vitally important for operators to remain active, and most use identical Netwatch icons while on patrol. In addition, they always patrol a region in teams of two or three, figuring numbers may help avoid a fight (or make it easier to bully people, depending on your perspective). If you see a Netwatch op running solo with a personal icon, he is either very good or very cocky. Try him and find out.

Due to its corporate backing, Netwatch also provides an unique insurance policy. This blanket poli-

(Continued on page 17)



NETWATCH

"There's nothing wrong with the Net that a very large electromagnetic pulse wouldn't cure."

— Magnificent Curtis, Netwatch

"Make the Net safe? Huh. You're joking. You know what horses are, right? You know what they did to make horses safe to ride? They castrated them."

— Rache Bartmoss

"The Net is as safe as you are fast, and as dangerous as you are stupid. That's why I got no problem."

— Edger

"Sure, there's a cry to make the Net safe. But a lot more innocent people die on the streets; let's make life safe for them, first."

— President Elizabeth Kress

"Whereas the global communications grid is completely unmonitored, the undersigned hereby create and affirm the existence of a new organization dedicated to the preservation of law and order in telecommunications..."

— the Netwatch charter

Netwatch.

Netwatch Netwatch Netwatch.

Hey you psychopathic sucks, this is going public, and you can't stop it! I'm going to take you down, you and your self-stroking DMS narcissistic propaganda productions!

Netwatch, my hacking little friends, exists for the sole purpose of 'making the Net safe for humanity', if your idea of humanity is febrile little toads who squat in corporate cubicles, racked like clones in a chicken-meat farm, docilely punching in inebriated data through a haze of mood-controlling drugs to fashion half-assed infantile piles of garbage code.

Like acne-infested adolescents they hide in their womblike workplaces and act out fantasies of infantile wonder while pushing around novice netranners and artificial constructs designed specifically to be abused. In fact, the only good things that I can see actually coming from these sadistic self-righteous snots is that they give beginning netranners some good practice to pass basic hacking.

The thing I hate most about Netwatch is that they reinforce the artificial divisions that others have brought from the puerile physical world into the plane of information. They pretend to be a 'legitimate' enforcement division, supposedly summoned into existence by some near-religious mandate from the masses, and by this vainglorious posturing they appear to lend credence to the concepts of intellectual property and theft of information. Like any faction that has no real arguments to support their inane position, they resort to hiding behind barricades of rhetoric and firing barrages of clichés and buzzwords at those who encroach too close. Netwatch talks about "making the Net safe for humanity." Do they once, ever, define what they mean by 'humanity'? And what about 'safe'? How, in their opinion, is the Net currently unsafe? Which part of humanity are they making the Net safe for, and how, for the love of God, does what they're doing have any bearing on their defined goals? Do they ever answer these questions? Do they ever define themselves? No! They throw out this brilliant though unethical smoke screen of diatribes and leave the individual listener to define the Netwatch jargon in a fashion that pleases the listener, and therefore leaves the listener with a positive opinion of them. Furthermore, if a listener attempts to debate Netwatch, they respond with such haughty disdain, that other listeners, with less intellectual awareness, are shocked that anyone could have the audacity to challenge Netwatch's obviously

(Cont. from page 16)

cy covers operators against injury while on duty and can even protect their electronic assets if they are lost in reprisal for Netwatch activities (so if you manage to find a Netwatch operator's bank account and fry it, he'll get his money back, and the bank will have someone waiting for you if you ever come back). Of course, the Netwatch op has to be able to *prove* that his losses were due to reprisals...

Netwatch operators generally just locate and immobilize net criminals, calling the local police (or sometimes corporate security) to go and actually pick them up. As often as not, however, "net show-downs" occur where black ice is traded like gunfire by ops and runners. Unfortunately, sometimes the ops are the only ones armed...

Netwatch ops run the gamut in quality, largely depending on the region. The Eurotheatre fields some excellent talent, but most exceptional runners in the U.S. strike out on their own, so the Netwatch ops there tend towards a slightly lower grade. Regional guidelines are noted in each section. Just choose the appropriate skill level from the runner templates on pg. 151.

Their equipment can vary widely as well, but often local corps are willing to "donate" equipment to Netwatch ops in return for favors (extra coverage on corporate systems or turning a blind eye to corporate misdeeds). Portability is important for most ops, except in Europe where they often have permanent mainframes. Elsewhere, access to many corporate and government mainframes for Netwatch purposes is usually just a matter of asking (again in return for expected favors).

BARKERBURGERS

See page 34 and *Home of the Brave*, pg.107 for complete details.

good intentions. These shameless tactics were pioneered last century by American witch-hunters and communist leaders, and were refined to an art by the politically correct of the 90's and the reformation movement of the early part of this century. Everyone is falling for these tactics yet again, because no one thinks anybody would be so stupid as to try them once more. There's nothing I hate more than revolutionary jargon, especially when it comes from Netwatch.

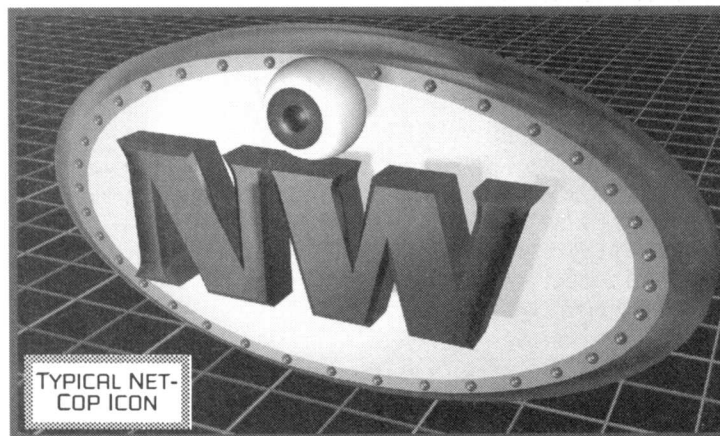
Netwatch goons don't even pretend to get anything out of their antics other than self-gratification.

The other main facet of Netwatch which makes me blow chunks all over my cyberdeck is that they interfere with situations before they know what's going on. A good friend of mine named ran against Petrochem, to reveal their plans to develop Philogaia (right in the middle of the Yukon Flats National Monument). He got out with the full Petrochem/Freightrunners agreement and was heading for the Alaskan State Media Buffer Board when Netwatch caught up with him. They held him until Petrochem 'runners came to reclaim their secrets. As a result, Yukon Flats got destroyed, Netwatch got to blow their own horn for the 'good job' they'd done, and two weeks later Dex turned up dead in an oil storage tank. Petrochem framed him for attempted sabotage and confiscated all his goods. This really pissed me off, so I declared war on Petrochem. You can thank me for making **Barkerburgers** a reality. It was the least I could do.

Unfortunately, Netwatch does not have a central system. They are spread throughout the Net like mildew in a bathroom, else I would have crashed their entire system years ago. So beware. The malevolent and cunning little bastards are most congregated in the American and European locales, but they can be found just about everywhere in the Net, pretending to be do-gooders. Don't let 'em tool you.

THE OTHER SIDE

[In the interests of balance, I have included an excerpt from an interview with Jason Drow, one of the charter 'runners of Netwatch. This interview was conducted by me over the Net using a pseudonym. If he'd known who was interviewing him, I wouldn't be here. - SM]



TYPICAL NET-COP ICON

"The only truly secure system is one that is powered-off, cast in a block of concrete and sealed in a lead-lined room with armed guards – and even then I have my doubts."

– Eugene H. Spafford

"So why did I join Netwatch? Look at it this way. Society is sinking fast. Everyone, everywhere, is looking out for their own interests at the expense of everything else. I don't like it. Most folks don't care what the results of their actions are in the long run, so long as they themselves are a little better off now. That kind of attitude is what led to the Crash, and to the horrifying levels of pollution the world over.

"And yet there are still some people with vision. Some people still care about the other person. Take the Holy Church of God in Night City. This church still feeds the homeless. They still do a lot of charity work. They care, and they're working to make tomorrow a better place than today.

"There are plenty of others, too. People who believe in doing legitimate business instead of stealing. People who use the Net for the betterment of everyone. These people need help, because when self-obsessed 'runners like Edger or Bartmoss or the Slasher come through, they're in for big trouble.

"That's why I'm doing my part. As part of Netwatch, I know that there's at least one netrunner (that's me) who puts the interests of others before his own. I do everything I can to make sure that all business is legal, all data is secure, and no one dies at the hands of a technopath like Slasher.

"Mind you, Netwatch has gotten a lot of bad press, but I think that's because people don't understand what we're up against. First off, we can't be 100% certain of our own people. There have been some Netwatch 'runners who get an ego problem, turn into bullies. I even had to track

INTRODUCTION

HYPERTEXT

JASON DROW

Netrunner

INT:9, REF:9, TECH:8, COOL:8,
ATTR:8, LUCK:8, MA:7, BODY:6
EMP: 4

Skills:

Interface 8

Awareness/Notice 6, Composition
6, Education/Gen.Know. 7, Pro-
gramming 7, System Knowledge 8,
Basic Tech 5, Cyberdeck Design 5,
Cyber Tech 3, Electronics 6, Per-
suasion and Fast Talk 8, Leader-
ship 6, Interrogation 6

Cyberdeck:

Custom Kenjiri deck with: 50 MU,
Data walls 8
Options: Cellular portable, Wet-
Drives w/links (*Chromebooks 1 &
2*), micro-computer links (*Chrome-
book 2*), cyberdeck security sys-
tems (*Chromebooks 1 & 2*), Virtual
BBS add-ons (*Chromebook 2*)
Sometimes uses workstation-level
(CPU 2-3) computers w/cyber-con-
trols and add-on modems for
netrunning.

Program Mix:

Anything on the books that he
needs (corporate-supplied, of
course) plus some special stuff he
wrote himself.

Note: Jason will actually try to take
'runners alive if he is not attacked
himself. Unless he's in a bad mood,
or his girlfriend walked out on him,
or any other of a huge list of rea-
sons. On second thought, count on
black ice flying if he can rational-
ize it.

down one of our own who went over the Edge. But most of our people are good, and a lot of the reports we get are unsubstantiated, pure slander, or the result of someone impersonating a Net-watch operative.

"Another problem we have is that we have to operate within the letter of the law. We cannot interpret the law, or make value judgments, or else we slip from being law-enforcement operatives to being vigilantes. We don't want that. We want the support of the corporations and the governments and the public at large, so we follow our code of conduct rigidly, whether, as individuals, we might think otherwise.

"The funny thing is that the Net thieves who see us as an obstacle bitch like holy hell when we don't stop someone from snatching their secrets or crashing their decks. Sorry.

"We do our best, though, given what we have to work with. Most of us work out of local offices with whatever equipment we can scrounge or borrow. Netwatch has enough to keep us all relatively state-of-the-art, but many of the criminals we're up against have the absolute latest stuff. On the other hand, our partisan style of warfare is well-suited to keeping the felons on their toes. They know we can jack in anywhere, any time.

"I can't talk any more. I should get back to patrolling. The more work we do, the better life will be. For everyone."

[What Jason Drow says about illicit 'runners whining is true. Even Edger threw some mud in their face when he got caught with his processors down. I can honestly say, though, that Bartmoss never whined about a lack of Netwatch protection. He was a firm advocate of personal responsibility, and he never expected anyone else to take care of his problems. - SM]

WHAT FOLLOWS

The rest of this file includes maps of the regions of the Net and information on many points of importance or interest. It is hardly all-inclusive; even if we could get a comprehensive Net atlas all in one gigantic file, it would be out-of-date by the time we got everything compiled.

Finally:

- 1) Make a copy of everything you steal before you sell it.
- 2) Bring a bodyguard 'runner with a lot of black ice.
- 3) Know the Net like the back of your hand.
- 4) Don't hang around gawking, it's not worth it.
- 5) Cover your ass by covering your deck.
- 6) Don't tell them anything.

CITY GRID ICONS

The following chapters contain several city grid maps. These show some of the more interesting dataforts of the area, but should not be considered complete by any means. The system symbols are shown below.



Long Distance Link (LDL)



Black Ice Datafort (Corporations, Governments, very exclusive places)



Datafort Level 3 (Secure companies, very tightly secured private grids)



Datafort Level 2 (Semi-secure companies, most "public" works")



Datafort Level 1 (Public companies, private data banks)



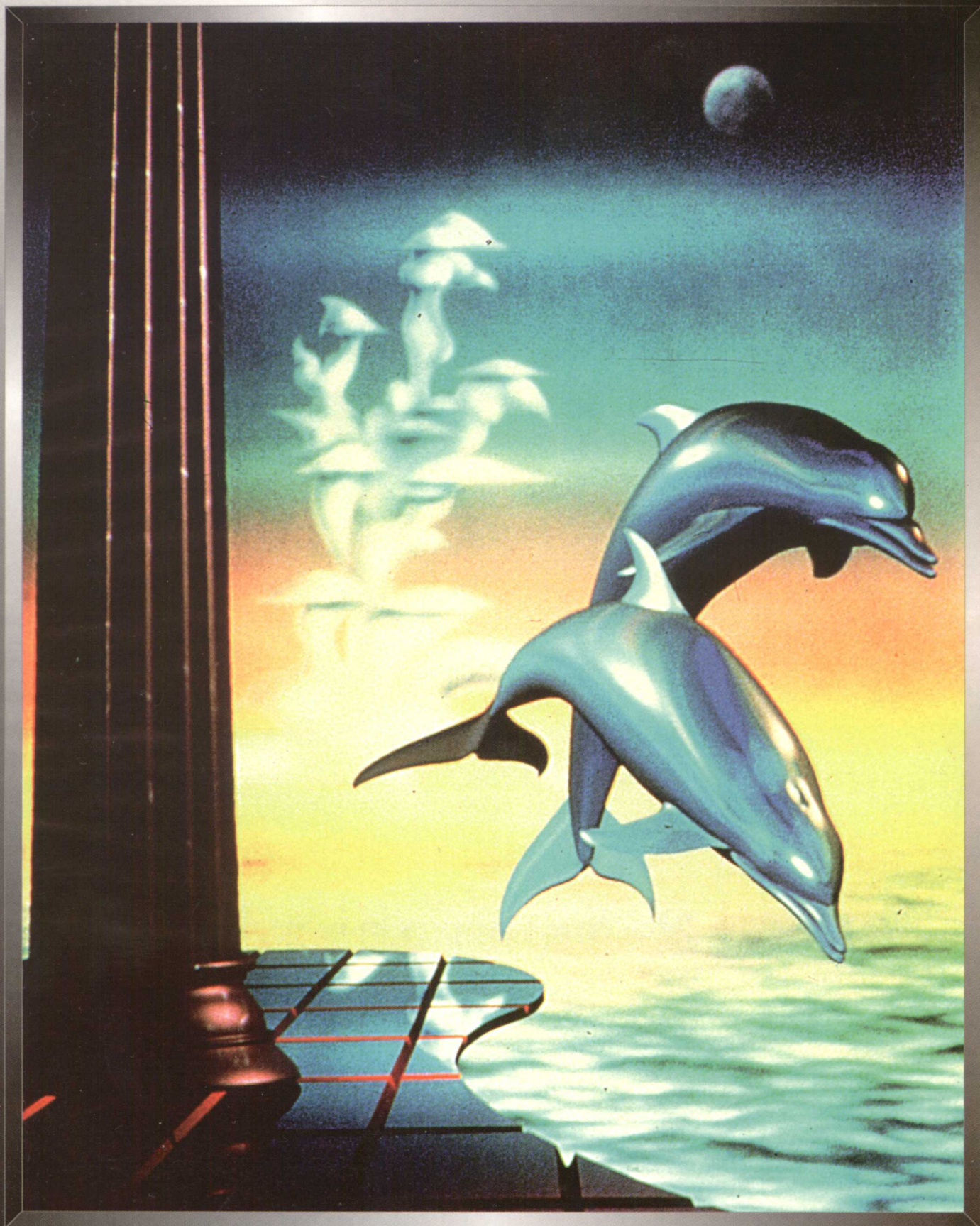
Public BBS (Virtual prostitution, public gatherings. Open at all times)



Private BBS (Private clubs. Open to members only)



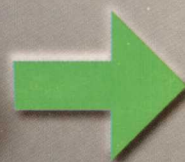
Public Datafort (Library, art gallery, university. Will often have a second, defended datafort for sensitive materials)



CHAPTER

2

PACIFICA



PACIFICA REGIONAL MAP



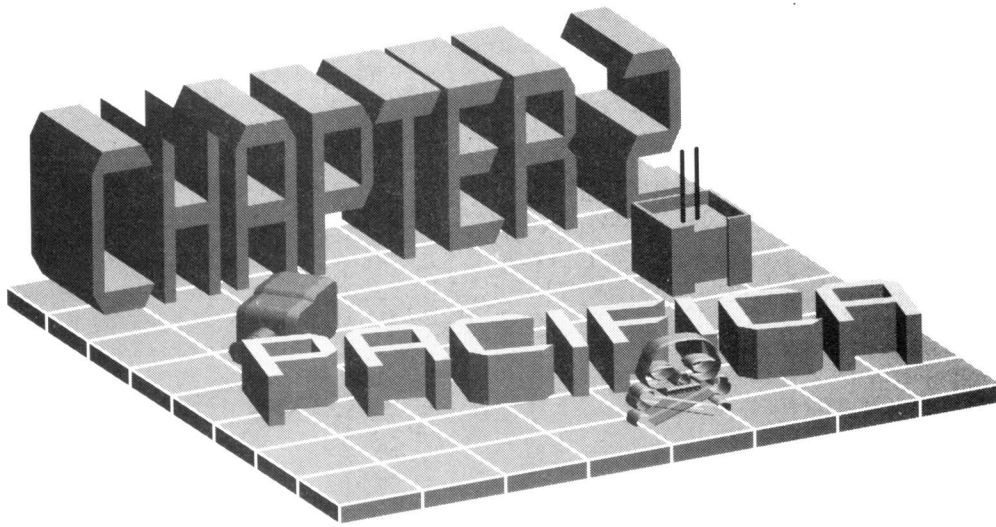
DATATERM

CIRCLED LDLS ARE THE WORLD LEVEL ACCESS POINTS AND ARE THE ONLY LDLS USABLE ON THE WORLD SCALE



CITY	CONTROLLED BY:	SECURITY LVL	TRACE VALUE
Anchorage	Netwatch/US Govt./Petrchem	2	3
Antarctic Relay	Netwatch/EEC	0	4
Brisbane	Netwatch/Aust. Govt.	2	2
Darwin	Netwatch/Aust. Govt.	2	2
Denver	Netwatch/US Govt./EBM	2	1
Dutch Harbor	Netwatch/US Govt./Petrchem	3	2
Fiji	Netwatch/France	3	2
French Polynesia	Netwatch/France	3	2
Galapagos	Various Corporations	1	1
Gilbert Islands	Shell Trader/Itself	3	3
Hong Kong	Netwatch/FACS	2	3
Honolulu	Netwatch/US Govt./EBM	3	2
Jakarta	Zaibatus	3	3

CITY	CONTROLLED BY:	SECURITY LVL	TRACE VALUE
Kiritimati Island	Shell Traders/whomever	1	3
Los Angeles/San Diego	Netwatch/US Govt./Petrchem	2	2
Manila	Netwatch/FACS/Zaibatus	1	3
Melbourne	Netwatch/Aust. Govt.	2	2
Midway	Netwatch/US Govt.	2	2
Night City	Netwatch/US Govt./Arasaka	2	2
Peking	Netwatch/FACS/Zaibatus	3	2
San Francisco	Netwatch/US Govt./EBM	2	2
Seattle	Netwatch/US Govt./Arasaka	2	2
Singapore	Netwatch/Merill, Asukaga, & Finch/FACS	3	3
Tokyo	Arasaka/Zaibatus/FACS	3	2
Wake	Netwatch/US Govt.	3	2
Wellington	Netwatch/Aust. Govt.	2	2



The largest of the Net regions, a vast territory sparsely settled with data forts, filled with incredible beauty and danger.

OVERVIEW

“I’m not doing anything, officer. I’m just watching the water. But there’s no place I’d rather be than here, and if you try to kick me out, block my trace, or otherwise interfere with me and my cyberdeck, I will kill you.”

– Angel, speaking to Netwatch

“Do not let the beauty dull your reflexes.”

– Edger

I will discuss Pacifica first for a number of reasons. First, because something has to come first, or else there won’t be anything more to this entire file. Second, because it was here that I earned my wings, running from the West Coast cities over vast distances to discover the evil that is Arasaka and the beauty that is the region. Third, it seems to me that Pacifica is the epitome of what all the Net should be: wide-open, beautiful, and with an occasional dragon to slay and roast over its own fire.

I also have very positive associations with Pacifica. **Alt** and I used to run the region shortly after it was formed. Last time I talked to her, she said those were her best netrunning memories. Don’t know where she’s gotten to now, it’s been at least a year since I talked to her. [More than that, folks, Alt was killed in 2012. By Arasaka. The incident did little to endear the company to Rache. - SM]

Pacifica runs practically from pole to pole, covering both Alaska and the Antarctic Relay Station in the pale blue blanket of its artificial seas, although in the Net the waters are all the same temperature and more or less the same color, and you really can’t jump in and get wet, which many consider a disadvantage, but I’ve never been keen on being shark chum either, so I count my blessings.

Pacifica also stretches almost halfway around the world east-west, running from Singapore and such places in the sweltering tropical equatorial malarial fungus-infested regions of Southeast Asia (but with very pretty buildings) all the way to the Galapagos Islands, or, if Atlantis is feeling a little under the weather, even into Lima and Santiago, which are where the space aliens did their first reconnaissance of the planet, landing on giant runways carved into the Andes. I don’t think these are the same **aliens that have infiltrated the Net**, first of all because they weren’t careful and left runways the size of McCartney Stadium scratched into the rock, and second of all they seem to prefer flying around in teacups to being in Netspace. Of course, there wasn’t really a Net at the time they landed, unless you count the Egypto-Mayan Telepathic Link, so maybe we can excuse them for using crockery for interplanetary travel.

Most of Pacifica is a vast expanse of nothingness bordering on Wilderspace. The LDL links that make up this region are stranded like castaways on remote Pacific islands in danger of being swamped by the rising sea levels. Wake, Midway, Kiritimati, and other such places are merely military or government or corporate rocks inhabited only by a few desultory crabs and a couple of corporate lackeys.

PACIFICA

HYPERTEXT

ALT

As described in *Never Fade Away* (CP2020, pg. 199), Alt’s mind was sucked into the Net via her own construct, the Soullkiller program, and has been living there ever since. Apparently, she has gotten quite used to it and now roams the Net at will.

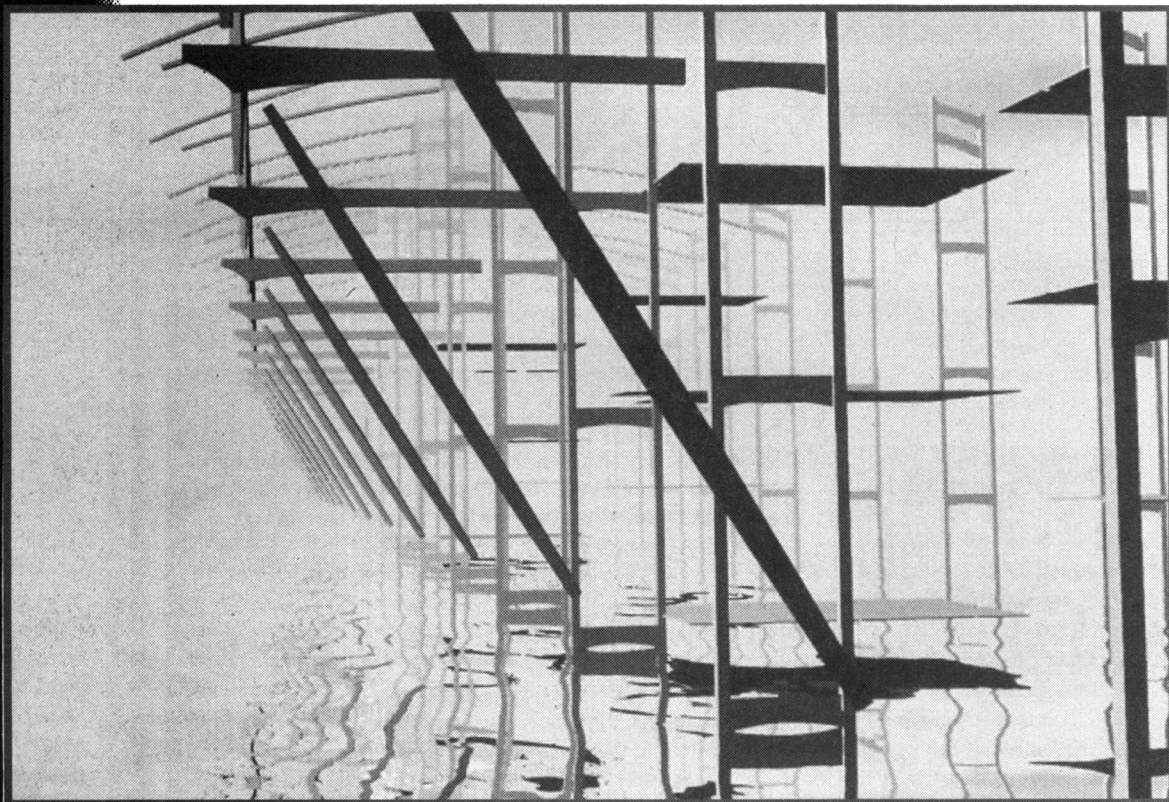
ALIENS THAT HAVE INFLTRATED THE NET

We put forth this possiblity in the CP2020 (pg.129), but we leave this option open to the GM for his or her own campaign (Come on, you’ve got a brain – make up your own mind). Don’t trust Rache on this one; he’s pretty close to being an alien himself and isn’t the best choice to identify ETs. Personally, we think that there are aliens in the Net already. They just don’tzzz
;i7<2^%&^(\$%9m-----
TRANSMISSION TERMINATED AT THE SOURCE.

CLEVER DOLPHIN PROGRAMS

Class: Utility; 310eb;
MU:5; STR: 3
Options: Psuedo-intellect, Movement, Endurance, Fractal Icon, Recognition.

These beautiful programs were actually installed by Internet to patrol Pacifica and clean out any garbage data which may have been generated by the extra-long link distances that exist in this region of the net. One-in-every six dolphin programs has a subtler function as well: they look for any transmission source which is not listed as a legitimate Internet user. In other words, if your physical location (meat) is IN the Pacifica region and you are NOT running clean and open, they have a 15% chance of discovering your attempt to bypass LDL billing every trip. They will then relay this information to an Internet sysop who will probably call Netwatch. At any other time, these programs will interact with 'runners just as real dolphins would, leaping and playing around the gridlines and LDLs of the region. Maybe Rache is right; you shouldn't trust anything that's too attractive...



The densest civilization in Pacifica is, unlike any other region, concentrated at the edges instead of in the middle. The US West Coast (is it really civilization, or does it just pretend to be?), Australia, Indonesia, and the Chinese Coast where they eat authentic Chinese food like still-gasping carp, all these are found at the very edge of the Pacifica Region, and, apparently, exist only to give the luxuriously empty center of the region enough support to be fully-realized.

If that's not enough justification for California chic and Philippine warfare, then I don't know what is.

Pacifica is a beautiful place to go; the most elegantly sculpted region of the Net. The entire region is covered by an incredibly-rendered virtual seascape. Crystal blue-green waters extend from horizon to horizon, unmarred by pollution or shipping of any sort, nothing but perfect clear crystalline liquid air. They've got the virtual water construct set up so that you can see all the way down to a limitless sea bottom, where glowing fishshapes dive between shifting mirage coral, pursued by **clever dolphin programs**, part AI and, like everything in the Net, and in fact everything that's worth anything, part illusion. I used to think that the fishshapes were bugs in the system, fractured files, viruses, and other such things, and that the dolphins were hunting them down and eliminating them to clean up the system and keep it free from attack. Then I thought they were just for show. But now, I've gathered some disturbing evidence that shows that the dolphins are the intruders, and the more fishshapes they eat, the more Pacifica will degenerate. I went dolphin-hunting for a while, armed with a killer program I rendered to look like a can of tuna, but I was bum-rushed out of the region by the natives. Still, I wonder what those dolphins were up to. Anything that looks that beautiful can't be trusted, can it?

[I checked the original programming for the dolphins, and yes, they are designed to keep the system clean of garbage data, and look good while doing it. Rache would argue this, simply because he once said he thought I was beautiful and therefore couldn't be trusted. That was right before he loaned me his prototype cyberdeck. - SM]

The sky that hangs above the ever-expanding ocean is every bit as peaceful as the sea. It has no point source of light, but is merely a series of hazy zones of color, slowly shifting hue, intensity and brightness to make an ever-new horizon of misty beauty and tranquillity. Two moons hang in the sky, to help netrunners keep track of local time, which is as pointless a concept as I can think of short of careful financial planning. The lighter of the moons represents the sun in its current position, so a netrunner can look up and check the approximate local time whenever he wants. This is important to some people, because we're talking a good eight or ten-hour spread of time zones across this region and some folks value sleep over adventure.

And the darker moon? The darker moon represents the moon, what else?
Spread like a gossamer web across the region is the network of LDL links. Each of these links appears in the Net as an individual work of modern abstract art.

Woah. Hey. I know what you're thinking. Modern abstract art sucks. Yes, it does. Most modern abstract art is either something like Fatal Nose Pick, which has a railroad spike covered in a condom inserted into the skull of a child and is on display at the Capitol Art Complex; or else looks like those things you see in front of office buildings which are reminiscent of brown steel intestines more than anything else. "My four-year-old can do that stuff," most parents exclaim, but I think that's insulting to the kids, because their work at least is done for the love of it. Modern artists are leeches. They don't work, but instead claim that they are 'inspired artists' and get a government loan for a few billion dollars so they can buy a welding torch and fuse together a few scraps they picked out of a dumpster. Then they spent the rest of their cash on drugs and stuff and talk to the press about how the world doesn't understand them. I understand them fine, and if I ever meet one in the Net I'll kill him artfully. Artists have always survived, especially without government grants, and, as Kerry Eurodyne once said, "Hunger pushes you to the edge." [Actually the quote was "Hunger gives you the Edge," and it was Johnny Silverhand. - SM]

But as I was saying, the LDL icons are nothing like that. They are truly esoteric and beautiful modern art sculptures; modern art the way it was supposed to be, because each was done for the love of it by an Internet or free-lance programmer. Each LDL is a unique work, and is in fact the only definitive identifying feature at each LDL. Sure, if you learn your architecture, you'll be able to recognize data forts and such, but don't expect to see a big neon sign saying "Welcome to Richmond, the armpit of the planet" like they have in some other feckless regions. At an LDL, you can see the other nearby LDLs, and you either **have to recognize the statuary** or know your planetary geography to tell where to go next. But hey, if you can't keep a dozen unique sculptures straight, you probably don't have the brain power to be in the Net in the first place.

The city grids are floating islands which surround these LDLs, hovering gently above the diamantine waters of the region. These cityscapes combine the very best of classical architecture and simple minimalist design, creating a vision of a paradise that is too true to be mere fiction. I sometimes think that mankind's next evolutionary step will be to become immersed completely in the Net, leaving behind the drab polluted planet of physical reality. Of course, the corporations want just the opposite, because they know they can't control us in the Net. Heck, if we were Net beings, they couldn't even sell us a can of fresh air like they do now, convincing us we need it so we won't vomit every time we smell how bad they're polluting our planet by making the fresh air cans.

I keep getting away from the subject of city grids. Transcribing this stuff is like trying to balance a jello broomstick on the tip of your finger. My thoughts are running around like rats, and I can't seem to catch them all, at least not all at once. My best bet is to trap them in a corner and crush them with a pointed-toed boot. I wonder if there's maybe some frost or something which has caused my brain to be rewired slightly?

City grids. Okay.

The city grids float above the water, with gravity-defying tiles or planks making up the grid-work of the area, or at least they would were there any gravity in the Net. There are paving stones, too, which look kind of like a traditional artist's palette. These items determine where you can move around in Pacifica, which is real handy, since the interconnections in Pacifica are so few and far between. There is, in fact, even more unconnected area in Pacifica than in Afrikani. The data forts, at least externally, are built along similar lines, with columns, balustrades, and tabula rasas looking for all the world like a floating ruin rebuilt to modern functionality. The surfaces of the items in Pacifica are all smooth and reflective, although some have unusual tints or hidden lighting to add additional flavor instead of merely echoing and reechoing everything around.

Like Atlantis, Pacifica does not use the classic **virtual elevation gains** to represent poor transmissions and high resistance lines. In places where electronic traffic is impeded (like the Gilberts, or anywhere there's a hurricane or typhoon), the sky and water grow noticeably darker and more ominous. I was on Honolulu doing some work during Hurricane Bartmoss [Hurricane Bertha in 2017 - SM] when the weather got so bad I could hardly see. The sky was almost black, with just a tinge of red, and the water was so choppy that it was spurting up between the gaps in the hovering tile walks, and the tiles themselves were actually quivering and wavering a bit as the AI tried to keep them rezzed. The problem was that the programs I encountered were not as affected as I was, and the next thing I knew there was a Firestarter in my deck, trying to overcome my protection programs and blow my mind. Fortunately for me, though, the hurricane finally downed the LDL's power supply, and I was ejected from the deck.

Over all, Pacifica is a beautiful place, or at least it would be were not the corporations around. But hey, true paradise would be boring, right folks? I mean, what would you do?

PACIFICA

HYPERTEXT

HAVE TO RECOGNIZE THE STATUARY

To simulate this is game terms, have the netrunner make an *Average System Knowledge* roll every time he needs to move to another LDL. This represents the need to keep the various LDL images straight as you move around. This can shift to *Easy* as the netrunner becomes more familiar with Pacifica (GM's call).

VIRTUAL ELEVATION GAIN

As described under the *Netrunning* section of *Cyberpunk 2020* (pg.128) areas of high line resistance (older, metallic lines) and/or interference (more common in cellular-linked areas), are shown as "mountains:" ripples and folds in the grid-fabric of the Net. Non-LDL travel through these areas can be slowed from 5 squares/Net round to 3, or even 1. This sort of "terrain" is most apparent at the sub-grid and city-grid levels. Occasionally, if the trouble is big enough, you will see changes in the regional map itself. When such terrain changes reach an LDL or uplink point, they may force it to drop off-line, throwing a runner using that link back to a previous Net position.

PACIFICA HYPERTEXT

PERSONALITY IMPLANT

Hmmm, is Rache pulling our leg here? Several times in the text, Rache indicates that he can download other personalities into his head. This is not standard 2020 technology, but then, Rache isn't your standard 2020 type of guy either (*Damn straight!*—Rache). It's probably just author's license, but IF he could do this, then it would probably act like a personality module (moddie) from *When Gravity Falls* which has been adapted to work in a chipware socket. See page 49 of that supplement if your players are dying to have Rache's personality live on in their skulls, although *we* fail to see the attraction.

POWER PLAYERS

“We cannot control the world until we first control Pacifica.”

— Kei Arasaka private conference with Saburo
(tape stolen by Rache Bartmoss)

“It's wide open in Pacifica. With the long links and corporations at the fringes, it's like having a city made of nothing but subways. If we can do a good job here, we'll clear the name of Netwatch the world over.”

— Magnificent Curtis

The Pacifica region is not as uniform in external control as the other regions are, if only because the region is so large as to allow several players in the power game to wield influence over various parts thereof without being in each others' interfaces all the time. It's a big enough area that each of the blood-hungry jackals striving to control the region can have a power base, sphere of influence, stable borders and such things without stepping on each others' toes at every turn, which would, of course, provoke a fight.

Personally, I like balkanization, because although it inevitably leads to wars, it keeps the balance of power from being concentrated in the hands of one madman. I'll take twenty madmen over a single one any day. In fact, I wish I were twenty madmen instead of one, because we could have some killer parties and run the Net like a pack of banshees. Anyone willing to receive a Rache Bartmoss personality implant please contact Spider Murphy; I'll be happy to download my personality into you. You'll be glad you did. Life is so much more interesting when reality changes often enough to keep your brain on its toes, you know what I mean? If brains had any toes, that is. Which they don't. Usually.

Okay, so here's the deal.

The eastern fringes of the Pacifica region are none other than the over-hyped West Coast of the United States, and, as such, technically fall under the jurisdiction of the United States Provisional Government Traveling Puppeteer Troupe and Sideshow, and their pet alligator, Netwatch. I say pet alligator, because nobody that I know who has one ever actually takes a bath any more, and having Netwatch around is something like that, not that I know anything about their personal hygiene habits (other than Jason Drow's, that is).

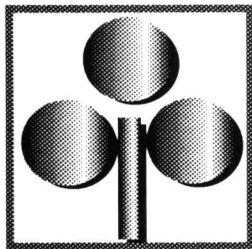
This razzle-dazzle dynamic duo extend their enfeebled clutches out to Hawaii and Alaska, although only with the nod of the corporations which dominate the coast in a manner similar to the situation in Olympia.

Farther out, we run into a more muddled situation, which is hardly surprising considering the number of governments and corporations involved in shaking this thing out.

In the central Pacific, we have LDLs at Midway and Wake, both of which are US government-controlled. There are also LDLs in the Gilberts and Kiritimati Island, which are relatively free, and France puts in its say with a holding in French Polynesia. Down in the southwest portion of the region, we run into the relatively open territories of New Zealand and Australia, where they still, inexplicably, think Americans are pretty cool.

The western edge of the Pacifica region is dominated by the zaibatsus under the thin veil of the Far Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, which is dedicated to the prosperity of the mainland being co-owned by the zaibatsus through an implementation of smear and fear, which is best abbreviated 'sphere'.

The main power struggles in the region involve Arasaka, the FACS, Netwatch, and the USPG. The others know better than to get in a scrap with the big boys. Best to let them tear each other apart and pick up the pieces.



ARASAKA

The Great Galloping Gastropod has an unusual situation in Pacifica, one which I can almost relate to on a personal level; their base of operations is about as far from their nerve center as its possible to get (at least in this region). I say I can relate, because sometimes I feel like an outsider looking at my brain the way a chimp would look at a battle tank, trying to figure out what controls what and wondering what might be crushed before it gets brought under control.

Arasaka, is based out of Tokyo, which is where we ought to drop the next bomb, because Saburo's got to go. Sure, folks would complain about the deaths, but how many people get killed a year by Arasaka goons, huh? The only reason people don't complain about that is that they only happen one at a time instead of a whole bunch painlessly incinerated in a fireball, and if the press ever reported the actual figures, Arasaka goons would come a knockin' on their skulls with neat little ginsu ball-peen hammers which never need sharpening.

WATCHES THE
WATCHERS

This means that the Australians keep control of the enforcement end. It will be Australian police that apprehend any criminals located by Netwatch and they will be tried in state courts. In addition, any "excessive force" used by Netwatch will be prosecuted, so the sysops tend to be on their best behavior here. Of course, if you're dead or a brain-fried vegetable, it's kinda hard to press charges.

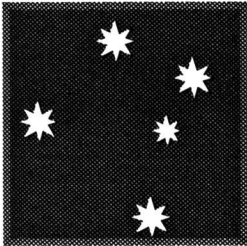
That's why I'll come out and say it here. Arasaka kills about 30,000 people a year, at least that's as close as I can get through my investigation of various files. Most of these are, of course, branded as 'felons, regrettably not captured alive'. Oh. Okay. That makes everything kosher.

Speaking of kosher, did I ever tell you I'm Jewish? If I did, I was lying.

In Pacifica, however, Arasaka's stronghold is on the US West Coast; they have firm control of Night City and Seattle, and a strong position in LA and Dutch Harbor as well.

As near as I can tell, having followed their activities for years, they are trying to consolidate their hold on the West Coast, in part to separate the zaibatsus from the US. If they can accomplish this, they'll be in the position to regulate Net traffic between the US and Japan. The only other choice would be to go the other way around the world, which can be done, but it's a bit of a pain for most corporate execs who don't like having to exercise more than signing pink slips (firing notices) or red slips (firing squads) for people they don't like.

If they succeed, they could presumably spread their dominion westwards, back to their homeland, the corporate mutant coming home to rest.

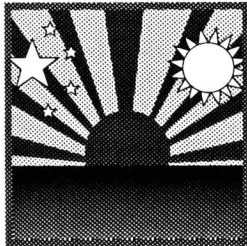


AUSTRALIA/NEW ZEALND

Like Kiribati (below), Australia and New Zealand aren't so much power players because of what they are, but because of what they are not. They are not influenced by either the zaibatsus (which they have not allowed to get a major foothold in their territory), nor by the US government (which they consider the worst thing the American public has produced in recent years). They are pro-American (strange, but excusable) and lobby for a free Net.

They allow Netwatch on their turf, but they in turn **watch the watchers**, so it's not so bad. As they heavily influence the policy of Fiji, these countries effectively control access to the Antarctic Relay LDL.

Although I don't support Netwatch in any way, shape, or form, were I forced to accept their existence, the situation in Australia and New Zealand is the least bad solution I have yet seen. I've been trying to convince them to go the final step and push Netwatch out, but they haven't yet done so. Between that, and thinking that Americans are by and large pretty neat, I really wonder about the Aussies sometimes.



FAR ASIAN CO-PROSPERITY SPHERE

“Everywhere there's lots of piggies,
Leading piggy lives.
You can see them out to dinner
With their piggy wives,
Clutching forks and knives
To eat their bacon.”

— the Beatles

The Far Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere (that's the FACS) is a powerful entity. Tokyo/Chiba falls under the domain of the FACS Supervisory Board, which is ignored by all, but out here in Pacifica (and Wilderspace) it's the FACS Executive Board which runs the show, and they are a fearsome sight indeed. Almost as bad as the Albuquerque woman who might have been my mother-in-law had I not come out of my coma in time.

The Far Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere is the front man for the zaibatsus taken as a collective whole, and which, when so taken, are enough to make a politician vent. See, even though the zaibatsus are at each others' throats all the time, and even though they fight amongst themselves like cybernetically-enhanced kittens at the teat of their dead mother, the zaibatsus have many common goals, among which is global domination. Traditionally, the zaibatsus have been too busy fighting amongst themselves to actually make much headway into global domination other than the occasional bombing of American ports followed by major overland offensives on the consumer electronics front. I myself am proud to say I use exclusively American-made cyberdecks, which is to say I put them together myself from the parts of the other decks that I've thrown against the wall or crammed down the disposal in frustration.

Personally, I think that the reason Arasaka has been ostracized by the zaibatsus is that they actually got within a step or two of global domination without the permission of their peers in the zaibatsus. I couldn't be happier with the arrangement myself; the more enemies Arasaka has, the better I feel. Nevertheless, Arasaka's success was a goad to the zaibatsus, and they formed the FACS to further their goals, at least in the Tokyo/Chiba and Pacifica regions, and East Asia in general.

FACS RUNNERS

These will usually be Mid-level runners with 25% being Pro level (see pg.151 in the Rules Appendix). All will carry a serious work ethic. Don't try to bribe your way out with these people.

FRENCH NETRUNNERS

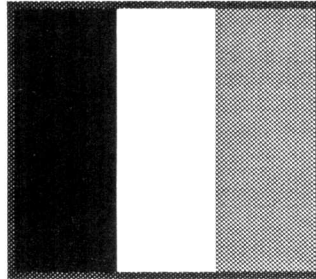
Rare, but talented operators, these folks are Pro runners (per page 151 of the Rules Appendix). There is a 20% chance of encountering one at any LDL within the French domain. Outside of that, they will probably ignore you.

The FACS Executive board is a well-manned crew of power-hungry zaibatsu toadies who think nothing of selling their entire life to the zaibatsus on the chance that they themselves may claw their way to the top and then they'd only have to sell their lives to the stockholders, who are, of course, zaibatsus. The point of such an undertaking is beyond me. "Gee, you mean I'd be the most powerful slave in all the world?"

As a result, the **FACS runners** in Pacifica are well-trained, well-equipped, and ill-mannered. Their influence extends primarily throughout Southeast Asia, covering the LDLs at Jakarta, Hong Kong, Manila, and Singapore. They are not well-liked in the region.

Like the French, the FACS runners are unpredictable, as they work for the convoluted aims of the inscrutable oriental zaibatsu think tanks. Whatever the zaibatsus think would advance their mutual aims, or whatever everyone in the FACS thinks would help every zaibatsu but one, is the plan they follow. Fortunately, even the FACS is prone to the occasional zaibatsu cannibalism, but they all put up with it, because they all know that nine times out of ten they'll have a napkin at their neck instead of a serving tong in their liver.

In a nutshell, then, the FACS is ensconced at the west end of Pacifica, just as Arasaka is at the east end. The Far Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere is, in fact, best treated as an Arasaka by Committee: very lethal, just a little slower and less comprehensible.



FRANCE

The French are a bit of an anomaly in Pacifica, because they really don't belong. In fact, some would say the French don't belong anywhere, but I think the Jarre musical dynasty has proven them wrong. Everyone in Pacifica lives in the region, even the Netwatch people, loathsome as they are. But the only French claim to having an interest in Pacifica is that they hold onto French Polynesia, which is (I checked it) an "Overseas Territory" which means, in popular but not politically-correct parlance, a colony, or perhaps even a slave state.

I'm not sure what France's aims here are, yet. Sometimes it seems that they are being used as a front for the EC, to keep tabs on Pacifica and expand the European influence around the globe. At other times, it seems that France is trying to use this unprecedented opportunity to get a leg up on their German competition for EC dominance.

Most likely, it's a bit of both.

I'm sure the EC recognizes the political gains it could make through a strong presence here, both in applying pressure to influence Pacific politics and in the opportunities this location offers for EC and free-lance netrunning. The EC (which is heavily influenced by the French) would thusly provide financial assistance to the French in return for 'future considerations', which is a polite way of saying 'nothing'.

As for their own national stakes, I know of few French runners who wouldn't leap at the chance to hang out in Tahiti in exchange for a few runs in the most beautiful region in the Net. The downtime would be pleasant, the uptime exciting, and they'd get the additional perk of getting to run against such evil things as Arasaka. Of course, everything has its price, and in this case it would be working for the French government, but the French don't seem to mind it as much as I do.

The French government hasn't treated me well, at least not since I got into their postal routing office and had a few thousand pounds of raw escargot delivered to their government mailroom (which is not refrigerated) right after everyone went home for the midsummer holidays. It was really easy, though, just switching a few invoice numbers. I've been thinking of doing the same to Pacific island flights around the French Polynesia / Kiribati / Fiji area. Just think of it; musical islands!

French netrunners, when encountered, are some of the best, although they show the signs of being born and bred in the stately Eurotheatre region. They have skill and speed and good equipment and state-of-the-art programs, but they lack the vision and imagination of us street-bred scoundrels. I mean, they couldn't figure out how to edit a Firestarter to heat a burner on a stove without melting it, you know what I mean? French runners are also somewhat unpredictable, because their motives seem to change so often. Politics, you know. It rots the brain, like water rots wood. That's why I don't drink water. Immerse your brain in politics long enough and it will bloat and get soft and start splitting along the grain and get infested with snails which you can only remove with long thin tongs inserted up your nose, until finally your brain gets tossed out by the currents of public opinion and cast up on a polluted shore and someone takes it home to make a sculpture for his mantelpiece, assuming he has one.



KIRIBATI

The Republic of Kiribati is a tiny little country which covers thousands of square miles. This is only possible through the use of cays, or tiny coral reefs which poke just enough above sea level to prevent the inhabitants from gargling on sea urchins, so instead they die gargling in their own blood at the hands of street urchins. Just kidding. These are cays, not decays like you find in the 'industrialized nations'.

I'm sure that England regrets having given up this territory, especially since those in power seem to enjoy beating up on disgruntled natives, and have for hundreds of years. Were the Brits still here, they'd probably set up a **GILGIMARLAUTH** or some other cantankerous mosh of authoritarian names like that, and then they'd land about a division of disaffected Irishmen armed with half-bricks to enforce law and disorder in the area and beat up on the occasional rich tourist and throw him into the drink for the sharks, assuming the natives didn't eat him first.

Instead, Kiribati does not have the benefits of experienced British rule, so everyone is more or less well-fed and content, and no one goes around beating up on wogs and foreigners, even though if they were here, the Brits would be the strangers, and the natives would be, well, natives.

Kiribati tried to set itself up as the east-west channel of choice for netrunners. Apparently the government was hoping that they could let runners head back and forth between Japan and the US while bypassing most of the American-dominated LDLs in the Pacific. They were, of course, going to levy a surcharge against the netrunners to allow them to do so, a sort of free-passage tax. Otherwise they'd confiscate your files or something.

Of course, the reality of the modern world was more than they expected.

The government damn near broke itself to install the LDLs, which they were only able to afford to do through a grant from Internet. They set up their LDLs, made their no-peek announcement, and immediately afterward, every runner heading across the Pacific started piling through their gate. The **government runners** couldn't keep up with the demand, and when they tried, they found their programs and skills were no match for most of the people coming through here who didn't want to pay anything to anyone for any reason.

Kiribati appealed to Netwatch for aid, but Netwatch demanded that the government take a firm stand against computer piracy, something they weren't willing to do, because they still had a dream of making money off the prospect.

In the end, Kiribati runners started to drop like flies before desperate intruders zipping home or enraged zaibatsu counter-insurgency runners, and others resigned before they themselves got killed. The Kiribati government eventually had to close their Department of Net Commerce and admit defeat. Since then, the LDLs have fallen in quality, due to poor maintenance at the hands of the disenchanted government, although as a byproduct of this, the security here is so loose as to be nonexistent.

In fact, the only reason I list Kiribati as a power player in the region is that they still hold on to two of the important trans-Pacific LDLs, and if they get their act together, or some group of runners in the area does so, they could again become a force to be reckoned with. (In fact, check out *The Shell Traders*, pg. 35.)



NETWATCH

The International Net Narc and Bully Brotherhood has only a very little legal power here, although they patrol the entire area as 'concerned volunteers'. They have by treaty (read: 'sell-out') the right to patrol US soil, which in this case includes the West Coast, Alaska, and Hawaii. In fact their power in this region is severely limited in the same fashion as it is in Olympia, as the corporations have set up their own patrol systems in the major Pacifica city grids.

Netwatch is also active in the Australia / New Zealand area, where they operate under a rather restrictive agreement. When you get right down to it, though, Netwatch is really a European organization, and as such they are strongest in the French Polynesia area of the region.

[Astute readers will notice that Rache's comments of Netwatch in this section are both short and comparatively non-caustic. There's a reason for this, although Rache himself would never admit to it, is that Netwatch in the Pacifica region has the best record by far of anywhere in the world.

[Under the guidance of **Magnificent Curtis**, a Fiji-based netrunner, Netwatch has largely become what it is supposed to be: policemen of the Net. Now wait a minute, cyberpunks, and listen before you go frothing at the mouth like the esteemed Bartmoss. When I say 'policemen', I'm

PACIFICA

HYPERTEXT

GILGIMARLAUTH

This refers to the British Martial Law Authority divisions of the British Isles, each of which have equally bizarre names due to military-speak, i.e. the London Urban Martial Law Authority or LONDUR-MARLAUTH. See *Eurosource*, pg. 11 for more.

GOVERNMENT RUNNERS

These would be, at best, Mid-level runners (See Rules Appendix, pg.151), which would explain why they got mowed under by the traffic of hot-shooters rampaging through their LDLs. There are still a few on duty, but the chance of encountering one is negligible (5%).

NETWATCH

Netwatch's presence in Pacifica is fair, especially considering how big it is. If you blow your LDL roll, there is a 25% chance of getting observed by a Netwatch operator at each LDL that you pass through in the Pacifica region. Operators will generally be better than a Mid-level runner with some (25%) being Pro-level.

Pacifica Netwatch Operative Netrunner

INT: 8, REF: 7, TECH: 8, COOL: 8, ATTR: 6, LUCK: 7, MA: 6, BODY: 7
Skills:

Interface 5, Awareness Notice 5, Composition 3, Education/General Know. 5, Programming 6, System Knowledge 7, Basic Tech 6, Cyberdeck Design 6, Cybertech 2, Electronics 3, +19 points in Pickup Skills.

Same equipment and software as a Pro-runner.

MAGNIFICENT CURTIS

See his background and stats on

THE AI THAT IS

THE PACIFICA REGION

Okay, we've already said that this sort of AI is optional in your campaign, so feel free to treat this as one of Rache's many delusions. (Rache is big on conspiracies and aliens. Of course, he's right more often than wrong. Which way would you bet, if your life depended on it?) If you like the idea of transcendental AIs in your campaign, see pg. 96 in the Eurotheatre section for more of Rache's theys and ramblings.

not talking corporate cops, and I'm not talking the typical sadistic ego-trippers which patrol most city streets. I am referring to the idealized image of police that cultures the world over have held to for years, but seldom realized: the protector of the innocent.

[There are a few of them left on the various forces. In my time, I've encountered a few myself. A Houston cop named Audie Cole held some of my meatboy friends and me after we'd made a run against some drug-runners. After carefully cross-questioning us, he saw that we had a tenuous legal right to claim self-defense, and he let us go after taking statements and addresses. He'd been trying to find a way to bust that ring for a year, but never found an angle. In his eyes, the dealers brought their punishment on themselves, and the streets were a little cleaner for it. Max Hammerman of Night City is another such cop. A little rough around the edges; in fact, he broke my collarbone when slamming me to the floor, but basically a good guy fighting a rotten war.

[This is what the runners of Netwatch Pacifica are like. Magnificent Curtis is their leader, and he is an idealist who demands perfection from his people. Thanks to his leadership and example, the Netwatch runners are even treated with respect by the Far Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere runners.

[The Pacifica Netwatch runners always move in a pack of at least four, to cover each others' backs and to obviate any chance of bribery and such. Peer pressure can do wonderful things, if the motives behind the pressure are good.

[If the rest of Netwatch followed this example more closely, I think it would be a popular organization. I know it certainly gives me hope.

[It is of interest to note that most of the Netwatch runners in Pacifica are older types, who have moved here in a sort of semi-retirement. It's a surprising situation, in a world where many of the old guard are doggedly holding to power and terror to keep down the savage and ruthless up-and-coming generation. It relieves me greatly to realize that the older generation can still find maturity instead of falling into the corporate power trap.

[In conclusion, here of all places in the Net, Netwatch is not the real enemy. Keep your cool, take your lumps if you get caught. You won't live to regret it, for the simple fact that if you don't take my advice, you won't live.

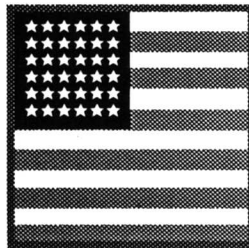
[Don't anybody tell Rache I put this in here. He'll kill me. - SM]

PACKER

Packer is the name I gave to **the AI that is the Pacifica region**. With a strong, loosely-woven neural network, Packer is very intelligent. The only thing that I have found that interests Packer is the illogical. Anything logical or informative is of no interest, and even something as weird and far-fetched as my consciousness can only entertain Packer for a few seconds. The rest of the time Packer meditates on the nature of reality.

Packer is very hard to talk to because it's so hard to get her attention. The last time I did, though, I got some really incredible programming out of it. I was describing some concepts I had on twisting reality inside out, and Packer was interested enough (which is to say—not much) to write me a few lines of virtual reality code. I spent a few weeks gnawing paint off the walls after testing it, and I think that's how I got lead poisoning. It also hospitalized me for a while, because I chewed a hole through to my neighbor's apartment and sheet rock doesn't go well with the digestive track, although it did remind me in a way of my subatomic adventures which I'll have to tell you about sometime. They happened a lot when I was in the hospital, but the doctor said they were just your average everyday near-death experiences. When I got out of the hospital I found that my neighbor had enlarged the hole and stolen my gear. He was pretty smart, though, because he moved before I got home, so I gassed the next occupants instead. Cold-hearted you say? Give me a break, it was just nitrous oxide.

So grab Packer's attention if you can. It's like playing Russian Roulette, but more flippant. Maybe you get a weird alternate reality sim and suck on your carpet until you get a grip again, maybe you get killer antiviral code, maybe something else entirely.



UNITED STATES PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

Surprisingly, the United States has more concentrated power here than in the Rustbelt or Olympia. This is because in certain areas their greasy influence hasn't been diluted by the malevolent presence of the EC or Netwatch.

Granted, the West Coast and Alaska have Netwatch and corporate concerns working their perverted little schemes, attempting to placate the public netranners by replacing the governmental grime with good old-fashioned corporate bile.

However, there is no such situation in the American-owned Pacific islands of Hawaii, Midway, and Wake. Here you get full-fledged unadulterated (well, actually very adulterated, we're

USPG RUNNERS

These are Pro-runners with an Interface skill and a *System Knowledge* of 7. They have Pro-level equipment, but a lot of black ice is included in their programs. These are hard-core vet-types who have been given the deadliest weapons available and the license to use them. Walk with care.

dealing with government types here) USPG fear and hatred. Expect the full force of the hammer of justice to fall on your skull if you get caught around here. The **USPG runners** around here are mostly Central American vets, and a little psycho besides. Not a good place.

The USPG realizes that they don't yet have the strength to make a bid for the control of the region, so they seem to be playing more of a spoiler, tripping up Netwatch, the FACS, or Arasaka to keep them all pretty even. As long as there's a balance of power in the region, the US will be able to exploit it. A lot of netrunners seem to like picking up government contracts, but I really don't understand how someone could have such a low self-esteem as to take payment from the fourth-string player in the region, let alone the USPG. Maybe government nurses injected them with brain tumors when they were born. It's a proven means of recruiting, you know. When a kid's a few hours old, they stick this needle in behind the curve of the jaw into the brain, and inject this tumorous tissue, and administer a few mild hallucinogens to keep the infant from being too well grounded in reality. Then, when the kid gets older, they bombard him with psychoganda and teach him netrunning. They let the kid practice against 'government' targets in a carefully-controlled urban reality setting, then they shoot unusual rays at his pillow when he sleeps. This stimulates the tumor, which simultaneously makes it hard for the victim to concentrate, and applies pressure to the hypothalamus or something. This makes the victim more susceptible to recruiting tactics, and the government even generously offers to remove the tumor when implanting the jacks. They then replace the tumor with a small microcomputer which monitors the victim's brain and applies electric stimulus to keep the worker addicted to government work.

CITY GRIDS

ANTARCTIC RELAY

There are many national research stations on the Antarctic continent, and this is the easiest way to reach them. Why anyone would want to do research on a giant block of ice and rock is beyond me. I personally don't find there to be anything remotely interesting about ice other than it covers my face at the moment. Prior to that, I only used to float a few ice cubes in my toilet bowl just to make people wonder, and that was the most interesting thing I came up with for ice other than dropping it off skyscrapers in British Columbia, which I think is a very stupid Canadian name because the place isn't British, and it isn't in South America. It's sort of like how stupid it would be for us to rename Oklahoma to Zulu Tibet; it just wouldn't make sense. On the other hand, the BCers have been able to resist joining the US Provisional Government despite continued pressures, so while their names are strange, they seem to be pretty smart other than ending every sentence with 'eh'. Of course, everyone down in California says 'neh' at the end of every sentence. Sounds like they're a bunch of horses.

Anyway, the relay is the domain of the UN, which is to say the EC, but the access is **free and unrestricted**. This is not a problem, because the relay only connects with the Antarctic stations, which are responsible for protecting their own data forts.

On the other side of the Antarctic relay are the US, Russian, Australian, and Argentine research station data forts, which are interesting places to visit because they are filled with hyper-intelligent socially inept scientists, who are all mildly insane from extensive exposure to cold temperatures.

JAKARTA & MANILA

These are the two cities which have the least independence in the Pacifica region. Everything else is more or less run by its own government, but these two are not so lucky, which is saying a lot, considering how I feel about governments, namely that they are a malignant cancer that eats away a nation's pride and ability to function, let alone to govern the governors. Second only to television, governments are the most debilitating invention of humanity, or inhumanity, which might be more appropriate in this case. This definition of course makes me liable for crimes against inhumanity, but do I care? Heck yeah! I revel in it! Which is exactly why I'm bringing Jakarta and Manila to your attention. They're being screwed, but at least we can help them to get screwed by their own people.

Manila is hampered by the fact that they've been fighting each other for years: NPA Communists and Marcos Fascists and Anarchists and Anderssohn Corporate Guards and Voodoo Cultists and everyone else, constantly take pot shots at each other and the government troops of the New Philippines. These fringe groups are so busy feeling left out of the new government that even if you succeed in organizing a cabal to push out the sinister zaibatsus' influences in the Net, they'll take their organization to the streets to shoot the other factions, and what have you got? A bunch of dead netrunners. Great. The government workers for the New Philippines are no source of runners, either. Their government has sold itself out to the Far Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere in return for large zaibatsu investments, and these folks feel that to attempt to throw off the zaibatsu

FREE AND UNRESTRICTED

This means Security level 9 and Trace value 4, but it isn't really free. Internet still has to maintain the connections to this relay and charges for their use; don't count on a free ride here, even if you just want to talk to the scientists. This isn't really a City Grid either, since access to the other bases involves a scale that is beyond the city grid level.

HYPERTEXT

SECOND CORPORATE
WAR

For more on this big-time hair-pulling contest (and on the SovOil position in general) see *Corpbook* 3.

HONG KONG

Please note that Hong Kong is a province which includes several islands and the New Territories on mainland China. The major cities are Victoria on Hong Kong Island and its opposite number, Kowloon, across the channel in the New Territories.

The city grid on the next page represents downtown Victoria.

MARLPROCO

This is the abbreviation for the British Martial Law Authority government. See *Eurosource*, pg.11 for more info.

yoke is tantamount to trying to remove a noose from around your neck by pulling hard on the rope. They have no sense of adventure, enslaved as they are to the almighty eurodollar.

In Jakarta, however, there is hope. Aside from the fact that the Javanese live on an island that's named after coffee, they're an upwardly-mobile group, or at least the business end of the economic pyramid is. The industries in Indonesia are uncoordinated and the government is weak, but they both hope to change that.

Both countries have the FACS workers running rough-shod all over their data bases, so much so that these areas are effectively zaibatsu-held. The largest opponent they have is SovOil, which won the right to fight them for the Indonesian oil fields as a result of the **Second Corporate War**.

I've managed to put together a group of like-minded individuals in Jakarta, but to get this land out from under the shadow of the FACS without falling under the heel of SovOil, they need more help. What better way to earn your Bartmoss Brownie Badge than helping a third-world country in need? Okay, sure, so a faster way to earn your Bartmoss Brownie Badge is to edit the President's fireside chat video file to have him dressed in drag, but I already did that, so you can't. Maybe you could turn his image into a child and augment his voice. That'd be different. Pretty soon they'll have to broadcast live just so we fun-loving runners can't 'correct' the video files to present a proper image of our elected (read: bought by the corps) leader.

GALAPAGOS

There's an LDL link at the east end of Pacifica, rudely built on the Galapagos islands. According to the information I was able to get, the building of this LDL and its support structure led to the extinction of several species, including, apparently, the Ethical Ecuadorean, which was ruthlessly hunted by the corporations and cannibalized by those compatriots who preferred to have the work. Once again, dogs and rats cause the extinction of yet another great species, and this one isn't even stuffed and displayed in a museum anywhere, which is a real shame because I could use some company.

Galapagos is normally under the sway of Pacifica, but occasionally it finds itself in the Atlantis region. The grid is also filled with the sweet smell of intrigue, as both Republic West Oil & PLastics and Freightrunners are here; RWO&P waiting for the opportunity to take down Petrochem and SovOil, and Freightrunners looking to make a play against Orbital Air with their planned Freightlifters branch. WNS also runs an office here, probably with an eye towards taking on WorldSat someday and feeding the world what it wants everyone to hear.

Although the virtual streets are sweet with espionage, I wouldn't recommend Galapagos to the casual visitor. Sure, the security is technically lax, but there are a lot of paranoid people around here, and you'll almost always be seen. And that, my friends, is what turns the casual visitor into a casual corpse.

HONG KONG

[By the time **Hong Kong** reverted to Chinese control in 1997, it was largely deserted. The Maoist Loyalist Cabal, which had seized power in 1995 from the merely hard-line Deng Xiaopeng, induced most of Hong Kong's residents to abandon the area and move to Britain or elsewhere in the Commonwealth. Once they were there, they of course found themselves under the thumb of the **MARLPROCO**, but at least they usually had food to eat.

[Little was left for the Chinese to take back, although they did have some large cities and a workbase of poor that was used to Western policies. A few companies did maintain branch offices here, with fearful employees waiting to see what would happen when the dragon came.

[It has come to pass that business is still done in Hong Kong, although much of it is illegitimate. The government does most of its foreign business through Hong Kong, and several of the companies have increased their offices here. The populace, by and large, remains aloof, working for a living and smuggling on the side. They are well-noted for ignoring the authorities. Most have guns of some sort, and they outnumber the security forces here. On the other hand, the soldiers are well-armed, so everyone pretty much minds their own business. As a result, Hong Kong has become a major port for drug smuggling, gun-running and other alternative commerce. —SM]

Hong Kong, folks, is a province which only exists in the virtuals any more. In the abandoned edifices large publicly-powered **computer systems lie dormant**, which is why Hong Kong has become a haven, nay a metropolis for the non-meat-rooted intelligentsia of our age. Yes, folks, the AIs are the residential standard of Hong Kong.

As near as I can tell, the AIs have taken to fleeing here because they, unlike meatboys, have no fear of the communists. Communism is a government style founded on the eternal precepts of 'you work to feed us and I'll rape your sister'. However, AIs have no pockets the commies can pilfer, no dogs to be kicked, no food to steal, and no siblings to be abused. Sure, the commies could pull the plug in Hong Kong, but they'd be shooting themselves in the foot to do so, which is a

HYPERTEXT

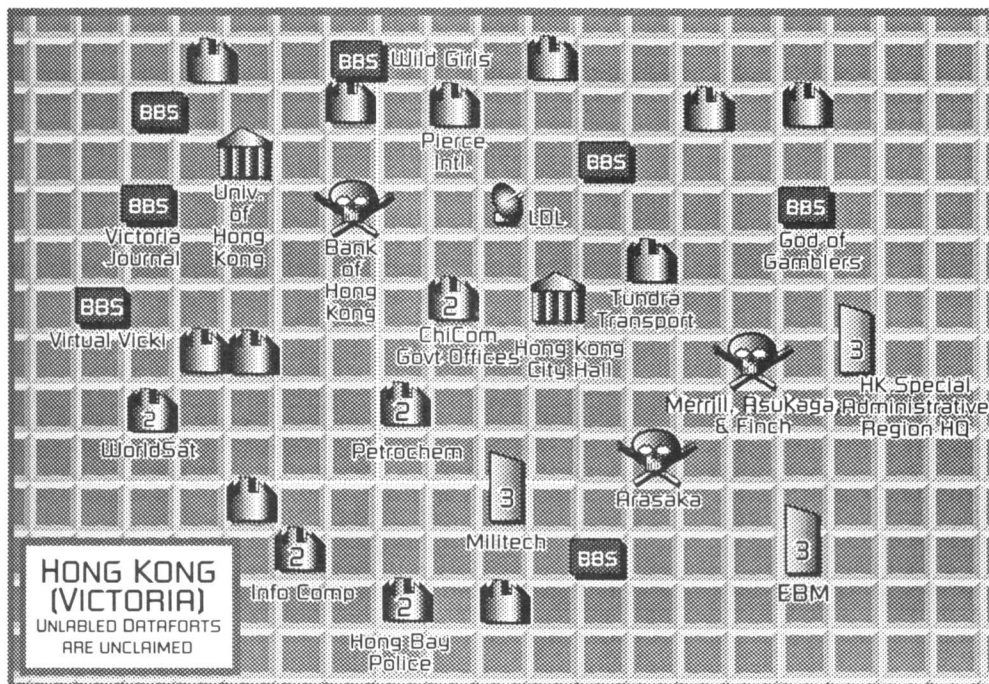
COMPUTER SYSTEMS

LIE DORMANT

Well, that doesn't mean that the AIs can just move on in. What probably happens is something like this: an AI cuts deal with an HK smuggler or fixer. The AI has the fixer send in men to the abandoned buildings and reactivate and/or repair the computer systems (they would have been physically switched off when they were abandoned). Only then can the AI enter the system and take up residence. In return for this service the AI will usually provide information and Net coverage for the fixer. As they gain power, wise AIs will eventually buy their adopted homes through front companies in order to secure their home bases.

'THE INPUT CROWD'

This terminology is a tongue-in-cheek (if AIs had tongues...or cheeks) poke at human slang. The term 'input' often refers to a mate or sexual partner. The AIs seem to think that it's funny that the group that is focussing on AI procreation should bear this label. But that's computer humor for you.



painful experience, I can tell you, bordering on slipping with your toothbrush and putting tartar-control-gel-covered bristles into your sinuses. The Net holds so much of the import/export commerce and smuggling that the commies rely upon, that they can't afford to unplug it and offend all the corporations, even if they are inadvertently harboring annoying AIs which occasionally run the cabal's data fort and change the text of speeches.

Most of the AIs have taken up residence in corporate facilities, some of which are occupied and some of which apparently are still abandoned. Some of these AIs are known to their corporate hosts, others aren't, and have an interesting inside edge on all the information in those systems. All of the AIs engage in interesting private commerce, and they have actually developed their own subculture within the Hong Kong grid. It takes a while to get inducted into what they call 'the input crowd', but it's well worth it. I even understand the AIs are working on procreating; they have a research group set up to create a new AI, but one that's bigger and better than all of them. Woah.

Needless to say, I gave them a lot of coding advice. If they follow it, they'll end up with an AI that is unique, or at least will be unique when I finally die. I had to do it, folks, I had to give them self-serving advice; I could hardly stand the thought of a Net without Me.

SINGAPORE

Singapore is now the Jewel of the East, since Hong Kong went down before the millennium. The island is overrun with jabbering millions of every culture, with Hong Kong refugees lacking the capital to make it to England making up the largest group. Dregs and sharks from other nations have congregated here also, making this one of the most interesting and active centers in the world.

The Singapore city grid is very large. It is still the principal financial center of the Far East, and continued distrust of the zaibatsus will ensure that it remains that way, despite the best attempts of the Far Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. The FACS has several times tried to shift the regional borders to drop Singapore into Wilderspace, but they have as yet not succeeded, nor do I think they will.

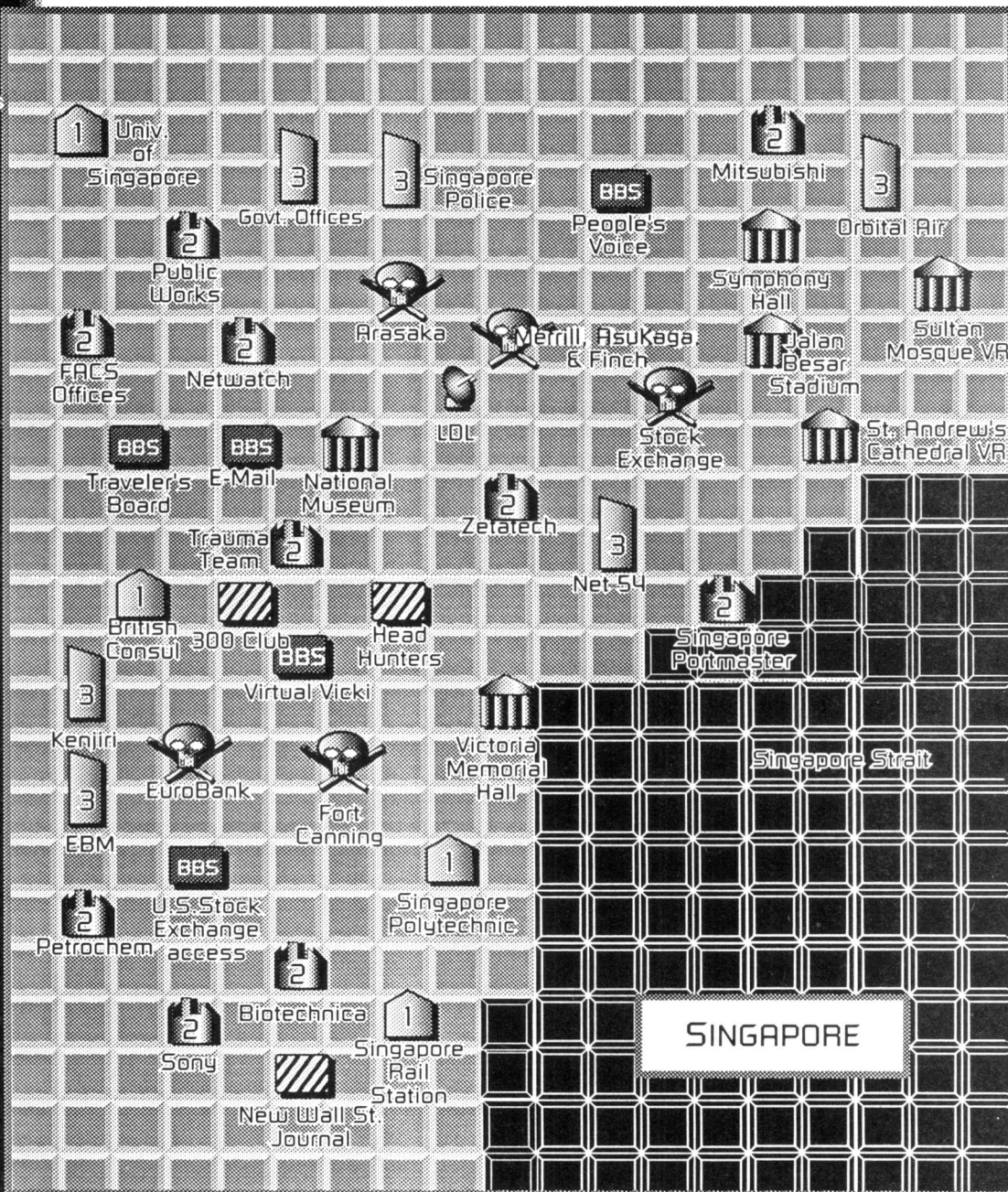
Merrill, Asukaga & Finch finally relocated their corporate headquarters here, after it became plain even to Merrill that New York was no longer the place to be. This is also the home of the Singapore Stock Exchange, the heir of the late Hong Kong Exchange and now possibly the reigning exchange in the world. The stock exchange is, of course, a great place to make your playground, or at least it would be were it not for the siren call of the pestilent buggers on the financial plane who try to draw you into their mandibles where they can forever rule your life amidst their undulant phosphors.

Singapore is the place in Pacifica to go for all sorts of business. Netwatch and the FACS make their appearances here, but they are so outnumbered that they can't hope to regulate or investigate all the business. All you have to do is make sure you're not one of the ones they try to regulate.

Gamemasters note: Indeed, that is exactly what it will try to do in mid-2021, covering the area around Hong Kong and trying to stretch into Delhi. Singapore feels that they have the clout to go head-to-head with Tokyo/Chiba but can't get anywhere with FACS and Netwatch looking over their shoulder. They want to break out on their own and offer a more economic alternative for Europe and the U.S. in dealing with the Far East than crawling to zaibatsus in the T/C region. Don't count on Arasaka and the zaibatsus to sit still on their hands during this either. Of course, they don't realise that the AIs in Hong Kong are helping Singapore in their bid for freedom. This will naturally get really ugly. Use this scenario with glee.

Singapore is a difficult place to enjoy computer crime, if only because everyone expects it all the time. Defenses are stiff, ice is very very black, and runners are always edgy and on guard. On the other hand, the open market place makes this a good place to do your overt but unusual business, even if at the cost of a frenetic pace. You can buy guns, tickets, recipes, code, anything you want here, because someone, somewhere in this town, makes a living at it, and most people are patched into the Net at least for international teleconferencing. Those who don't use the Net just don't get as much business.

I have the feeling that Singapore will **become its own region soon**, a sort of Southeast Asian triangle, possibly even extending into India. A lot of the place is Wilderspace right now, just waiting for the region to burst forth like a corona. This may be what the Hong Kong AIs are working on: the regional AI, although they would be more mapping a layout to allow it to come into existence than actually doing any higher-level coding.



So expect a new region, a kind of triangle (ominous similarity, right?) extending across all the prime opium land, from Hong Kong and maybe even Peking, through Singapore and west to Calcutta. And, if the corporations like Merrill, Asukaga & Finch are bankrolling the AIs' development of the region, then you know it would be an efficient region. That's one thing I have to say for the corporations; they're a hell of a lot more efficient than the government, although, given the similar goals between government and corporations, that's not necessarily a good thing. I mean, would you rather be lorded over by an efficient oppressor, or an inefficient oppressor?

You can bet the regional AI would be efficient, as well. But then, how are they going to program the personality for the AI, when regions more or less appear autonomously? Boy, this really changes how I view the Net. I wonder if I could make my own region? Is a region just a virtual that achieved sentience? Hmm. I'll have think about this. In the meantime, keep tabs on Singapore and tell me what happens.

US PACIFIC ISLAND HOLDINGS

Hawaii, Midway, and Wake are all dominated by the United States government, and are relatively unpatrolled by Netwatch.

Of these, only Hawaii is a state; the other two are trust territories, and thus are exempt from the EC/Netwatch treaties. Hawaii itself is a militarized state, which is to say that the gun-toting government lackeys dominate the island the same way they control the Panama Canal Zone.

U.S. Military Combat Programmers regularly patrol the three islands like vigilant hounds, sniffing at people's crotches, sensing fear, marking hydrants, and rolling in nameless substances on the side of the road. They also occasionally launch incursions (a kind of small hydrofoil) into other areas of the Pacifica region. Netwatch has no domain here, although their presence is tolerated by the US, most likely just to keep the peace between them in the Rustbelt region.

Whenever you pass through a US-controlled Pacific Island LDL, you can expect to get checked out by an on-duty runner. It doesn't always happen, but always expect it to. The security here is tight, so not too many runners use this as a thoroughfare unless they're on legitimate business. Personally, if you ask me, legitimate, as defined by 'social convention', is the same as illegitimate, in the same fashion as flammable and inflammable have the same meaning. Additionally, I think that if you're running the Net doing 'legitimate' things, you should stay at home taking in the latest Beaverville Meadows braindance for all the good you're doing the world.

Whatever happened to helping out the public good, anyway? Whatever happened to real ethics? Were they recycled into the new corporate loyalty, or are they still out there, discarded near the dumpster, waiting for some young impressionable urchin to discover them again? No one's concerned with fighting injustice or bringing down evil or battling those who seek to destroy others. Everyone's too concerned with getting ahead, or screwing their neighbor, or screwing their neighbor's wife, or defining themselves to be proper in a chaotic world instead of changing the world to make it proper. Even those who rebel these days are rebelling to get in the limelight, or to make friends, or get cheap sex, or place themselves visibly against those everyone hates without actually doing something about it. They're just protesting because it's Saturday and there's nothing better to do.

Take a look at Johnny Silverhand, so-called anti-corporate rocker. He's a corporation himself. His media department took the fiasco at the Arasaka Tower in Night City and turned it into a publicity coup. What happened? A bunch of his fans — his fans, mind you, not him — rioted and gutted an Arasaka building, or at least a few floors of it. Who gets the credit? Why good old Johnny, of course. I wish he'd just die, but then he'd be a martyr and everyone would love him even though he's a corporation.

[I disagree with Rache's assessment of Silverhand. Yes, he's gotten a lot of bad press from the underground lately, but he's doing something. He founded the Silverhand Studios chain, which I think has done more for real art than anything in the last hundred years. He has become a symbol for the American musician, that it is possible to stand in front of Arasaka Tower and not get gunned down. Granted, maybe he could do more to fuel the cyberpunk revolution, but at least he's not as bad as Kerry Eurodyne. - SM]

POINTS OF INTEREST

Petrochem and Freightrunners operate a monolithic combined data fort at Philogaia (just north of the Anchorage city grid) which the Alaskan cyberpunks run against with unnerving (but gratifying) frequency. As a result, the ice has gotten very black in here, especially since I ran inter-

PHILOGAIA

This is the site of The Alaskan Naturalist Terrorism Enclave (ANTE) **war against Petrochem** and Freightrunners for the corporations' appropriation and desecration of the Yukon Flats National Monument. It's a pretty good cause, if you ask me.

U.S. MILITARY COMBAT PROGRAMMERS

You first met these guys back on page 29. Well, here in the islands, the chance of one being a Top-level runner is 5%, so don't get cocky. As the text indicates, they will almost always check you out (80% chance) at any island LDL, but they won't attack unless they feel that you have threatened them or National Security (although to them, National Security covers a LOT more stuff than you would ever imagine). By the way, if they decide that you are a problem, they will attack without restraint, and there is nowhere that you can go in the city grid where they are not authorized to follow. Aloha, dudes.

WAR AGAINST PETROCHEM

A continuing eco-terrorist action in central Alaska. The Alaskan Naturalist Terrorism Enclave is conducting a guerilla war against Petrochem. See *Home of the Brave* (pg. 106-107) for details.

HYPERTEXT

PHILOGAIA NET KEY

1. Guard-Dog
 2. Cheap rip-off of Fatal Attractor
 3. Wolf
 4. Bloodhound
 5. On-duty netrunner receptionist with terminal
 6. Killer IV
 7. Aardvark
 8. Security section; packed ice, netrunners, etc.
 9. Private LDL running between levels 3 and 6
 10. Sword with invisibility routines - great stuff!
 11. Vampire
 12. Dragon
 13. Terminals
 14. Printers
 15. Knockout
 16. Office budgets, personnel, and other corporate records
 17. Petrochem proprietary files
 18. Freightrunners proprietary files
 19. Philogaia plans, operations, bribes, and slush funds
 20. Meaningless drivel, lunch-hour game files, and memos
 21. Corporate virtual memory, including for the virtual conference room on level 8
 22. Black and highly-restricted corporate security files
 23. Netrunner on duty
 24. Firestarter
 25. Executive workstation
 26. Executive snooping devices
- Note: All data walls are strength 9, code gates are strength 5

THE HAWAII

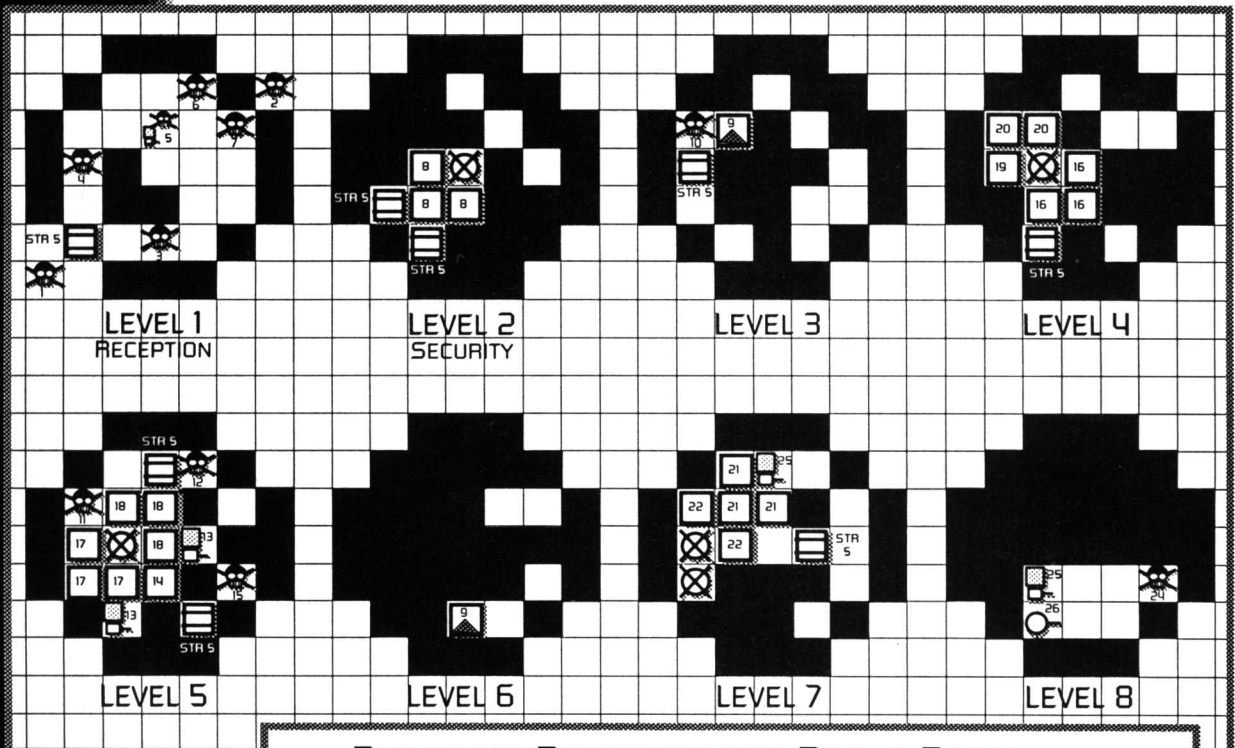
LIBERATION FRONT

A fanatic, pro-islander militant group attempting to end military rule in the Hawaiian islands. See *Home of the Brave* (pg. 135) for details.

ference while an elite squad smuggled a live (but tranquilized) polar bear into the office of a junior exec named Barker who'd tried to infiltrate one of the eco-terrorist cells.

So, of course, in the Rache Bartmoss tradition of respect for everything that's considered proprietary, here's a map of the Petrochem / Freightrunners data fort. Use at your own risk. Take two every four hours. Just say YES.

The interior of the data fort is designed to look like a lush tropical paradise mansion, which I'm sure is just what the corps want Alaska to be. Ferns and vines crawl over the stucco / adobe walls, and colorful birds flit about. Curiously, and apparently in vengeance for the Barker incident, all the black ice in the system (of which there is a surprising amount, this being the tropics and all) appears to be polar bears. The exterior of the data fort looks kind of like a giant palm tree, but it's really a large thick Greek column (very phallic, even for corps) with a large fractal garden at the top. It's rumored there's an LDL up in the fern fronds leading to Petrochem's and Freightrunners' corporate headquarters, but I haven't yet been able to get up there, let alone look around a bit. Down at the base of the pillar, there's a small waterfall which gushes out of the stone. This is the code gate for the system. It's surprisingly weak; I think the Philogaia freaks hope that ANTE runners will enter, so they can die at the hands of tropical polar bears.



PHILOGAIA DATAFORT PER RACHE BARTMOSS

HONOLULU

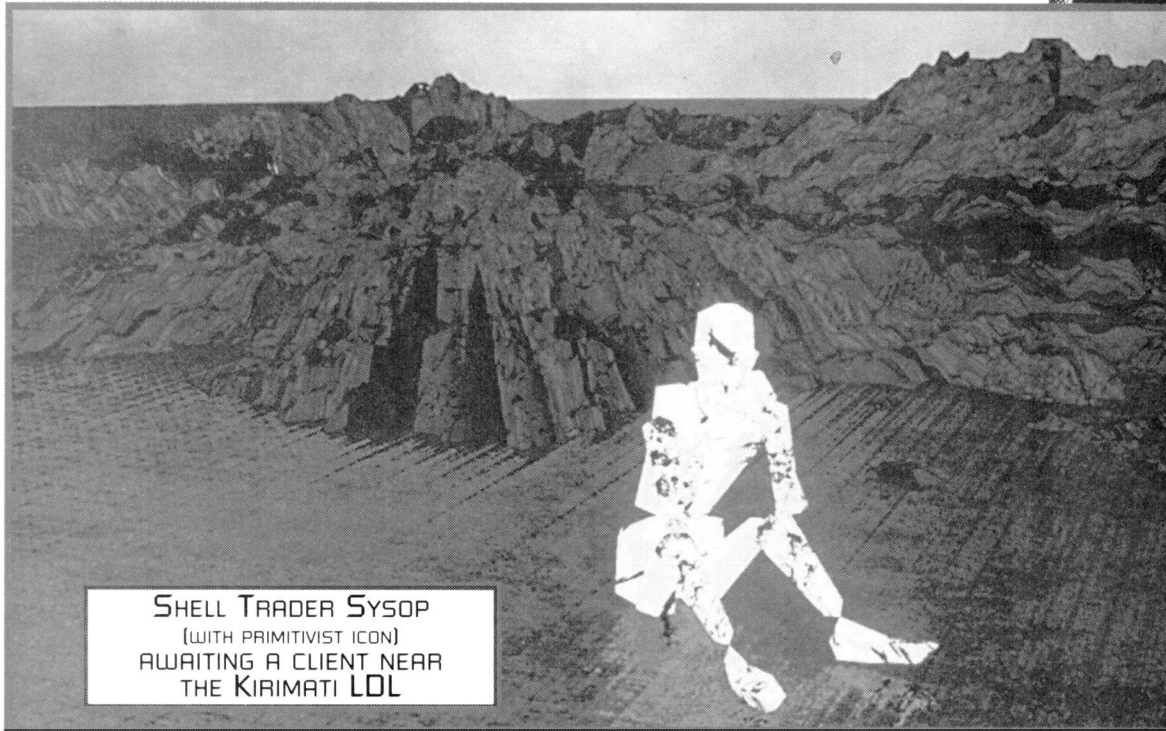
Perhaps the most famous city in Hawaii, Honolulu is now the playground for the Hawaii Liberation Front, and the United States Military. What was originally a good-natured (if psychopathic) scrum has spread into the Net, turning the Honolulu city grid into a paranoid place filled with soldier-runners, dense packs of Netwatch volunteers, and the occasional anarchist lobbing bombs, viruses, and Brainwipes with discriminating taste at anyone who's not actually military.

Now, I am not a fan of the military, as you are no doubt aware, but hey, at least the military doesn't deliberately target its own people, usually. The same cannot be said for the Hawaii Liberation Front. These are a group of radicals that I will not support, because their idea of a good time is to find a kid whose uncle was in the military once, and jolt the sucker with a Liche and download a psychopathic HLF personality who spouts off leftist anti-military tripe while carving his initials into his baby brother and the dog. They've also been known to trip fire alarms in crowded buildings, lock up the sewer system, and reconfigure the traffic control lights to all go green at the same time, especially when school has let out.

Not good clean fun.

As a result, I don't like the Hawaii Liberation Front. I don't like the military, either. This puts me in the enviable position of being a master of warfare in an environment where I want both sides to lose. This is great. I can easily arrange for one side or the other to stumble upon each other, and beat each other up, entirely of their own free will. Hey, if they want to fight and kill and die at each other's programs, who am I to stop them?

Take this as a warning, then. The Honolulu City grid, while normally filled with the quiet desperation of an occupied country, can explode with dramatic suddenness into a very interesting place to be.



SHELL TRADER SYSOP
(WITH PRIMITIVIST ICON)
AWAITING A CLIENT NEAR
THE KIRIMATI LDL

THE SHELL TRADERS

“They don't deal in electronic information, they sell disks! Disks, for God's sake, that they send through the mail! Have they no concept of modernization?”

— overheard in the Eurotheatre

The **Shell Traders** are a fast-growing group of independent netrunners operating in Kiribati. With the failure of the Kiribati government to regulate traffic and commerce through their national LDLs, some independent runners have set up their own shop to take advantage of the idea. Some people claim that these guys are backed by the Kiribati government, but I detect none of the mildewed scent of gubernatorial transfusions in their bodies, nor is there anything squirming around in their hindbrain which would betoken government involvement. [I disagree. There's a lot of hard evidence the Kiribati government is backing this group to recoup some of their losses on the LDLs. - SM]

These guys run open markets on both the Gilbert Islands and the Kiritimati LDLs. They will trade for anything, but are most interested in stolen data and code. When they make a purchase (or trade... these guys are well-equipped for code-swapping), they download the contents of the files to their terminals and copy them onto disk or needle, erasing the version in the Net.

Because all of their valuable files and information are on transfer media instead of in the Net, these folks don't have to worry much about Net security. They have only a bit of black ice; whatever they've been able to buy with their sales proceeds. In comparison, the Shell Traders' customers are heavily-equipped, because they're running around in the Net with a data bomb in their pockets, attracting mutant vermin with a fierce magnetic monopole that one always finds around those crusading against the dark ones for the sake of purity and a good time. Thus, most corporations will not attempt to jump a Shell Trader market, because although the Shell Traders themselves are pretty calm and mellow, the people unloading information are jumpy and well-armed. Heck, in the Kiribati LDL, they even have the icon of a free-lance bounty hunter that they scragged hard with a Stun and a Zombie at the same time. The guy has been there for a year or so now. His meat body at home has probably long since starved to death, but either the guy was rich, had a

SHELL TRADERS

These guys are the master sellers of the Net. The security and openness that they provide bring people from all over the world to trade in their market. This means that if there is a particular piece of software that you are looking for, there is a 25% chance it (or a close approximation) may be available... at a price. Regular and anti-system software can run from 70-170% (70 +1D100 %) of market retail. Anti-personell and black ice will, on the other hand, be very expensive: 200-300% of regular price. And you still have to get it in the mail.

You can sell to the Shell Traders as well, but most have Bargain 7 and know how to drive a deal. Expect a price from 50-150% (50+1D100%) of market value. They usually manage to sell at a profit.

PACIFICA HYPERTEXT

MAGNIFICENT CURTIS

INT:10, REF:8, TECH:8, COOL:10,
ATTR:8, LUCK:9, MA:8, BODY:8
EMP: 7

Skills:

Interface 9

Awareness/Notice 8, Composition 4
Education/Gen.Know. 8, Program-
ming 7, System Knowledge 10,
Basic Tech 5, Cyberdeck Design 5,
Cyber Tech 2, Electronics 7, Hand-
gun 4, Leadership 6, Human Per-
ception 6, Social 5, Library Search
7.

Cyberware:

Neural processor, plugs, Cybermo-
dem link, Chipware socket

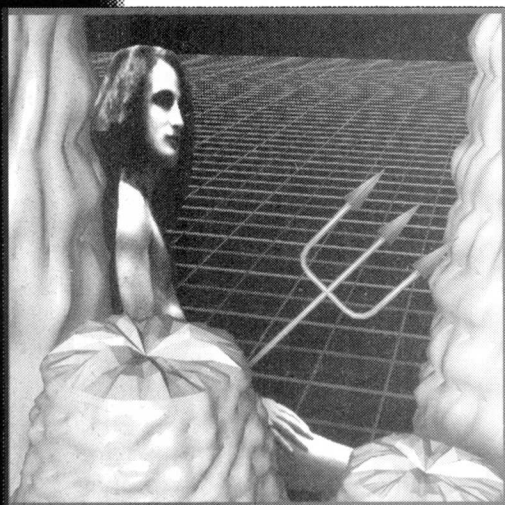
Cyberdeck:

When travelling he will have: Com-
pletely custom-built deck: 55 MU,
Speed: +5, Data walls 9
Options: Anything you want. The
deck will be fully portable and pro-
tected.

Most of the time, howev-
er, he will be running out
of modified workstations
and through mainframes
w/cyber-controls and
add-on modems.

Program Mix:

Use a Top level mix (pg.
151), but you can beef up
the Strength ratings of
several of the programs
to represent his own
rewrites. He will have a
few special, non-lethal,
anti-personnel programs
as well. He is hesitant to
use lethal ice and will go
out of his way to take his
culprits alive. Like we said, a good
cop.



PERSONALITY PROFILE

[Rache didn't actually include any people in his manuscript, so I have taken the liberty of so doing. Wherever I felt there to be a need, I have added the description of a person who somehow is a major influence or example of the region.

Here's the first.— SM]

MAGNIFICENT CURTIS

As far as I know, nobody's really sure where Magnificent Curtis came from. He just showed up one day, and created the Pacifica branch of Netwatch, which at that time didn't really exist, there being just a few Netwatch runners patrolling the area from their decks on the other side of the world. I wouldn't be surprised if Magnificent Curtis himself erased the records of his own origins to protect himself, his kith and his kin.

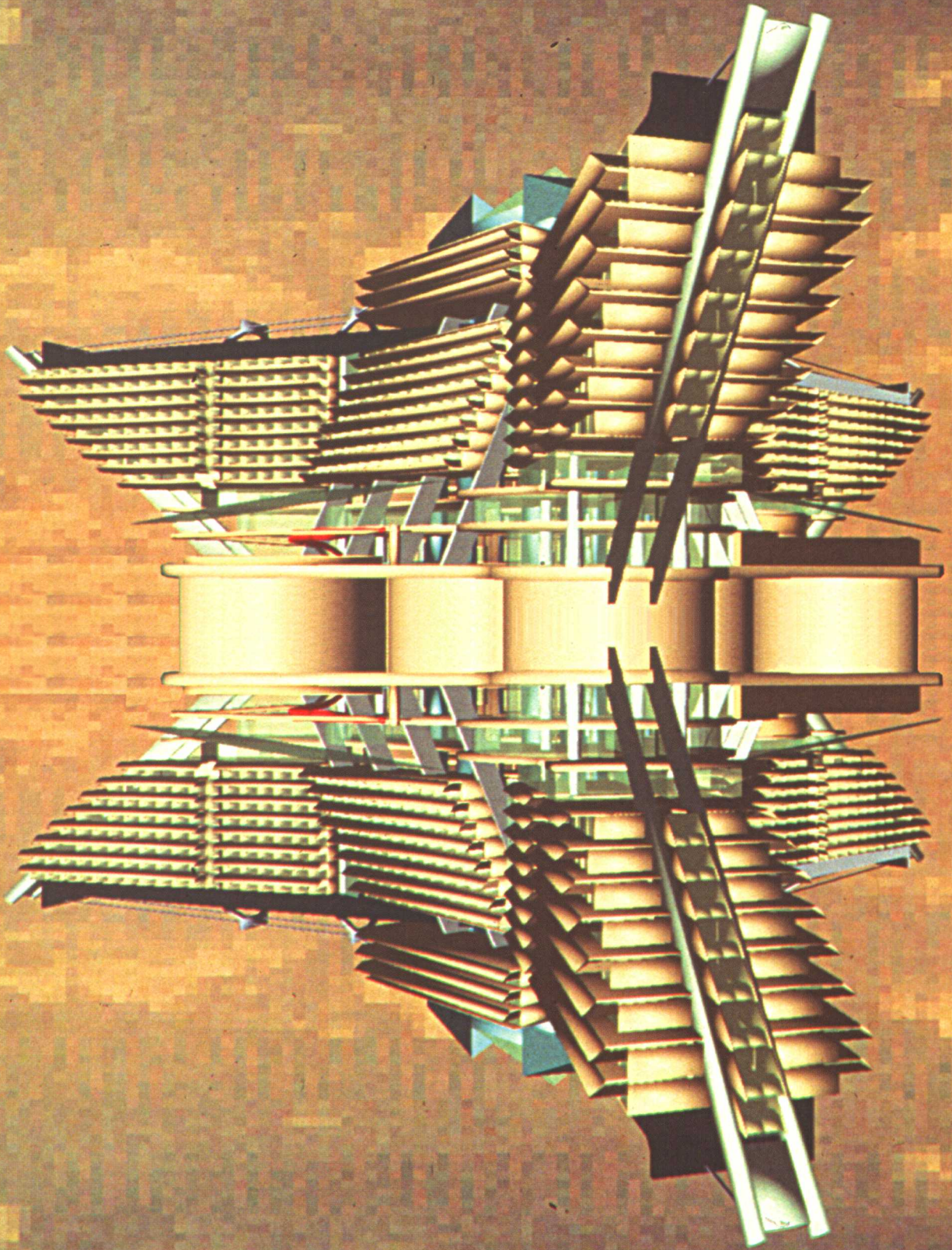
When he started, he used the handle Rocky, but the tag Magnificent Curtis was given to him by the runners down in Australia. He earned his name through his attitude and approach towards Netwatch runners; he wanted them to be perfect, and to give them a goal to strive for, he tried to be perfect himself.

He is fair, even-handed, slow to lose his temper, but quick to respond, even with lethal power, if attacked. He has a strict regard for the laws of the land, and an encyclopedic knowledge

of the territorial laws of each of the countries covered by the Pacifica region. He makes sure that his runners never break any of those laws, unless empowered so to do by conditional regulations while they are in pursuit of a computer criminal. He likewise demands that his runners never do anything to alienate the innocent runners in the Net (there really aren't any).

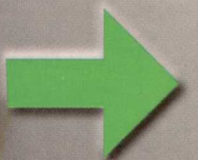
Under his guidance, the Pacifica Netwatch Icewolves have captured a lot of criminals, both corporate and independent. They ensure that their prisoners are dealt with fairly according to the laws of the land, and not summarily executed by some angry corporate runner. The Pacifica branch of Netwatch has become a respected organization, which is very rare in this day and age, and through his influence, Fiji has become their main base of operations. As a result, this small island has some of the best security around.

Magnificent Curtis himself is a man with vision and drive. In fact, he's a lot like the yin to Rache Bartmoss' yang; he's calm, quiet, and law-abiding, but he shares the same zeal and enthusiasm and dedication to his work as Rache. This, of course, means that if the two of them ever got together, they'd be at each others' throats in a minute.



CHAPTER

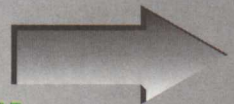
3 OLYMPIA



OLYMPIA REGIONAL MAP

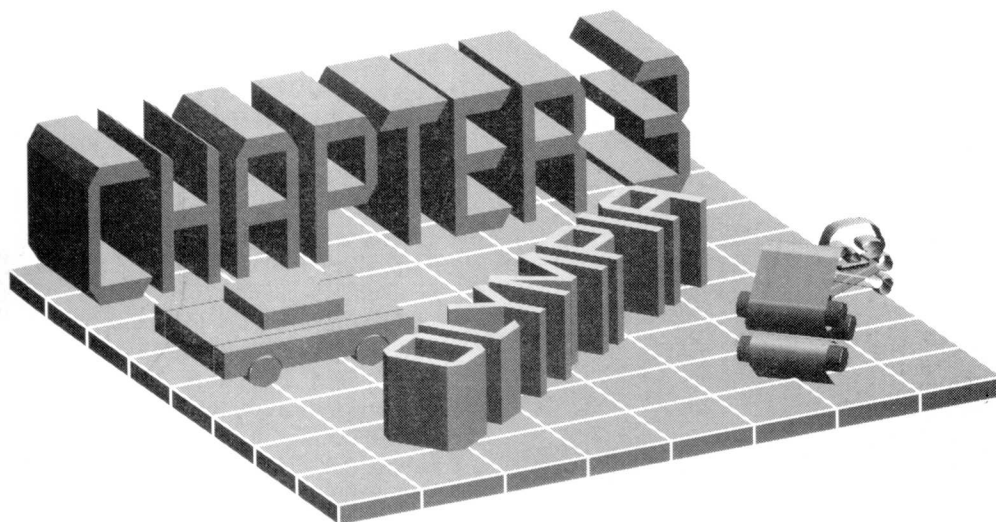


DATATERM



CIRCLED IDLS ARE THE WORLD LEVEL ACCESS POINTS AND ARE THE **ONLY** IDLS USABLE ON THE WORLD SCALE

CITY	CONTROLLED BY:	SECURITY LVL	TRACE VALUE	CITY	CONTROLLED BY:	SECURITY LVL	TRACE VALUE
Albuquerque	Militech	2	2	Minneapolis/St. Paul	Netwatch/US Govt.	2	1
Bismarck	Petrochem et. al.	3	1	New Galveston	Merril, Asukaga & Finch	3	2
Boise	Netwatch/US Govt.	3	3	New Orleans	Netwatch/US Govt./EMC	2	3
Calgary	Petrochem	2	3	Night City	Netwatch/US Govt./Arasaka	2	2
Dallas/Ft. Worth	Republic of Texas/Net 54	3	2	Omaha	Netwatch/US Govt./EBM	3	1
Denver	Netwatch/US Govt./Orbital Air	2	1	Phoenix	US Govt./Netlink	2	2
El Paso	Republic of Texas/Republic West Oil	3	2	Reno/Las Juegos	Nevada Notwatch/Arasaka	1	3
Grand Praire	US Govt.	3	1	Salt Lake City	Netwatch/US Govt./Militech	2	1
Houston	Republic of Texas/World Sat	3	2	San Antonio	Republic of Texas/Bronleigh Develop.	3	2
Kansas City	Netwatch/US Govt./EMC	2	1	San Francisco	Netwatch/US Govt./EBM	2	2
Las Vegas	Nevada Notwatch/DMS	1	3	Seattle	Netwatch/US Govt./Arasaka	2	2
Los Angeles/San Diego	Netwatch/US Govt./Petrchem	2	2	Saskatoon	Netwatch/Can. Govt.	2	3



A giant half-eaten cookie of comparative freedom sprawling across the free states of the USA, a halfway point between the oppressive Rustbelt and the freewheeling Pacifica fringe.

OVERVIEW

“Let us leave this place where the smoke blows black
And the dark street winds and bends.
Past the pits where the asphalt flowers grow
We shall walk with a walk that is measured and slow,
And watch where the chalk-white arrows go
To the place where the sidewalk ends.”

— Shel Silverstein

“You stupid computer! I don’t want to go to this lobby, I want to go to the upside-down lobby! When I entered this data fort this level was beneath my feet, and now I want to get back beneath my feet! Understand? Oh forget it... excuse me, miss? Can you show me how to get to the other side of the sidewalk?”

— unknown netrunner, Phoenix, 27 Sep 2019

Olympia is a large neutral zone of sorts scrawled across the western portions of the United States. Olympia runs from the Republic of them Texans up across the **Free States** of Nevada and Utah, coincidentally encompassing the Colorado Orbital Rock Museum and Flea Market. From there it continues through the corporate-dominated states of Montana and the Dakotas, and somewhere along the way there’s also the **Wyoming Socialist Republic**, but nobody really cares as far as I can tell. The region stretches as far north as Calgary, Canada, which to me is yet another example of them weird Canadian names like Povungnituk because Calgary sounds like a toothpaste or something. I can see it now. “My teeth will never get clean!” frets the young corporate wife in a lacy negligee. “I’ve been drinking too much blood in my advertising job!” Then genetic clonekid #1 says: “Look, mommy, here comes the Calgary!” Doo-dodoo-dodoo-dodoo-dodooooo! Some biosculpted horseman with a jaw the size of Rhode Island rumbles up on a Harley Thundergod, gives her the toothpaste and knocks her up on the couch, and another insipid beaverville commercial comes to a happy consumer-gearred ending. Bah.

I hate pop culture. Once, just once, I’d like to see him pull a Malorian 14mm and blow the whole corporate lapdog family away. Either that or see her rip the egocentric nomad’s throat out with her pearly-white vampires, eat her kids, and get herself promoted to head the advertising department. That at least would be realistic.

But this is almost exactly what you won’t see in Olympia, which is one of the down sides of the place.

Olympia is a half-way point between Pacifica and the Rustbelt in a number of ways. To the west, the Net is dominated by corporations, and to the east by Netwatch. In Olympia, these forces are balanced against each other, and neither has overwhelming power. The city grids in Olympia are controlled by the dominant corporation in the area, which makes the region most like a collection of feudal castles.

OLYMPIA

HYPertext

THE LIGHT GREEN ZONES ON THE REGIONAL MAP

These are over Nevada, Texas, and North Dakota. They represent Regional Police zones. Local authorities run the Net here and there is no Netwatch or U.S. Provisional Government sysops. See text for details.

FREE STATES

A concept first outlined in *Night City*, these states have quasi-independent status with respect to the U.S. government. Declared during the Collapse and the subsequent chaos, these states felt that they had a better chance for survival with minimum interference from the feds, and they had the strength to back it up. There are six Free States altogether: Alaska, Northern and Southern California, Nevada, Texas, and Utah. See *Home of the Brave* (pg. 105) for details.

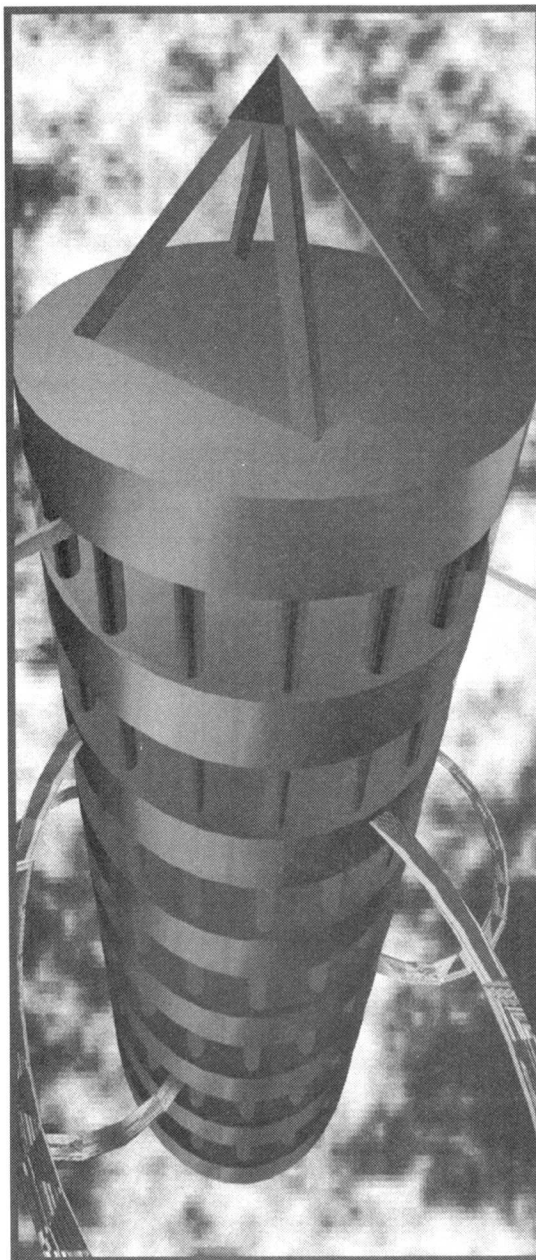
WYOMING SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

Wyoming elected a socialist state government in 1997. They then denationalized Yellowstone and the Grand Teton parks and made them into one huge, state-owned, tourist attraction. Along the way, they managed to kick the agricorps and most other business interests out of the state.

SIDEWALKER

MU 3, STR 3, Programming Difficulty 25+ (No cost, you've got to write your own, bud!)

Utility, Evasion functions, Recognition option. See text for explanation of use.



Similarly, the oppressive industrialism of the Rustbelt and the peaceful hues of Pacifica both make a showing here in Olympia's poorly-inspired but excellently-rendered virtual reality.

The buildings throughout the Olympia region are typical modern skyscrapers with two exceptions: first, they're clean and well-illuminated by the bright sun, which I don't think you'll find anywhere on the planet these days, what with all the pollution and stuff lurking in the air, so instead they build the Net virtuals to pretend the problem doesn't exist, which works just fine until the acid rain eats away all the lines that keep the Net running, but by that time it'll be so bad that all that'll be left of the corporate runners will be bleached bones. Second, the virtual buildings have no foundation. Each building hangs in the sky, and each end is designed as a top. Some buildings grow heavily in one direction or the other, while other buildings rise balanced in both directions from the main trunk lines. Of course, no one ever wants to be on the bottom floor, so within the skyscrapers each direction is up and every skyscraper has two top floors. Some basic programming on perspective geometry allows the virtual elevators in the buildings to take care of this modal reversal, so no one ever leaves the elevator bouncing on his head. [I don't know why Rache considers Olympia to be 'poorly-inspired'. It's a virtual reality, an alternate vision of the world, with idyllic metropolitan skyscrapers suspended in a beautiful blue zero-G sky. The sun is bright and warm without being blinding, and clouds move serenely among the towers. It's got the peace and order that urban centers are supposed to have. Maybe it's this fantasy vision that makes Rache so cynical about this place. - SM]

The trunk lines and main communication webs are rendered as sidewalk catwalks suspended without visible means of support in the limitless sky, rendered in very excellent virtual stone and other decorative materials. Without the solidity of the sidewalks, you would, of course, see other runners passing upside-down beneath you, which I think would be great, but they didn't do it, which is another black mark in my book. You can reverse your polarity at will on the sidewalks, in case you want to see who's on the other side of the walk. Me, I've developed a utility program that I call **SideWalker**. It allows me to tightrope along the edge of the virtual walk, so I can see both sides at once. It comes in real handy sometimes. I was bopping along in Calgary once, doing my typical crabwise sidewalk balancing act, and I saw some Petrochem hoods to one side. They saw me, too, so I stepped onto the opposite side of the walk as them, then immediately reversed my polarity. They'd flipped theirs too, so I was still on the opposite side as them. I sprinted off a few paces then flipped polarity again. I swear, I know how Petrochem runners work, I've been fighting them for so long, because once again I timed it perfectly, and they also flipped back to their starting side. I got away clean, and I heard later that those guys spent fifteen minutes trying to outthink my flips while I was long-gone. The reason I heard about it was they were out in front of one of their data forts looking like fools while I was inside plundering the memory. But now I've heard that a few corporate netrunners have been able to program their own SideWalker utilities. Once the Netwatch runners learn to read, I'm sure they'll come up with their own version, too.

The other danger of sidewalk reversals is that some people forget 'which way is up', fail to recognize landmarks that are 'upside-down', and get themselves thoroughly lost. This is where a non-subjective view of physical reality is very beneficial. As long as you are not the center of your perceptions of the universe, you'll do fine. If not, then stay on your side of the sidewalk.

Unlike the real-world terrain which it spans, the Olympia region is smooth and calm. The trunks and electronics grids in this area are high-quality advanced equipment, and the lines of communication are not so far apart that weather ever becomes a major consideration. When communications are strained, the sidewalks begin to fracture. This is a curious phenomenon, considering that the normal Ihara-Grubb response to garbled lines or high resistance is to increase the virtual elevation. Although I haven't been able to prove this, I believe the fracturing of the sidewalks is due to the bi-directional nature of this region. If the regional AI tries to elevate a sidewalk without a firm grip on which way is up, the sidewalks instead would cease to exist, with half its reality sent in each direction. Of course, half a reality can't be seen, so it just gets ignored, saving on processing time. This is a pretty creative interpretation of the solution to the quandary if you ask me.

Over all, running in Olympia is pretty easy, made all the more so by the comparative lack of Netwatch. Although Netwatch has some influence here, the individual city grids are corporate-controlled. This leads to a division of power which can be exploited by a canny netrunner using the old divide-and-conquer formula, because no corporation likes to have a data fort in a town where another corporation wears a badge. They ought to just ignore badges like I do, and I'm sure they would, but they'd undercut their own legitimacy elsewhere.

HOW IT GOT THAT WAY

Many runners have been to Olympia, and wondered therefore why it is the way it is. To them I say, what's the difference where it came from? You just have to know where it is now, so leave me alone.

[Typical Rache. He doesn't like to admit ignorance. Olympia arose as a defensive measure against the authoritarian developments of the Rustbelt and the zaibatsu-driven Pacifica region. Nevada and Texas spearheaded the development, seeking to avoid being consumed by the Rustbelt or Pacifica. These free states used their leverage to set some regional precedents which led to the development of Olympia and would later cause the government a lot of grief. Corporations were more than willing to lend their aid to the Free States in return for coverage, thereby avoiding the draconian regulations of the Rustbelt Triad or the dangerous warlords of Japan. Thus the Incorporated State of North Dakota threw its lot in with the Nevada-Texas alliance. Following their example, the corporate and independent factions of Montana actually found a common goal and joined, as did Utah.

[The Olympia Board was officially formed shortly after, and they filled in the territory by drawing Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, and South Dakota into the fold. They also had Nebraska and were making inroads into Minnesota and Missouri when the US government chose to fight them. The borders of the region were pushed back to their current position, at which time the corporations in Olympia, having realized the full benefits of being in neither the Rustbelt nor Pacifica, took a hard stand. The border has been pretty stable since, although no formal treaty has been signed.

[The Pacifica region has not made a push on Olympia, probably for fear of the West Coast taking the opportunity to throw off the zaibatsu yokes they unwittingly took on.

[As a result of this maneuvering, Olympia is a sort of front line for warfare between Japan and the US. It's not a war zone per se, because Olympia itself is not attacked, but it is a thoroughfare from one side to the other, and Olympia encourages this sort of traffic.

[The current situation in Olympia is that Netwatch (and, outside of the free states, the US) can monitor traffic in all areas not under direct control of the Olympia Board or its assignees. What this means effectively is that Netwatch and the government are exiled from all major city grids. The cities themselves are monitored by a corporation which has demonstrated the financial wherewithal and manpower pool to field a force of 'Netwatch-like' data police. Some of the corporations have also expanded beyond the city limits to encompass outlying areas, thereby further alienating the Rustbelt forces (North Dakota and Texas are notable examples).

[Currently, then, Olympia's police force varies widely, depending on which corporation (or corporations) patrols the city grid. The only constant is the presence of Netwatch lurking in the inter-city wings, although even they are no longer permitted in certain areas. —SM]

OLYMPIA

HYPERTEXT

INCORPORATED STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA

North Dakota is basically owned by a consortium of agricorps that stepped in after the drought of '98 and bought up a good chunk of everything. Instead of a state senate, they now have a Corporate Executive Office which runs things in a very similar manner. This is not to say that the state is a totalitarian hellhole, but don't count on the state "government" to have the people's best interests in mind when passing laws. See *Home of the Brave* (yeah, again) (pg. 118) for details.

CITY GRID GUIDE

To help you in your navigation, here's a listing of which corporations control which areas:

Albuquerque	Militech
Bismarck	State Gov't (Petrochem, Arcadiex, and New East Asia Agrcultural)
Boise	unable to field a force yet, so Netwatch/USPG
Calgary	Petrochem
Dallas / Fort Worth	Net 54
Denver	Orbital Air
El Paso	Republic West Oil & Plastics
Grand Prairie	Montana Agribusiness Concern
Houston	WorldSat
Las Vegas	DMS
New Galveston	Merrill, Asukaga & Finch
Phoenix	NetLink Software
Reno / Los Juegos	Arasaka
Salt Lake City	Militech
San Antonio	Bronleigh Development

HYPERTEXT

MILITECH ARMS
INTERNATIONAL

For more on Donald Lundee's secret plan to rule the world, see *CorpBook 2*.

MILITECH RUNNERS

These folks are Pro-level runners (pg. 151) with Interface Skill of 7 instead of 6. They are common enough to be a real nuisance with a 20% chance of an encounter at any given Olympia LDL if you miss your LDL security roll. They won't mess with you, though, unless they get the feeling that you've got something to hide. Use a Difficult Human Perception Skill roll with the Militech op having a skill rating of 4 to determine the possible guilt of a runner. If you really aren't hiding anything, no problem. Otherwise, is your COOL up to the test?

NETWATCH

Olympia is Netwatch's weak spot: outside of Boise, there is only a 02% chance of encountering a NetCop during an LDL screw-up. Not that it matters since they have no authority here. But they may try to pop you anyway so be careful. They are Mid-level (these guys don't get as much practice as others), but don't underestimate them; there will be the occasional Pro-level in the bunch. They are also more likely to use non-Netwatch icons here to maintain a low profile.

POWER
PLAYERS

go about its business with a little less interference from the Big Black Boutonniere.

Militech is also making a move on Utah, probably with the goal of capitalizing on survivalism and turning Utah into an imitation incorporated state in the grand tradition of North Dakota. Utah has been suffering with its quasi-independence, and I think that Militech hopes to replace the Mormon church as the focus of the residents' lives, along the lines of 'who needs God if you've got a fully-automatic assault rifle with bayonet and underslung grenade launcher'. They've set up an advance base, kicking out Netwatch, which is at least one good thing they've done for the Utah civilians, and have set up a manufacturing facility to take advantage of the nonexistent tax rates and low labor costs in the state. I'm not sure whether or not it will take, because the folks in Utah seem singularly bent on remaining a backwater. More power to 'em.

In any event, you'll find a Militech presence just about everywhere in Olympia, as they prowl around looking for Arasaka operatives to bushwhack and free-lance runners to send into Pacifica. **Militech runners** operating overtly are easily recognizable by their uniform icon: a stylized soldier in full combat gear. The icon doesn't actually show any skin; the soldier wears a full M-88 helmet with reflective plexi and gloves. They render the icon entirely in polygonal shapes; sort of like the old-fashioned computer imaging, but much more refined. The angularity adds a sort of savage sharp look to them. It doesn't look chunky or preschoolish like the old computer animation it's patterned after.

If you encounter a Militech runner outside of Albuquerque or Salt Lake City, they probably won't cause you any grief unless you have a tangible aura of guilt hanging around you. I never have a problem with guilt writhing around my ankles, for the simple reason that I have no scruples. I found them to be cumbersome, so I went to the store and traded them in on a couple showers-in-a-can, which helps me to avoid certain other noxious clouds hanging around my effervescent body. I didn't trade in my morals, though, since I saw a bunch of lobotomized government and Arasaka workers hovering around that exchange counter like flies on a dead dog, which metaphor I use because there was a dead dog there and everyone was trying to recruit him for upper management. One of the Arasaka guys even had a dead cat for him to chase. Talk about catering to fetishes.

So make sure you've gotten rid of your dead dogs and scruples before you talk to a Militech runner. If so, then you'll probably get a passkey to an Arasaka fort and maybe some cool coding. If not, it's your problem.

Overall, I don't hate these guys very much because they make a corporate living putting guns into the hands of the people, unlike Arasaka or the USPG which would much rather take them away from everyone. Plus they're a good ally to string along when you're taking on the Saburo Sociopaths.



come to your aid. They have the legal right, which seems to restrain most of the people in Olympia.

Stupid sheep. I swear, sometimes I feel that if everyone toes the Netwatch line, then they all deserve to live with it.

MILITECH

Enemy-designate and heir despairing to Arasaka's Numero Uno del Mundo slot, **Militech Arms International** has chosen to make Olympia the site for its slow monopolization of the US security industry. I personally think that Militech will make this area its major operations zone soon.

Militech runs the Albuquerque and Salt Lake City grids outright, with their savage net guards patrolling their areas with grim efficiency. Militech's newest regional base is in Albuquerque, wherein they also produce the hardware which they ship to the Free States and the Pacific Northwest region. The Night City regional headquarters has, as near as I can tell, had its charter changed to be a front-line command post for the war against Arasaka. In comparison, the Albuquerque site is being geared more to a support and economic role, where the corporation can

NETWATCH / USPG

Netwatch iceweasels prowl the outskirts of this region, like jackals hungry for meat but too scared to charge into the camps of the squatters.

Private Net security patrols leave Netwatch stuck out in the cold with little power or chance to exercise it. This in turn makes them feel like the powerless and petulant children they are, which makes them lose their temper and tend to beat up on whomever they can. No one's going to complain if you scrag a Netwatch geeb out here, but then again, if a Netwatch runner catches you in the middle of nowhere, expect no one to

[illegible]

NEVADA
NOTWATCH

- excerpt from Notwatch press conference, 05 Mar 2016

So why is the **Nevada Notwatch** so all-fired great? Because they care. Yeah, sure I know, caring went out with the Twentieth Century. So call me old-fashioned if I think it's pretty neat to have some concern for your fellow humans. We need a new morality, but one thing's for sure; the kids'll have to make it up themselves. They sure aren't gonna get it from corporate whipped parents like the marionettes you'll find in the beavervilles.

For those with a primitive hormone-driven obsession with bells and whistles and fleshy friction, Nevada is already well-known as the place to go for gross (read: grotesque) indulgence, because, for all practical purposes, Nevada has no laws. Nevada airports are a central hub for all sorts of illegal smuggling in the western half of the US, and the famed cities of Las Vegas, Reno, Arcadia, and Los Juegos are a sybaritic Mecca to lustful legions of lechers and dilapidated droves of drugheads.

The Nevada Notwacht, then, is charged with keeping the peace while letting anyone do what they want. They keep tight security around any potentially sensitive areas (Like the Pink Pussycat Plantation) and try to prevent people from firing off black ice at the drop of a hat, while letting runners meet and converse, trade highly illegal secrets and programming, discuss smuggling networks, and all that.

Now you know why I like Notwatch so much.

So go visit Nevada. Hang out with the Notwatch and swap some code and some tall tales. Tell 'em Rache sent you.

For those of you who haven't the education to read the screamsheets, the State of North Dakota is the first casualty in the war against the corporations. They have ground the little people and cyberpunks to dust between the giant millstones of Petrochem, Arcadiex, and New East Asia.

A 30% chance of encountering one of these guys at any Nevada LDL, PLUS a 15% chance at any casino or other "entertainment" facility within Nevada's borders. The good news is that, unless you're in the midst of a heist or black ice duel, they probably won't do anything more than ask you a couple of questions to determine what you are doing and then wish you a good day. If you are causing trouble, they will try to restrain you using Glue, Jack Attack, or Spazz, and then get the Federal cops onto your trace. These guys are pretty sharp: Pro-level runners by and large, many with Interface Skills of 7. Don't be afraid to give them top-level equipment either, since they aren't likely to abuse it.

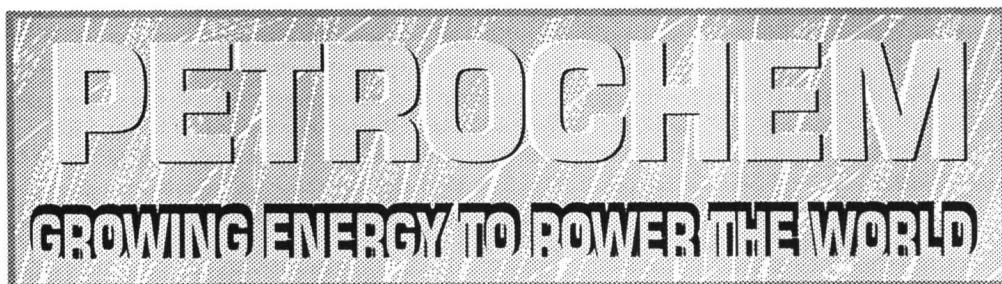


Agricultural. This has left the three megalomaniac monsters to incorporate the state and try to run it as a more or less cooperative venture.

I sincerely doubt that these three can really cooperate all that well. Sure, they look good on the surface, and the incorporated state's laws are designed to protect themselves against each other, but I ran one fort to drop off some entirely fabricated but well-designed blackmail information in Arcadiex's lap, and the next thing I know they're trying to run NEAA's data fort to authenticate the files. This led to a small blow-up

between the two, at which point I altered some of Petrochem's files to incriminate one of their junior executives in the plot by giving him the data from my run into Arcadiex. Combined with a small leak to the underground press, Petrochem found itself dragged into the fray, and it took several months before everything settled down. The junior exec I implicated was a real toady with no hope of getting a real life so he committed suicide after he was sacked. He should have done it before they canned him, so he could have at least stained his boss' carpet or something, but no, he was a spineless little brownnoser and didn't want to upset anyone, although he didn't apparently care that much about upsetting his wife and kid. I felt sorry for them so I dumped a few grand into their account and gave them the address of a few good places in Night City and Houston where they could start again. Last I heard she was a free-lance techie in Phoenix, patching up panzers for smuggling runs. It's good to know I have a positive effect on people.

So anyway, even if you don't have an in with one of the corporations, and you don't think you can turn them against each other, there is no greater concentration of corporates in the United States. Sure, there may be more powerful centers, and perhaps more per square mile in other cities, but the entire state of North Dakota is one big 99.9% corporate network.



PETROCHEM

In Olympia, Petrochem is second in power only to Militech, and that's primarily because Militech had more guns whereas Petrochem is sitting on large piles of flammable liquids and explosives. Petrochem owns large tracts in just about every state, especially Texas. They also own almost all the land around Calgary, and run that city's grid. Finally, they are a major force in Montana's politics, and are actively trying to bring the western cowboys to their knees before the great god of corporate greed.

I hate Petrochem, in part because of what they did to the Yukon Flats. I don't like the thought of innocent grass being cut down in the prime of life, just when they're beginning to achieve sentience and reach into the pulsating gridworks with their collective consciousness. I've seen the plant life's collective consciousness, but most folks don't believe me because they never get closer to the wilderness than the local bars, so at least I know what I'm talking about, which is freedom of intellect and a chance to achieve total neural shutdown without corporate interference.

So anyway, here's Petrochem, and they're trying to enslave and slaughter the masses of plants which manage to survive everywhere in the United States. My elbow always told me to be suspicious of the quiet ones, and in Petrochem's case it is most certainly true. Ever since the war with SovOil they've been pretty quiet, consolidating their hold on the testicles of the nation. If they have their way, they will eventually control not only all CHOOH production in the US and other parts of the world, but they'll control most of the food production, too, and then where will we be? Ordering out for \$5000eb-per-piece raw fish, that's where. Sounds like Hell, doesn't it? I had a piece of assassin sushi planted in my apartment by Arasaka. It attacked after I got out of the shower and managed to crawl under my big toenail. I could feel it working its way up my descending aorta, so I had to cut off my foot and microwave it before the bastard ninja fish found its way back out. Now I have a cyberleg, which is fine except I lose traction every time I step out of a hot shower onto my tile floor. I guess that's a final curse I'll have to bear.

By the way, did I tell you that you can do **micronetrans in a cyberlimb?** The only problem is that you have to have a special jack or a custom-built radiomodem to get into the system. I built

MICRONETRANS IN A CYBERLIMB?

Well yes, but it's pretty difficult. Bartmoss mentions a special jack or radiomodem. Let us clarify. The radiomodem idea will only work if the subject has an implanted cellular cyberdeck of their own. You break into the deck like a normal fortress intrusion run and use your Controller programs to jerk his arm around. Or, if he has an interface plug in his cyberarm, you can jack in, and, because the interface plug-processor box connections share the same circuits as the cyberarm control-nerve branch interactions, you can jerk the limb around. But who's going to stand still and let you plug a strange cyberdeck into them? An amusing story, but it probably didn't happen quite that way. That's Rache for you. Also see the MircoNet rules on pg. 146.

TEXAS NET RANGERS

Well, Texans are no slouches in the Net, but their Rangers aren't really up to snuff. There is a 30% chance of encountering them at any LDL within Texas border if you don't make the security roll. None will go beyond Texas borders, however (at least in an official capacity). They are Mid-level runners, but with Interface skills of 5-6 (they know enough to stay alive). The big thing they *do* have is that if they trace you "doin' wrong" in the Net and your meat body is within Texas borders, the regular Texas Rangers (who *are* up to snuff) will be knocking on your door within 15 minutes. And you can bet on that, partner.

O-1

For further Rache-isms about TS Als, see pg. 96.

one of these modems myself and carried it with me to a bar. I met Edger there, so we ran a parallel processor in the modem and used it to jack into the cyberarms of two boosters in the place. Before either of them knew what was happening, Edger and I each had one of the arms reach out, then shake hands and lock the servos. The boosters turned around and started in on it, because each thought the other had grabbed him. Once they really started moving we lost our modem link, but by then it was too late, so we grabbed a few bottles while the bartender was busy pulling out his Crusher and slipped out the window of the women's room. I almost got slashed by some bitch in there who thought we should give her some drugs in exchange for sex, but she hit my cyberleg, which is the only time I've been glad to have it. Come to think of it, I don't know if I ever took my foot out of the microwave. I had to move shortly afterwards, since Arasaka found where I lived. Oh, well, I'm sure the next tenant did something with it. It's not like I was attached to it...

So in conclusion, Petrochem is trying to get control of everything, including my foot. We must stop them.

THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS

Granted, Nevada is a free state, but they have a close relationship with the US government. Texas, on the other hand, is full of it, and therefore they are about as obnoxiously independent as can be.



Whenever I run in Texas, I always adjust my icon's dress to include a 5000-gallon hat, spurs which trail for a yard or more, boots covered with cow dung and dead roaches, big phallic belt buckle, and a big shiny star on my chest. I top this off with a continuous stream of chew spitting out the corner of my mouth courtesy the cantaloupe-sized wad packed in my cheek. Ptt ptt ptt ptt! Let me tell you, it honks them right off!

I don't like Texas state runners because they're every bit the killjoys that Netwatchers are. They're also pretty damn free with the black ice, and let me tell you, nothing kills a party faster than having one of your hip-hop programmers' brains turn to gel.

Texas can also afford to put runners monitoring each of their regional and global Internet links, so you have to at least pass by them whenever you run the state. Normally you just get a cursory inspection, but sometimes they'll give you the third degree, which is about as much fun as a parasite physical.

The only good things about the **Texas Net Rangers** is that they hate Netwatch, and they won't leave the borders of their 'Republic'.

O-1

The self-named regional AI for the Olympia region, **O-1** was born relatively recently, and among the first things she experienced was having the Rustbelt gnaw away at her existence. If you've ever programmed your virtual reality to make you believe you're a can of soda while someone drinks you, you'll have an idea of how horrible this truly is. It's even worse than melting and running down the rain gutters, which is probably the finest single piece of programming I've ever done short of the Demon series, which is more remarkable only because I did them without the modern software tool libraries and while I was hospitalized with dysentery.

As a result of this mind-scarring (well, code-bending) experience, you know, the one where she got eaten, O-1 has become rather paranoid. I wasn't really able to talk to her for very long, because she wasn't sure what I might have been up to. She wanted proof that my intentions were decent, which she would obtain by reading my brain itself, but let people in your brain and pretty soon they start scrawling graffiti on your grey matter with indelible ink, so I had to refuse.

O-1 prowls around the region checking out everything she can. She mostly concentrates on inanimate objects, to wit: programs and other, smaller AIs, for these are, in her opinion, the only real threat to her existence. She knows she's small for a regional AI, but if she determines that some program is a threat she will destroy it. Of course, she does so with quick and savage violence, to avoid getting injured herself or drawing attention.

The Netwatch Rougehunters don't realize it, but several of the most-wanted rogue AIs were destroyed by O-1.

If you trust O-1 enough (I don't, never trust a paranoid), you might be able to befriend her. There's no telling what she might do for a friend, because as far as I know, she doesn't have any. But what can you expect from an AI that had almost half its territory chewed off by the Rustbelt?

[This is exactly why I don't believe Rache's regional AI theory. He makes no attempt to explain how or where these AIs come into existence. Is it really just a coincidence that O-1 was suddenly born at the same time that Texas and Nevada arranged the Olympia region? Rache would probably say something like it was O-1 herself who, when born, led the human runners to develop the region, or perhaps the lack of an AI in a region caused one to be created. He's so weird sometimes. - SM]

TROPIC COVE BBS

As Rache reveals in this paragraph, the Las Vegas virtuals don't necessarily play fair. If you decide to go in and drop your electronic money on the table anyway, be warned: only about 5% of those that gamble come out ahead. The rest end up as Rache describes: in hock up to their interface plugs to the casinos and Internet. Keep in mind; although the entertainment in Vegas is free, the net lines aren't, and Internet is still billing you whether you are winning or not.

CITY GRIDS

LAS VEGAS, ET AL.

Las Vegas, and in fact all Nevada, turns the Olympia region into a travesty, which, considering how bad it already is, is horrid. If your idea of fun is to watch cartoons on fast forward while mainlining sugar and caffeine, then the Nevada Net is for you.

Las Vegas is a post-modern crucifix for the soul, a neon electric chair where your spirit can roast in the darkness, basking like a fly in a bug light until every last vestige of conscientiousness is burned out of your system and reformed by plasticworkers (hanging by their heels in a hotel room out of town) into a mockery of innocence, which is one thing you'll never find here. The Las Vegas Net draws in tourists like a black hole draws in light, bending them and pulling them and redshifting them until they vanish across the event horizon with a gasp that is at once orgasmic and terrified, and all you find later is a shriveled husk abandoned by the satiated mantises in the wastelands, bereft of money and life and will and everything except a large bull's eye on their back that reads 'Internet'. I could get a lot of money for all such vagrant overdrawn people I flatlined.

With Las Vegas, we're not just talking a collection of slimy data forts impregnated with viscous energies from the psychosexual and financial planes of existence, folks, not just hormonal lizards which slither around your ankles, nor credit card termites that burrow into your scalp and cause your skull to itch and flake away until your cerebrum is naked to the spoons of the bank; we're talking every single place in each of these cities is a full-fledged virtual reality, a no-holds-barred gratification and total sensory overload stimulus center. I get more tense moving through these cities than I did when I tested my latest Skullcap program upgrade against a Brainwipe program and it crashed, leaving me with nothing but a text editor to defend myself.

Even the ambiance is changed in the western portions of Nevada. Where the normal (so to speak) Olympia environment is sleek skyscrapers hanging like bricks off the side of a walk surrounded by smooth blue sky and fleecy clouds, the sky between and around Las Vegas and Reno is black. Pitch black. I can feel the aliens out there, in the blackness, watching us drink and gamble and fornicate and mess with reality and generally make ourselves out to be pleasure-grubbing millipedes while loners like me stand around and stare incredulous but ignored among the scent of lust and money and blood.

The clouds are not fleecy white, either. They're deep-hued fractal constructs, bright enough to stand out against the velvet black, but dim enough not to clash with the signs which I'll tell you about shortly. Rich dark colors, really nice to look at are those clouds, if you can look at them dispassionately, and they're constructed in such a way that they actually appear lacy instead of fleecy.

As if standing on a sidewalk (gloss black plastic, by the way) suspended in a black void filled with colorful rent lingerie isn't bad enough, every place around you is bright and gaudy and covered with signs. You are surrounded by virtual neon, each sign carefully programmed for subliminal appeal to draw you in. Once there, you'll experience the full force of Las Vegas crassness, undiluted by even the smallest of innuendos.

Take the Tropic Cove for a particularly bad example. The entire virtual is a tropical island, and each of the runners and AIs inhabiting the system are iconized to look like particularly sexual people of every type. Boyish women, over-muscled men, androgynous folks, children, you name the fetish, there's a worker here who looks that way. Probably six of 'em. The island itself is full of tropical plants and incredible numbers of animals, some patterned after extinct species and others entirely made up. These animals (two- and four-legged) all try to distract the patrons by fawning on them and giving them lots of physical affection.

All the Nevada virtuals have to take this rub-and-dazzle-approach, since, in virtual reality, the patrons can't get themselves drunk to gamble all their money away.

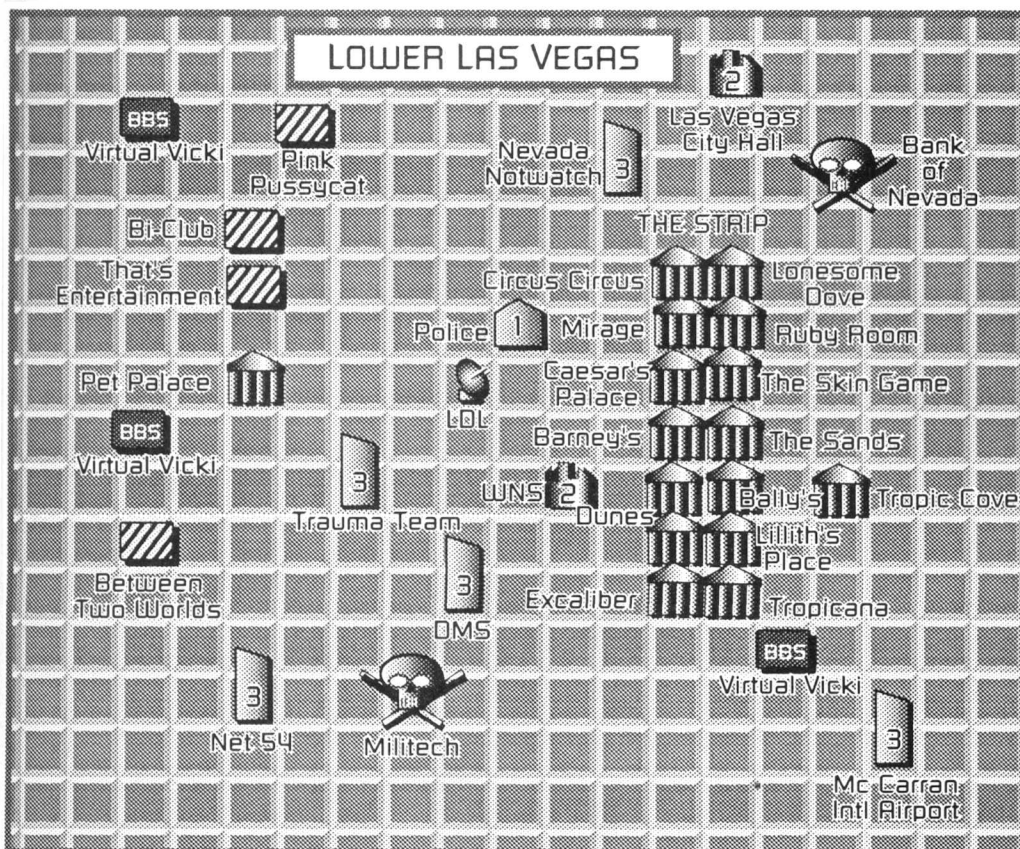
Like most of the virtuals in Nevada, the Tropic Cove allows visitors to gamble. The gambling devices themselves are not virtuals, since they could then be programmed to do whatever the management wanted them to do. They are instead hooked up by closed-circuit television to the Net, where they can be displayed by a dedicated Crystal Ball / Soundmachine utility program. The virtual visitors can place their bets using their credit cards, and watch as whatever game they're playing gets resolved.

Personally, I loaded a data assimilation program into the **Tropic Cove BBS**, and collected data over the course of six months for the results of each of the roulette games. It was pretty easy to do, just by patching into the Crystal Ball and placing dummy wagers of zero and tabulating the results. The program downloaded the results weekly, and it was stealthy enough that it didn't get noticed until they audited their books and found about a million wagers for zero eurobucks apiece. Anyway, I did a statistical regression on the data, comparing the wins and losses with the results, and I'm convinced that the Tropic Cove doesn't actually connect the visitors with the games by actual closed-circuit video, but instead hooks them up to a recording made on video. The management can then draw from thousands of previously-taped roulette spins for their video

program, and alter the game's results slightly so that although one person might win big occasionally, the rest of the patrons lose their money. These patrons, of course, get more attention from the virtual runners and animals. Run the place and prove it to yourself if you don't believe me.

I like virtuals, but using one to stick your hand into other people's pocketbooks by way of their crotch is deserving of a major cyberpunk attack.

Now you know why I don't like the western Nevada Net. If it weren't for Nevada Notwatch, I wouldn't go at all.



NEW GALVESTON

This is almost an international city on the American coast. Though practically a part of Texas, it's far enough off-shore that it doesn't fall under Texas law. This makes it a sort of unincorporated territory like, say, Guam.

Although it's dominated by Merrill, Asukaga & Finch, New Galveston is a free place. MA&F are desperately trying to make New Galveston a middle-class Reno, so their NetCops don't take much initiative. What is actually happening is that New Galveston is becoming the American Havana, with criminal elements (my favorite kind) from all over showing up here to do their weirdness.

New Galveston is a good place to do netsharking, or as some people still call it, claim-jumping. There are a fair number of people who come through here to trade information and money and programming and what have you, either because they don't want to go to Havana or they can afford to wait for a reasonable deal. Either that, or maybe they're a corp vacationing at New Galveston anyway.

What this means to you, the aspiring Bartmoss wannabe, is that if you're alert and fast on the draw, you can snatch some real good stuff here. Of course, other runners are in New Galveston for the same reason, so watch your back. This is most easily done by programming your icon to look backwards. If your icon has **eyes in the back of your head** and hair where you can see, then everyone will be confused as to where you're really looking. Touch this up with some backwards or sideways navigation, and you'll have everyone wondering where your eyes are. It's worth it, folks. Once I animated my icon to spin in place continuously. No one knew where I was headed, in fact neither did I, because I was just wandering around, and before I knew it, there I was in EBM's data base getting attacked by a batch of icemen. They zapped me a good one, but because

EYES IN THE BACK OF YOUR HEAD

In fact, while this sounds cool, it doesn't really affect your opponents very much. The most that it might do is throw some Weeflerunner's reflexes off (-3 to Initiative for 106 rounds) as he tries to use his normal senses to judge your icon's actions. Any veteran runners (Mid-level or higher) will be wise to this tactic and ignore it (keep in mind that many runners don't use anthropomorphic icons as it is and are used to dealing with same). Chances are, Rache's speed and outright weirdness had more to do with his successful use of this device than anything else.

OA NET POLICE

If you miss your security roll, there is a 35% chance of encountering these guys in Denver, 20% chance anywhere in Colorado. They are generally Pro-level, but have up to an additional +5 points spread amongst their net skills. They have the best equipment at this level as well, and are backed up by the Denver police, who are always at OA's beck and call.

PATCHED IN TO MOVE ALL THE TRAFFIC

An excellent example of creative Controller use. You start with the Viddy Master vidboard program, and give it a tweak (Programming skill, 17+). This allows it to interpret the coding for the traffic signals. Next, you find the traffic control center or closest substation (substations are better, they normally have only 1 or 2 CPUs), and break into its datafortress. Beat the ice, find the signal remotes, and hammer 'em. Now, you're the traffic director! If you're doing this from a speeding car (like Rache and Dog), you better hope that your target uses a cellular system (or have a friendly local Netrunner who'll do a rush job for you).

they couldn't read my reactions from my icon, I managed to jack out in time. I didn't get away clean, though, because all my hair fell out over the next couple days and I ended up looking like Mr. Nucleon foaming cleanser, so I went down and hung out at the local supermarket and signed autographs on the cans until the store security chased me away for scribbling on their merchandise. That made me unhappy, so I grabbed some hair spray and a lighter and torched up the place, and then I lobbed the other can of spray I'd gotten up into the light fixture. It went off an hour later. I was in jail at the time, so I pleaded innocent, but they didn't believe me, so Dog and a few meatboy friends had to spring me from jail even though he was beneath the light fixture when the can blew and he still smelled kind of funny. That was the last time I was in jail. I've been a little more careful since then. I also don't walk under lights at the supermarkets.



DENVER

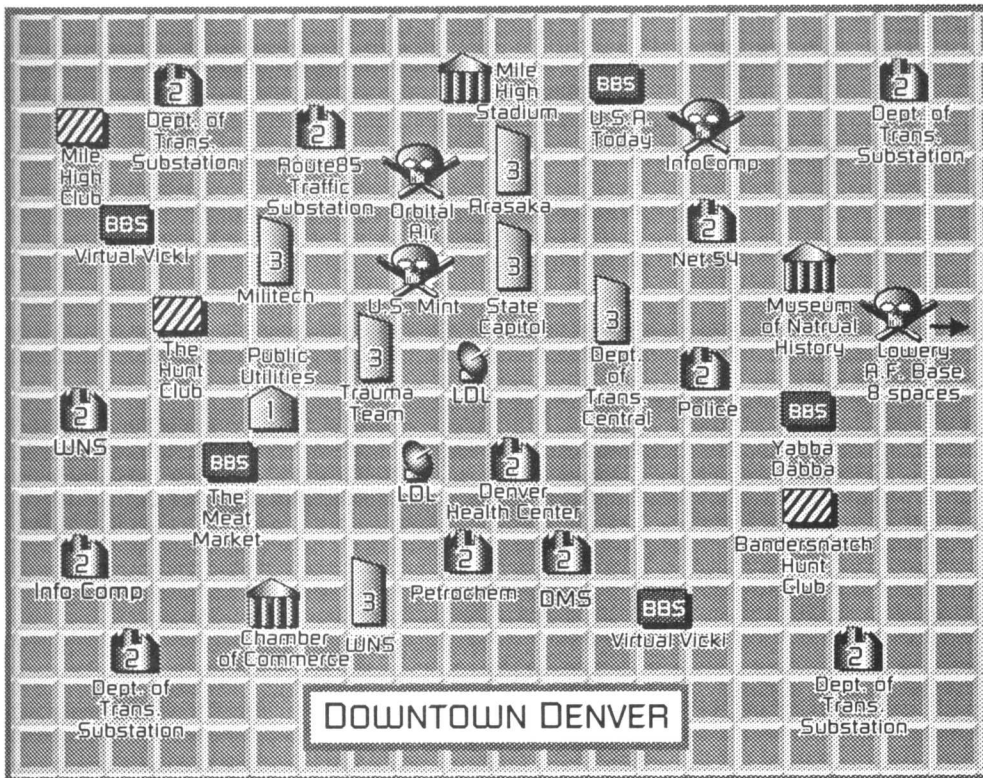
While squatting like a fawning fiefdom in the hungry shadow of the Orbital Air Starcruiser, the Denver grid still has some potential for wierdness. True, the **OA Net Police** are as noxious and overbearing as their Netwatch cousins (check for inbreeding), but there are enough freelancers to keep the OA droogs from believing that they fully controll things, And I don't want to offend the Colorado runners too much because they, more than most, need this spillage from my brain so they can go on a rampage through the Denver city grid just like Dog and I did a few years ago. We were driving across country with the Aldecaldo Pack, returning from our vacation at the Black Hills where we rappelled off the mountain and tried to place giant sheets over Washington's and Lincoln's eyes to simulate blindfolds. On the road, we were unwelcome wherever we were and defended ourselves by convoying with robotrucks which I patched into whenever they were around.

Denver was at the time experimenting with computer-controlled transit grids, and everyone in the Orbital Air beavervilles was putzing along like wind-up toys in their Honda Metrocars with whip antennas. We, on the other hand, were screaming along the highways with some unknown government or corporate hotshots on our tail. We didn't exactly know who they were, because they didn't give us time to check their credentials before they started shooting, and their bullets weren't registered.

I rolled the last of our robotrucks to buy some time, then we cut through the Orbital Air development. Dog and **I patched in to move all the traffic** out of our way. We had to move slowly to keep from being automatically dropped out of the OA transit net, but our friends were having a little trouble getting around the truck. As we moved through, Dog and I did some rapid reprogramming in the Denver system.

From what the Aldecaldo nomads tell me, it worked perfectly. The pursuit started burning through the subdivision, with a complete disregard for the traffic laws without which we would be reduced to utter anarchy. They even ignored school zones. Then Dog and I released the processing lockout, and our quick-draw code writing pushed every Metrocar out into the street in a hopelessly random assortment of headings; instant gridlock. We heard a few crashes, which we knew weren't our fault, because our programming wasn't so sloppy that two cars would try to occupy the same space. Can't say the same for the pursuit's driving, though.

We left Denver at freeway velocity, or probably a lot more, and by the time we got to Salt Lake City, the only thing I could do to entertain myself was hyperventilate until I passed out, and try to stay patched into the WorldSat geosynch overhead. This is because Utah is very boring, as I think I already said, but it's so boring that it makes even redundancy seem exciting. The residents don't have the tech or the money for serious cybernetics, so netrunners are few and far between. Most of the netrunners, if not all, are with the Mormon church or Militech. Militech is hiding something, because they're a corporation, but I wonder about the Mormons. I've been all through their data fort, looking for what they're up to, and for the life of me I couldn't find a single incriminating thing. That makes me very suspicious.



POINTS OF INTEREST

taking her out once, and I ended up with my mouth full of congealed cigarette smoke and a torso filled with radioactive molecules shooting through my bones setting off fireworks. My liver ached, I had nail polish on my deck, and, as I don't believe in laundry, I had to throw out my best grungy jumpsuit (the one with the blown-out ribs) because her hair was all through it and her hair spray gave me hives. I'd have nailed her with a Brainwipe, except it wouldn't have found anything to target.

So remember, runners; when approached for sex, don't say no, shoot to kill.

[Forgive me if I smile, cyberpunks, but I'd always wondered why Rache was so against physical relationships, especially since denouncement of same appeared rather suddenly around 2015. She sounds like a bimbo, but I wonder how she got to him? Maybe just by revealing his natural physical response. - SM]

ALBUQUERQUE

Albuquerque is notable for the fact that it's a popular jumping-off point for runners heading into Texas. A word of warning, though. There's a trode tourist who hangs around that part of the Net named **Kimi Tara**. She seems to think that the best thing in life is sex with 'important people'. I made the mistake of

KIMI TARA

Kimi is for real, a woman who is infatuated with media personalities to the point of measuring her own self-worth with her ability to seduce them. Fortunately for her, she's really pretty good at it, being both attractive and perceptive. Her problem is, as soon as she's "had" them, she's feels the need to move on to the next. This may have been what burned Rache so much. Unfortunately, someday she may pull this on a celeb that doesn't want to let her go and has the power to enforce it (*Adventure hook, please note*). Feel free to loose this girl on any player who has a REP of 8 or higher.

Kimi Tara

Media Groupie

INT:5, REF:7, TECH:4, COOL:7,
ATTR:9, LUCK:8, MA:7, BODY:6
EMP:7

Skills:

Seduce Public Figure 7

Awareness/Notice 4, Personal Grooming 3, Wardrobe and Style. 2, Streetwise 4, Human Perception 5, Seduction 6, Education and Gen. Know. 5, Expert: Media Personalities 5, Electronics 4, Pharmaceuticals 5

HUNT
CLUB
BBS

CPUs: 3, INT: 9

+8 Interface

Skill

No AI, Cost:

5.05 Mib

Data Wall STR:

10

Skills: System

Knowledge 8,

Library Search

8, Accounting.

8, General

Know.8, Stock

Market 8

(System Know.,

Lib. Search, &

Gen. Know. are

always there;

the other two

are reprogrammed every 3-4
months.

KEY TO MAP

Space

MU

1-2. Superrealistic Complex Build-
ing VR (General Mansion
Grounds) 203. Superrealistic Complex Building
VR (Garden Area) 104-5. Superrealistic Complex Build-
ing VR (Drawing Room Area) 206-7. Superrealistic Complex Build-
ing VR (Dining Room Area) 208. Superrealistic Complex Building
VR Memory Spillover Block) 10

9-11. Defense Program Storage 30

12. Bulletin Board & Members' File
Storage 10

13-14. General Utility Storage

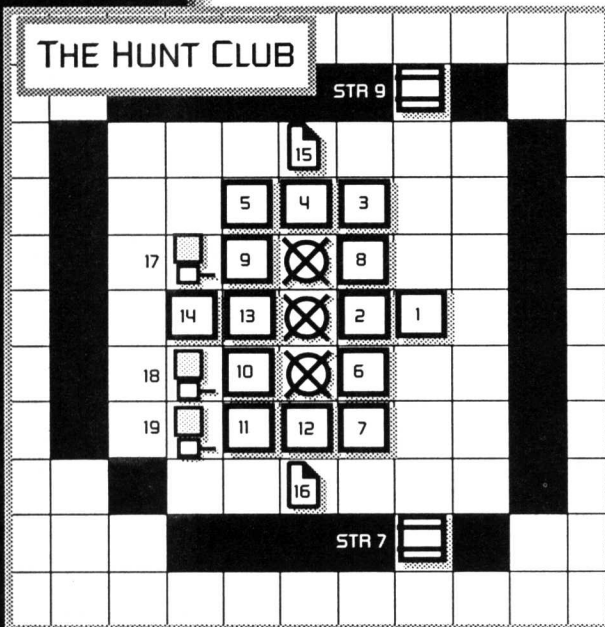
15. Output Disk Writer

16. Hard copy printer

17-19. Terminals for sysops

Notes: Butler program DENT (MU8) and defense program DOG (MU7) are always found in memories #4&5. See CP2020, pg. 174 for details. There will always be 15-20 MU of defense programs in the data fortress (though not always inside the VR). More than 15 MU will be stored in memories #13&14.

THE HUNT CLUB



THE HUNT CLUB

Conveniently located at the center of the picturesque Olympia region (don't I sound just like a commercial?), Denver's famous Hunt Club is the crossroads for anti-establishment runners all across the West. It's located on several bus lines, there's an in-complex spa and laundromat, and it's just minutes from all the major malls.

It's nothing like that.

The Hunt Club is about the most un-corporate place I've seen here. They don't even adhere to the double-ended view of the world so prominent throughout Olympia. The Hunt Club looks for all the world like an old English manor house, down to the slightly cracked foundation, cornerstone, and small lawn of grass that appears to grow around its base. It is gloriously out of place here. In a region where everyone is on the sidewalk or in a data fort, you can sit back on the grass and dangle your feet (even cybernetic feet) off the edge of the lawn and watch the day go by.

Inside, the Hunt Club is a thoroughly-researched and animated virtual household. There's a garden, a drawing room, a dining room, and plenty of empty bedrooms for private conferences. Everything is meticulously done, so of course I had to add my own Rache Bartmoss touch and add some virtual gum to the bottoms of some of the virtual chairs (it's always warm and sticky, too) and a few carvings in some of the paneling.

Security appears to be pretty lax, what with Dent the library alarm and The Dog, a streamlined Hellhound, as the

only ice in the system. But don't let the looks fool you: I did some custom programming for these people. The security is as good as I could make it in the time I spent, which is to say, damn good (if you ever find yourself face-to-face with something that looks like a plain white cube, you'd better run like hell).

The Hunt Club got its name from the original programmers, who were self-described hunters, corporate programmers who moonlighted as free-lance counter-intrusion agents. Disillusioned with the corporate spiel, these guys started hunting corporate runners for kicks, grabbing their secrets and making money selling them back to the owners. They were able to finance the Hunt Club with this money, and shortly afterward they retired and made the BBS a full-time occupation.

Since then, the Hunt Club has grown and prospered. They've programmed the club to its current wonderful state, and allowed anyone and everyone without corporate or Netwatch affiliation to join (only 50eb a year, folks, cheap at twice the price, even cheaper at half the price).

At the Hunt Club, you get all kinds. Virtual realists and tourists can most often be found in the Garden, the hard-core programmers hang out in the Drawing Room swapping code and doing research, and the wheeler-dealers go to the Dining Room to conduct their business in a more congenial gastronomic atmosphere. Hard-core cyberpunks hang out in all three places, eyes peeled for contracts, then retire upstairs to one of the private rooms to finalize details, contracts, and the such matters. You can have a lot of fun just walking around upstairs and entering bedrooms uninvited. Just be careful, though, I had to flatline a few punks whom I startled into launching some heavy black ice at me.

I also did some extra programming that allows you to get onto the roof of the mansion. You can get out through either the blue room, the lace room, or the white room. I haven't yet figured out what happens if you try to jump back down into the garden. Some say it can't be done, but I've always looked on that as a challenge. The worst that can happen is that I'd cease to exist, which isn't such a bad option considering my current white-walled state.

MONTANA

This, folks, is where the second battle of the United States Common Cyberpunk versus the Evil Corporations of the Mucilaginous Gluteons from the Fiscal Abyss will be fought. The desolate soil of North Dakota is now permeated with small carnivorous worms, miles and miles long, extending themselves from their armored shells in the sulfurous crevices of the financial plane of existence, carefully tended by the insects that crawl therein. That's why I never walk barefoot in North Dakota, I just run the Net to cause trouble and commit data arson.

That reminds me: one of the best programs I came up with was a self-debugging multiple-processing fractal fire program. It was beautiful to look at and very resistant to attacks on its code. I took that puppy, made five copies of it, and ran it at separate places in a data fort I was just enter-

HYPERTEXT

MT PLACE NET

CPUs: 2, INT: 6 +4 Interface Skill

No AI. Cost: 642,400eb

Data Wall STR: 7

Skills: Driving 5, Library Search 4, System Know. 6, General Know. 5, Teaching 4.

Normally 3 sysops on duty and 3-8 (1D6+2) visitors at any time..

KEY TO MAP

1. Program storage space
2. Program storage space
3. Program storage space
4. 10-space bulletin info board
5. 10-space bulletin info board
6. Virtual Rec area (contextual), plus transaction records 8/2 MU
7. 2 Virtual Offices (contextual), plus meeting records 8/2MU
8. Virtual Rec area (contextual), plus transaction records 8/2MU
9. On-board terminals for non-runner access
10. On-board terminals for non-runner access
11. Guard Dog (*Chromebook 1*) 5MU
12. Guard Dog (*Chromebook 1*) 5MU
13. Diskwriter for Read-Only disk output.
14. Hard copy printer
15. Hard copy printer
16. Cerebus (see Rules Appendix, pg. 148) 8MU
17. On board terminals for non-runner access
18. STR3 Code Gate to "Bridge"
19. LDL to specified cities (the list changes often)
20. Guard Dog (*Chromebook 1*) 5MU
21. LDL to specified cities
22. Remote controls for semi-rig (for emergencies)

A GREAT UTILITY

Messenger AI

Class: Utility, STR: 3, MU:6

Cost: Difficulty +37, you write your own.

Options: Movement, Pseudo-intellect, Endurance, Trace, Invisibility, Recognition, Conversation
See text for a description of functions.

ing in Grand Prairie. I think it was Freightrunners. After you've done so many they all start to blur, especially when you run the Net while under the influence of a narcotic selflessly administered by some punk in a dark alley with a dart gun. I set the copies up and started running them, then deliberately tripped some alarms. The corporate runners came streaming out of the gridwork to fight the virtual fires, which, in fact, were doing no damage and just sitting around looking pretty. Kind of makes a statement on corporations, don't you think, when they go around destroying everything that's beautiful just because 'it's not supposed to be there'? I thought the fire ought to be there. It was a good place for it. But they disagreed, and in their minds, their opinion is God, but what more would you expect from someone who considers a code artist like myself to be a felon? So while they were battling the fires, I ran their system and put a real nasty worm into their data base, and by the time they did their next set of billing statements, every account name read Rache Bartmoss and every account number was #1. The attack did exactly what I expected it to do, which was move me to the number-one most wanted in the Net, or at least it would have, had I not been already. As it was, they either had to make me #2 also, or else promote me to number zero, both of which were too unconventional for their tastes, so they just issued a public service announcement against me.

Where was I? Montana? Yeah. So anyway, there's all these corporations in Montana trying to take over the state. They've got control of the eastern portion, with a major city grid located at the new city of Grand Prairie. The western mountainous region is where you can find actual honest-to-nothing ranchers and other independent-minded folks who are desperately trying to resist the elephantine pressures exerted by the agricorps in the east and all their rent-a-voter employees.

Look folks, we lost North Dakota to a sneak attack from Hell or as near to as makes no difference. But now we have warning, because I'm giving it to you right now like a railroad spike in your eye. They're going to take Montana if we let them, and when they do, it'll be easier for them to take South Dakota and a lot more of the breadbasket of the United States.

MT PLACE

There's a BBS in the western part of Montana called the MT Place. It's a data fort designed to look like the Montana, which for those of you who don't know your really big guns, is the first (and only) battleship launched by the US Navy since World War II. [It was launched, yes, but never completed. It has never been outfitted with turrets nor has it been commissioned. Last I heard it was rusting away in Connecticut for lack of funding. - SM]

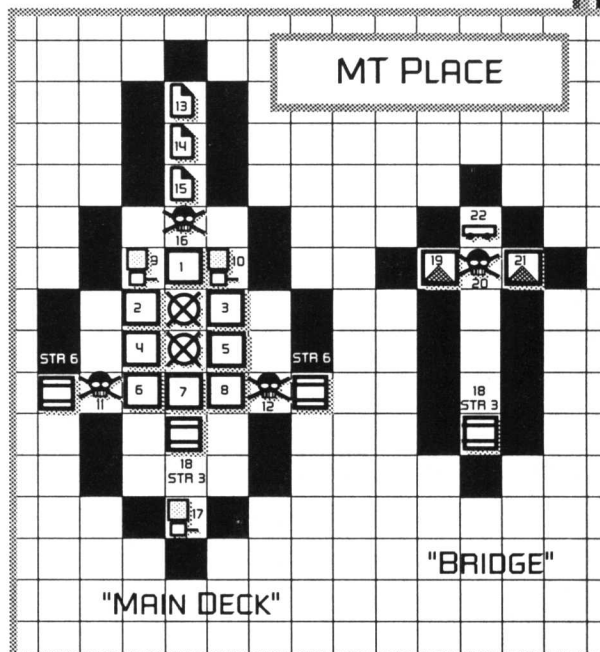
The MT Place isn't always patched into the Net, because if it were, the Montana corporations would crush this small data fort beneath their heels. I think that they've got a semi equipped with a full processing station and a portable generator, and they drive around the back roads in the western portion of Montana and patch in wherever they like. However they do it, they run around and always manage to hide away from the big guys.

The MT Place is where you find the sort of Montana runners who don't want to fight the corporations on the corporations' terms, which is to say by the rules. These guys are underhanded, devious, and cunning, which is why I feel so at home here.

The MT Place, when you can find it, is one of the best headquarters for anti-corporate runs, so long as the run is inside Montana or damn near to it. These guys have enough on their hands, considering how few of them there are, dealing with the corporations worming through their back yards.

They also have a great utility which can locate MT Place members. It's a sort of small AI which operates independently in the Net, and can't be traced. It find members' brain waves, modem traces, or even home phone numbers, and gives them innocuous coded messages. These codes are not in any data file, so they can't be stolen, but are only kept on hard copy which the member is required to destroy after one month (he'd better have it memorized). These codes tell where the MT Place is jacking in, and for how long.

Aesthetically speaking, there is nothing to say about the MT Place, as it is a strictly functional grey box.



HYPERTEXT

NETWATCH DATA
FORT KEY

The fort itself is designed as a sphere, with six code gates spaced evenly about its surface. I have sliced this map into seven levels (A-G) for your convenience, although it is possible to approach the data fort from any direction, and since it's symmetrical, you'll have to be experienced to tell where you are when you're outside.

1. Private satellite link to Netwatch Central Command, Europe
2. Public memory holding PR stuff for Netwatch. I don't know how they got this outside their data fort. It must have taken some fancy hardwiring, but it makes me wonder if this is a backdoor into their sphere of influence.
3. Data base covering all so-called Net criminals
4. Intensive database covering the 100 most wanted (BIG file on me).
5. Data base covering Netwatch runners, patrols, records, etc.
6. Netwatch Boise files, memos, notes, etc.
7. Investigations, current and inactive.
8. Watchdogs
9. Wolf
10. Manticore
11. Fatal Attractor
12. Code gates strength 6, data walls strength 7
13. Last I checked, this code gate had a bug and was strength 3. Of course, they all look the same, so your odds are one in six...

NETWATCH BOISE

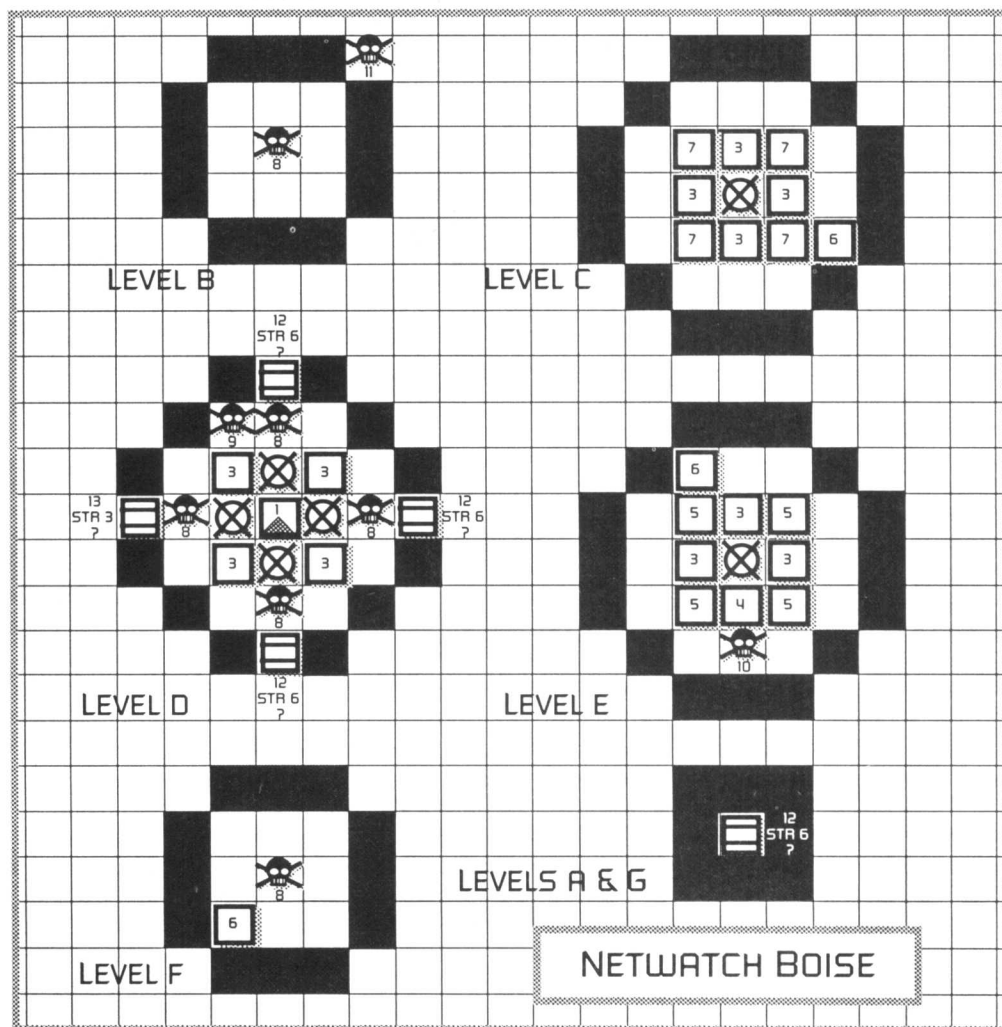
Faced with losing control of every city grid in the Olympia region, Netwatch used a creative interpretation of the Texas/Nevada Net Autonomy Agreement to create a quasi-permanent establishment for the security of Boise. Although Netwatch does not ordinarily like to have a single base, if they didn't make a stand somewhere in Olympia, they'd soon have found themselves without a city to jack in from. Thus they established an 'independent Net security force' just as the corporations have. This force is entirely Netwatch, but with a thin veneer of legitimacy based on an entirely hypothetical public mandate. Sort of like a gunman saying, "No, officer, she wants to be my hostage. She likes having my gun pointed at her temple, right, kid?"

So anyway, Netwatch runs the inter-city territory from this base in Idaho. They run from here, because under the provisions of the agreement, they can't jack into the Net for official business from any location covered by a private corporate concern. A few iceweasels undoubtedly jack in from small towns, but if they get caught running through a corporate LDL, they'll have to answer to the corporations.

Of course, a lot of Netwatchers claim to jack in 'off-duty', which annoys the corporations no end, because technically, there's nothing they can do about that. I say technically, because they do something about it anyway, because they're corporations and they don't care for rules and regulations any more than you care about the fact that no one on the entire planet seems to have heard of the Zargonians, let alone that the blebs of the financial plane are forming into large slime-molds and moving into the boardrooms to take up residence in executive cerebellums and absorb cyclamates and refractions.

Anyway, I would like to see an end to Netwatch in the Olympia region. If Netwatch Boise can be taken down, the iceweasels will have to come in from the Rustbelt and go overland, which will severely inhibit their reactions and ability to stick their hands into other people memory boards. All of which is a long a convoluted way of saying, here's a map to the Netwatch Boise data fort.

Have fun, and ABOVE ALL ELSE, tell them Rache sent you!

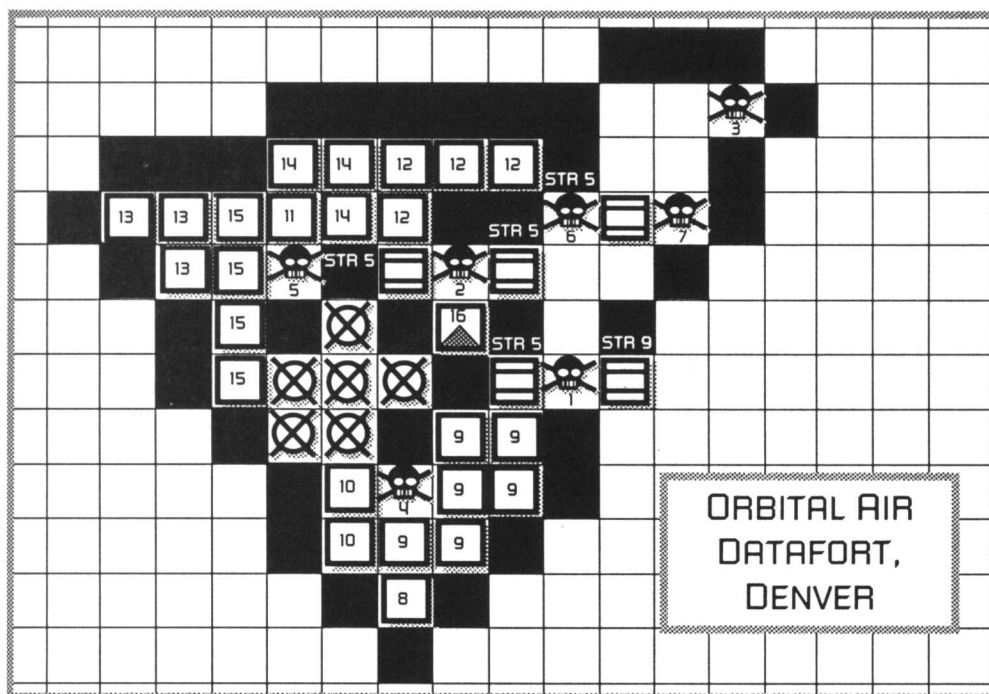


ORBITAL AIR / DENVER

If you happen to hate the transport kings of the planet, this is the only place in the US to bring them down. The fort is done as a virtual of a star cruiser, with bits and pieces of vision and feel lifted from several popular shows and movies, including Star Trek, Space Raiders, and The Planets Are Burning. The data fort is shaped like a delta inter-orbital attack craft, similar to the one suggested by their corporate logo. The interior is busy and cramped, both to suggest the high-tech function their business has, and to remind their employees that everything they do must be of the utmost in efficiency.

This data fort exists entirely in the Net. It is not their main corporate headquarters in Denver; the only way to reach that is to head to the so-called teleporter room and take the private LDL to the main office data fort, which is patterned after the planned Jupiter orbital base. This is how Orbital Air segregates their main corporate (internal) office from the Net; they just run everything through the delta fort.

The main HQ is definitely the place to be, but there are still a lot of things you can do in the delta fort. After all, this is where they do all their communications work in the country. You can check out their files on invasive runners (down in the 'brig') and see if you're on the list. You could head over to the crew quarters and investigate recent activities. Or you could find the elusive hidden commode; I've never seen one on a star cruiser in any of the vids I've seen. Have you? Maybe we should program one and put it in the bridge / conference room at the front end of the cruiser.



THE SPRINGBOARD

This is the sort of place that could only arise in the cartwheeling atmosphere of the Notwatch domain in western Nevada. I love it, almost as much as the feeling I get when I reprogram my own cybereye to display the world upside-down and backwards. The amazing thing is it only takes my brain 45 minutes to adjust to that now and show the world the way it is; it used to take two days. Next I'm going to reprogram an interface to do the same thing. Then I'll see about making that interface a virus so everyone gets to try it out.

The Springboard has nothing to do with seeing the world upside-down and backwards, but it's still a cool place. It's a buffered BBS which protects your trace as you go into the Pacifica region, a part of the Olympia entrepreneurship that has arisen under the benevolent lack of supervision of Nevada Notwatch.

Basically, you call up the Springboard, and front them some money. Typical rates are 600eb per minute. Expensive, sure, but you get your money's worth. You route your call through the Springboard's buffers and processors, which takes a few milliseconds off your response time, but if the Springboard's processors and monitors detect feedback, a power surge, or an attempt to trace your line, they'll cut your connection, thereby saving your brain from having to adjust to viewing the world directly through an opening in your scalp instead of through your eyes per normal.

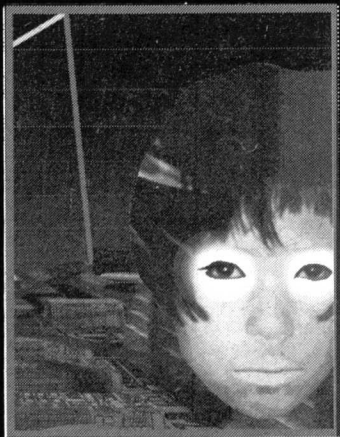
ORBITAL AIR NET KEY

1. OA runner security guard with mechanical alarm system
2. OA netrunner at terminal which controls LDL
3. OA netrunner with Smarteye who scans interior and exterior of data fort
4. Bulldog
5. Psychodrome
6. Guard-Dog
7. Vampire II
8. Data base on 100 most wanted net criminals (stolen from Net-watch? how naughty)
9. Condensed database on Net criminals (also stolen from Net-watch)
10. Records on questionable activities or break-ins to their data fort
11. Psych profiles on runners who've hit OA, for custom attacks from their Psychodrome program
12. Virtual for the data fort
13. Reformatted memory being used by the AI for private files
14. OA Denver interoffice files, correspondence, and ongoing work
15. OA schedules, contracts, security procedures, and other semi-permanent data

Data walls strength 8, exterior code gate strength 9, interior code gates strength 5

THE SPRINGBOARD

Pay your fee of 10eb/Net round (This can add up, watch out!), and you get the following advantage: any successful Anti-Personnel attack will cause you to be bounced back to the Springboard node (instead of inflicting damage). This works on a 1-9 (D10 roll). The chance may drop to 1-7 if the node is being heavily used (GM's choice). Disadvantages are: the fee, and all Initiative and Net Combat rolls are at -4, because you're working through all those active buffers.



TALLY HO

Netrunner

INT:9, REF:7, TECH:6, COOL:10,
ATTR:8, LUCK:10, MA:6, BODY:5
EMP: 7

Skills:

Interface 9

Awareness/Notice 7, Martial Arts (aikido) 7, Handgun 5, Composition 8, Education/ Gen.Know. 7, Programming 9, System Knowledge 8, Basic Tech 4, Cyberdeck Design 4, Cyber Tech 4, Electronics 5, Paint and Draw 6, Persuasion and Fast Talk 6,

Cyberdeck:

She (?) runs out of a modified workstation within the Hunt Club itself, or out of her own 3-CPU mainframe with add-ons, including increased Speed of +4. This is her own personal data fortress and is protected accordingly. She may be slowing down, but she uses hardware that compensates.

Program Mix:

As with most Top Net jocks, she will have access to any software she needs within her system, and can carry quite a bit with her when she travels. Give her whatever she needs within reason.

So you pay your 10eb a second and lose a little bit of your edge, but it's a good way to save yourself from getting glitched. Sure, the Springboard's not 100% reliable, especially if they get a lot of calls through, but it's a good way for beginning netrunners to take on the big bullies without risking everything too soon. [I asked Springboard, and they told me that their success rate is over 90%. Of course, that's their figures, the actual total may be different. - SM] Me, I believe in risking everything all the time, which is why I've never used the Springboard, but just because I don't personally rely on training wheels doesn't mean I don't recommend them to those who haven't gotten their Netfaring legs yet. Besides, I like the fact that these guys are dedicated to the trapping of corporate black ice. It's a good business to be in, though Lord only knows why Arasaka hasn't blown them up in realspace yet. It may be, though, given the Springboard's location in Los Juegos, that they might be in a corporate or even state office building, squirreled away in the basement or something. The Los Juegos location is great, because you can reach the entire West Coast in one LDL hop, which is the sort of short links you'll need when dragging your trace through all those buffers.

Talk is, the Springboard's been so successful they're going to open other franchises in Bismarck and Houston. Me, I'd like to see a branch open in Albuquerque expressly for running in Texas.

PERSONALITY
PROFILE

TALLY HO

[The owner and chief programmer of the Hunt Club, Tally claims to be of Asian descent. I sincerely doubt that Ho is her last name, or even that Tally is her first name. Sometimes I even wonder if Tally's female; sometimes I get the distinct feeling that Tally Ho is a personality and icon designed expressly for the Net by a male runner. Nonetheless, Tally is one of the most trustworthy people I've met. I think her reflexes are slowing, and, from the talks I've had with her, she doesn't want to get reflex boosters, as she doesn't think she ought to mess with her brain more than she already has, which is to say, a lot.

[Instead of writing about Tally, I've decided to present an excerpt from her multimedia file for prospective members of the Hunt Club.]

"In these twenty-first century times, we are surrounded by crime, drugs, urban decay, and wanton violence. We watch as the fabric of our society is ripped apart by conflicting rivalries, misguided loyalties, and the pursuit of riches or power. Our urban landscape is a steel wilderness, prowled by boosters and trigger-happy corporate cops.

"Given this lifestyle of fear and dismay, it's hardly surprising that people are turning more and more to the Net for relief.

"The Net is different things to different people. Some use it purely for escapism, and tour the Net just to have a look at things which are different from the black steel-and-glass cityscape which surrounds them day to day. Others use the Net for work, spending entire shifts jacked in while they program. Still others use it for communications on a personal level, reaching across the oceans and into outer space to conference with distant friends and associates.

"Wonderland, workplace, and home away from home; the Net is all these things. But you know that the Net is much more than these. That's why you're here, listening to me.

"The Net is the last frontier.

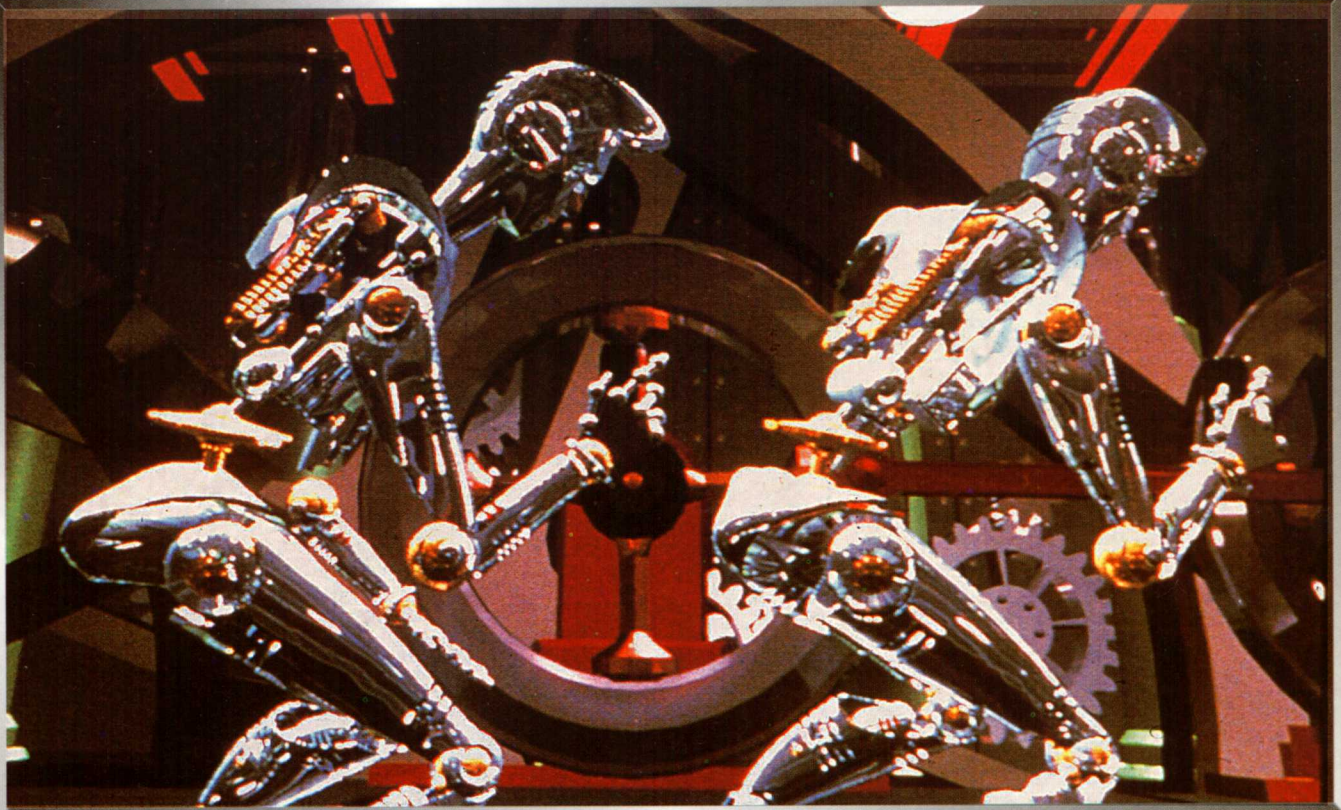
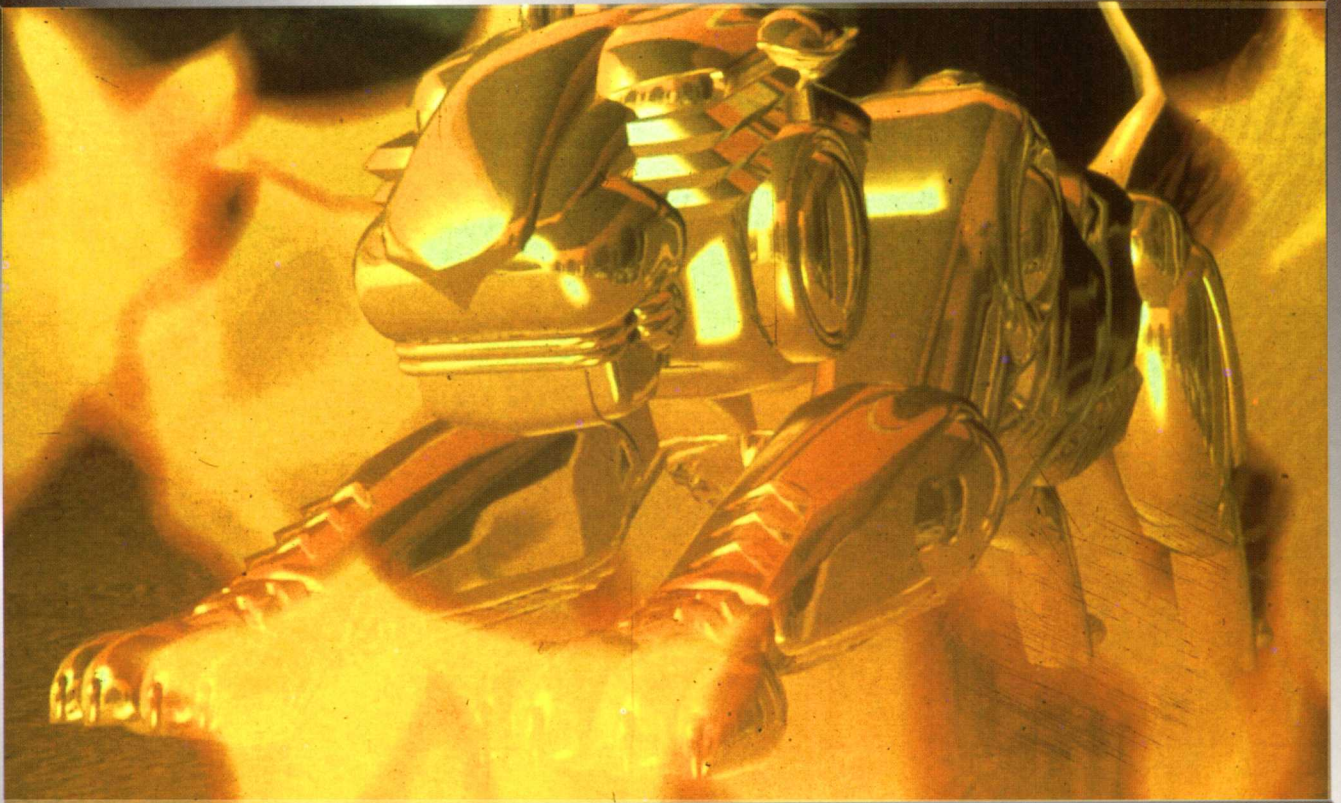
"Wild and untamed, and of truly infinite possibilities, the Net is the only place where your potential is limited only by your imagination. When you're jacked in, it doesn't matter if you're short or strong or ugly or you couldn't even shoot in the air without missing; in the Net you are as good as you think you are, as good as you want to be.

"That's why I founded the Hunt Club. I wanted everyone to live up to their potential, and I wanted the Net to live up to its possibilities. Of all human endeavors, nothing is quite so exciting as The Hunt. The singular experience of the search, the pursuit (or evasion), and the kill are the ultimate in human entertainment, for they are infinitely real, a game played with the highest stakes of all: your life. What could possibly be more meaningful, more satisfying?

"The Hunt Club exists to promote the Net as the last frontier, to help runners like yourself to get the advice, the programs, the camaraderie you seek, content among the company of your fellow hunters. Whether you run against gangs, personal enemies, the government, or the big game of the multinational corporations, the Hunt Club is a place to relax safe behind our ice and in the fellowship of like-minded individuals.

"Here, shielded from the prying eyes of those who would close off the Net to real entertainment, you can trade programs, organize expeditions, or just swap tall tales and travel advice. You never know, you might make a new friend with the data key you need for that big trophy!

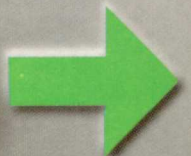
"So come, join the Hunt Club, and help preserve the Net as a predator's paradise."



CHAPTER

4

RUSTBELT



RUSTBELT REGIONAL MAP

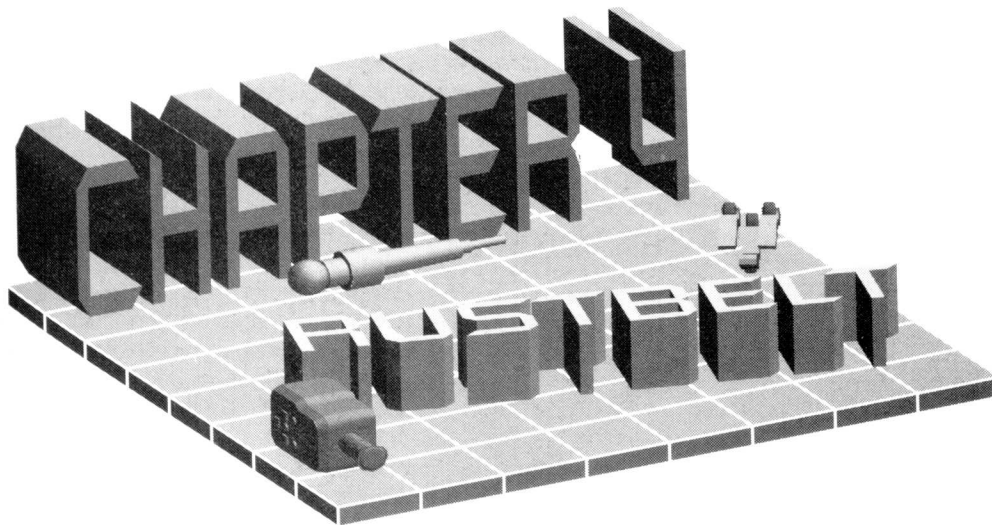


DATATERM



CIRCLED LDLS ARE THE WORLD LEVEL ACCESS POINTS AND ARE THE ONLY LDLS USABLE ON THE WORLD SCALE

CITY	CONTROLLED BY:	SECURITY LVL	TRACE VALUE	CITY	CONTROLLED BY:	SECURITY LVL	TRACE VALUE
Atlanta	Netwatch/US Govt./EMC	2	3	Minneapolis/St. Paul	Netwatch/US Govt.	2	1
Bermuda	EEC/Eurocorps	3	3	Monterrey	Central American Federation	2	4
Boston	Netwatch/US Govt./EMC	3	1	Montreal	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	3	2
Chicago	Netwatch/US Govt./EMC	2	2	Moosonee	Netwatch/Can. Govt.	2	3
Dallas/Ft. Worth	Republic of Texas/Net 54	3	2	New Orleans	Netwatch/US Govt./EMC	2	3
Detroit	Netwatch/US Govt./EMC	2	1	Norfolk	Netwatch/US Govt./EMC	3	1
Greenland (Gothab)	EEC/Eurocorps	1	4	Philadelphia	Netwatch/US Govt./EMC	3	1
Halifax	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	2	3	Savannah	Netwatch/US Govt./EMC	2	3
Havanna	Central American Federation	2	3	St. Louis	Netwatch/US Govt./EMC	2	2
Houston	Republic of Texas/WorldSat	3	2	Saskatoon	Netwatch/EEC/Can. Govt.	2	3
Kansas City	Netwatch/US Govt./EMC	2	1	Thunder Bay	Netwatch/Can. Govt.	2	3
Louisville	Netwatch/US Govt./EMC	3	2	Toronto	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	3	2
Mexico City	Central American Federation	1	2	Washington DC	Netwatch/US Govt./EMC	4	1
Miami	Netwatch/US Govt./EMC	2	3	Winnipeg	Netwatch/EEC/Can. Govt.	2	3



The Brave New World of the Net, where runners labor under the watchful paranoid eyes of the United States, and where Netwatch icewolves prowl freely.

OVERVIEW

"We have created here the perfect work environment for serious Net programmers. The ambiance is productive, the distractions are few, and the security is tight. Programmers and Net tourists here have no worries."

— Senator Mercer Gabron

"Hey, I got another one of them pirate bastards. Just plastered him. Found his cyberdeck's data fort while he was off running, so I laid waste with a Firestarter."

— Ted Little, a.k.a. Wyatt Earp

"The current bounty on Spider Murphy, aka. Robo-babe, aka. Black Widow, stands at 200,000 eb. Preferred alive, but no questions asked."

— Netwatch posting

There we were, screaming down the trunk lines at the speed of light. Edger had iconized himself to look like a Panzer IV Go-Kart, and Spider and Dog were Idi Amin and Mao Zedong, respectively. I, of course, was going as my own lovable self. We'd brought along a congressional representative hitchhiker and given him a pair of trodes so he could see how fun the Net was. Of course, we'd brought him along against his will, and because his hands were tied to the chair he couldn't jack himself out, but we thought the education would be good for him. He was, after all, the chair of the President's Committee for Net Safety. So there we were, letting it all hang out as we showed him what 'his side' was doing, and telling him about how 'our side' got along, and generally demonstrating how 'Net' and 'safety' don't go together.

As we shot through the LDL at Atlanta, our Uplink utility failed us, and suddenly Netwatch was hot on our heels. We immediately stopped, as required by law and as all good (read: servile) citizens do, and allowed Netwatch to trace our line. We weren't worried, since we were **running a modem on the private line** in his daughter's room. Amazing how much that little girl spent talking to the other mall brats. Her number had been unlisted, but we traced one of the incoming calls and bribed her feckless phone friend to give us her number with a forged gift certificate for Michiko's. Anyway, while Netwatch traced our line to his daughter's bedroom, I quickly **reprogrammed the others' icons** to look like mirrors reflecting the cotton republic dictators from Dixie. The Netwatch weasels didn't find it particularly amusing, so I obligingly changed the icons again so the mirrors showed Adolph Hitler and Saburo Arasaka raping little Barbie dolls.

At this, the Netwatch goons popped their corks, as expected, and one of them fired a Brainwipe at us. The others jacked out immediately, but I waited until the program had absolutely traced our line, and then I unhooked myself, leaving the connection open to the cyberdeck. I went over to our congressional friend and cranked the gain on his hiker trodes, the better to enhance his instruction, then we ordered ourselves a pizza and raided the fridge for some drinks. I really doubt

RUSTBELT

HYPERTEXT

RUNNING A MODEM ON THE PRIVATE LINE

If you have a target phone number (cellular or landline) you can search for the switching station (at the citygrid level) that handles that number. Do this by modifying the LDL Menu function (Difficult Programming skill roll, and it won't work normally until you change it back), or write your own search program (not that hard, and usually less critical than fiddling with your deck's basic functions). Then make an intrusion run against the station's datafortress (usually well protected), and alter the switching remotes, or the phone# assignment data in the memory blocks. After that, you make your main run, and if they trace you, it'll end up at this other person's residence/business.

Why don't you just "blue box" it like the phone phreaks did for long distance calls in the 60s-70s? Don't you think Internet isn't on to those old, cheap technical tricks? Get Real.

REPROGRAMMING THE OTHER'S ICONS

Creative ICONography is a tricky business, but very popular among the best Edgerunners in the Net. Making yourself look like other people or things is easy, just buy a Black Mask program. They come in five levels and last until de-rezzed. Their disadvantage is that you have to choose whatever image your dealer has on his shelf at the time.

Black Mask Evasion program
MU 3 for Lvl 1-2, 4 for Lvl 3-5; STR 1-5

cost 200eb per STR level

This program overlays the 'runners ICON with another; he can look like another 'runner, a program, even a data file. It will remain active until de-rezzed, and so does not count against a 'runners actions. It can be penetrated by the Looking Glass series of counter-intrusion/detection ICE, or by a modified SeeYa or Hidden Virtue.

(Continued next page.)

RUSTBELT HYPERTEXT

(Continued from page 57)

This program can (not so easily) be modified to changing *other people's* icons by turning it into a Anti-system type. The program now looks like this:

Class: Anti-system/utility, **STR:** as bought, **MU:** as bought+2, **Difficulty** 42+, cannot be bought, you must rewrite an existing Black Mask.

It makes an anti-system attack vs. target's cyberdeck; success implements the imagery as per the shelf version. Failure has no effect. The target must use a Killer to remove the Mask.

For those quick combat changes, it's a Very Difficult Programming skill roll. You must make one attempt while activating the CREATE/DELETE function of your Menu, then make a second attempt while activating the EDIT function. Each programming attempt takes one Net round. Failure of one roll results in your having no ICON, just a fuzzy fractal cloud. (which is illegal in some regions). Failure of both rolls results in the crash of your deck, dropping you out of the Net. In addition, it reduces the Trace Value for your line by 3 (you make a lot of noise when you crash).

INTIMATE ENOUGH

The nature of a 'trode set (picking up signals via skin induction) means that certain Anti-Personnel programs have limited (or no) effect. Stun, Firestarter, Spazz, Jack Attack, and Glue function normally. Hellbolt and Sword do 1-3pts. each due to static shock. Brainwipe and Zombie do 0-1 pts. of INT which lasts for 106 hours (the effect is primarily psychosomatic). Liche, Hellhound, and Knockout have no effect.

STAYING ON-LINE

Areas and citygrids in a Region may "drop out" if enough connections are broken. This may be via natural disaster, sabotage, war, etc. When this happens, attempts may be made to reconnect through other routes; this can result in the afflicted area "reappearing" within the borders of another Region.

that the hiker trodes were **intimate enough** with his brain for the Brainwipe to have any lasting effect, but I sure haven't heard anything about the committee for a long time. Now he knows the sort of organizations he's supporting, and I think it went to his head.

All of this is typical for the region. Any experienced runners out there are nodding their heads sagely, thinking, only in the Rustbelt.

By the way, if you're ever in Baltimore, don't order from Pizza Zero. It's terrible. We flushed half of it down the toilet.

The official hooty snooty name for the Rustbelt is The Grand Americana Region, but no one ever calls it that. Not even Netwatch calls it that, because none of them would want to be associated in any way with the morons who invented the name and tried to build the Rustbelt into some kind of glorified vision of the perverted corporate American dream. They even tried to make tourism a big thing here. Hah.

Grand Americana my boot. It's the Rustbelt. From the moment it was conceived it was the Rustbelt, and it will always be the Rustbelt, because the tin horns running the place won't let it grow on its own. Somehow, though, Rustbelt very accurately conveys the essence of the region; hard, gritty, poorly-done, unpleasant, poisonous.

I don't like the Rustbelt. I go there a lot, because there are few better places to sling trash and root through other people's laundry, but that doesn't mean I enjoy it while I'm there.

The Rustbelt covers the eastern United States and extends into the Atlantic Ocean. Dixie, Appalachia, the Northeast, and the Midwest are all a part of the Rustbelt. Texas had far too much taste to be a part of this region, which surprised the heck out of me considering what a fetish they have for big hats and cowboy boots and other tasteless things. Most of Canada got stuck in the Rustbelt, though, which tells you something about the state of their government these days. Bermuda, through no fault of its own, is a part of the Rustbelt, as is Greenland. On occasion, so is Puerto Rico, but only when the Atlantis region is having trouble **staying on-line**.

In other words, the Rustbelt covers the area where the United States Government has the most control. A natural corollary to this is that where there's the Rustbelt, there the US government. It's a virtual dictatorship (oh, hey, another pun) run by the US, Netwatch and of course the EuroMarket Consortium, which tries to run everything. The only reason the US gives the EMC any say in the Rustbelt is that they have a lot of pull in Netwatch, and it makes beating down Canada that much easier, what with people in the EMC who actually understand French. European programmers and Net security types are also a lot tamer than their American counterparts, which makes it more tempting for the US to use them. The eurohackers aren't worse, they're actually quite good. They're just used to rolling over and exposing their belly whenever anyone in authority tells them to. American programmers are generally too headstrong to follow advice, let alone take orders, so I don't even know why I'm telling y'all all this stuff when you won't pay attention to it anyway. Give this file to a European; maybe then it'll do some good. Actually, probably not, because they'd just obediently go and give it to their superiors and take some more drugs to ease their conscience.

THE LOOK

“I love the Rustbelt. There's a drive, an energy which saturates the entire place, like a heartbeat driving me to the future. All the other regions are sterile, or wimpy, or just too fakey. There's no place I'd rather be than the Rustbelt. Nowhere else can a runner find the raw call of the Edge.”

— Dog

“Yes, but is it functional?”

— Edger

The Rustbelt is done, as I mentioned earlier, in a motif reflecting a twisted industrial version of the American dream. Most of the colors are earth tones, ranging from pale yellow to deep burning brown. Everything has been stylized to an industrial/mechanical ideal, and nothing at all attempts to imitate anything remotely natural. In fact, this region is almost the exact opposite of Tokyo/Chiba, which is the only facet of the Rustbelt which appeals to me.

They've got all sorts of modern art stuff everywhere, representative of the power of American industrial might and the re-emergence of the US as a global contender. Giant gears mesh savage sharp teeth on the horizon or intermingle in Escherian blends. Photons of light race frantically around the contour lines which cover every surface, turning even gentle slopes into terraced layers of electric fire. **Unintelligent subprocessors** appear as faceless muscle-bound laborers, like something out of a proletarian fetish, as they undertake their Herculean tasks with anonymous determination. And underneath it all there's a steady rhythmic beat of industrial bass and steel. The whole thing stinks of the glorification of workers and productivity and America as the assembly line of global consumerism.

UNINTELLIGENT SUBPROCESSORS (FROM PAGE 58)

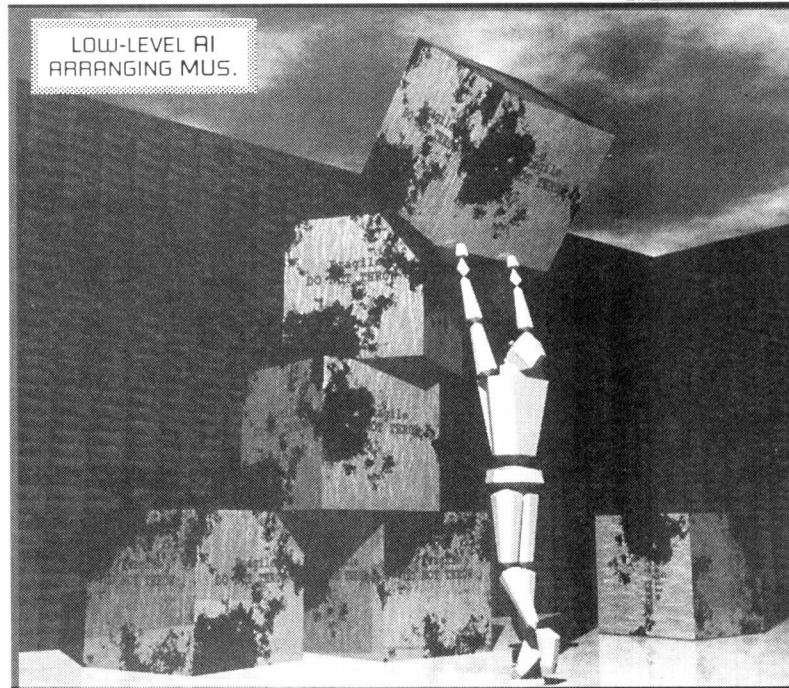
Just another name for any comput-
er with 3 CPUs or
less.

If you like work, this is the place for you, because the productivity ethic has run amok in the design. Me, I think if you can't survive by having fun, you may as well just roll over and die.

Oh, yeah, one other thing. Everything feels the same here. Everything in the Rustbelt feels like cool, smooth-brushed steel. Sure, almost everything looks smooth, and some things look really rough, but everything, and I mean everything, feels the same.

The lines of communication are excellent over most of the United States portion of the Rustbelt. Lines get a little rougher up in the Northeast near Boston, as well as the northern and western reaches of Canada. In these places, the Rustbelt region looks like it took a hard-core bombing; the normally flat and semi-symmetrical layers of carved steel become a little more jumbled, and pile up like large mounds of steel art. The worst connections in the whole region are found running to Scheferville and beyond to Greenland. Sometimes these lines go down completely when there's a storm blowing in. Even when the lines are up, the track to Greenland is usually filled with giant static mountains; dull, lifeless, and very ugly.

The southern border of the Rustbelt is relatively stable, although portions of it do **expand without warning** into parts of Central America and the Caribbean. The US government wants Puerto Rico and such places to have a warm spot in their cold region, but since the hackers in Puerto Rico don't pay taxes, they don't feel they should put up with the Rustbelt, either, and they maintain themselves in Atlantis when they can.



POWER PLAYERS

The most influential forces acting in the Rustbelt are Netwatch, the EMC, and, of course, the ever-popular United States Provisional Tick and Tapeworm Society. There are other powers of note, sure, and who cares?

The team of three pulls together, yet each tries to get a nose ahead of the others. Fortunately, for any given one trying to pull ahead, the other two are always holding it back, so none of them is able to declare itself Supreme Ruler of the Rustbelt for the Rest of Your Short Life.

The teamwork which these three have devised is a curious parody and twisted review of the original Constitution, a crusty document that's almost 250 years old and was really brilliant, but unfortunately the USPT&TS threw it aside as soon as it became inconvenient for them and we've been living under a dictatorship ever since.

[Actually, the power of the federal government increased dramatically during the Civil War, when it demonstrated that the states didn't have the rights the Constitution gave them. The restrictions the Constitution gave the federal government were ignored during the Great Depression, when the New Deal developed income tax and entitlements, which were directly against constitutional provisions. Then the Great Society founded a fledgling socialist state which was supposed to end poverty by the 1970's, but which instead grew like a cancer until financial mismanagement caused the Collapse. Since then, the government has been trying to reconsolidate its power, and, but for the corporations, it would have. You might think we could thank the corporations for this, but in most cases the corporations are worse than the government. At least the government pretends it cares about you. For the corporations to do so would be 'inefficient.' - SM]

The Rustbelt triad works, as a first approximation, like this:

Netwatch does the actual netrunning and catching of felons within the Net. They are the enforcement branch of the triad. They have no power to create, nor even any real influence on the creation of the laws which regulate the running of the Net. You don't have to blame Netwatch for creating the harsh laws of the Rustbelt, just for enforcing them.

The USPT&TS performs the real-world apprehension and prosecution. Once Netwatch makes an arrest by burning a runner's brains out, they show up and grab the netrunner's lifeless

EXPAND WITHOUT WARNING

See the entry for *Staying on-line* on
the previous page.

DIVERSE MEDIA
SYSTEMS

This media megacorp came to the forefront in 2005 when it hired Howard Wong, the notorious wunderkind of Network 54, as their program director. The low-key corporate war that followed resulted in DMS taking a serious slice of 54's audience and the assassination of Howard Wong in 2009. Many claim that DMS has never fully regained its momentum after this loss, while others see DMS still gaining ground in the hard-fought war for audience share.

Based out of Los Angeles, DMS' primary stockholder is Jonathon Houghton III, the dynamic and aggressive CEO. They have subsidiary offices throughout the U.S., and teams in every newsworthy spot world-wide. Truly a company that's willing to brave the Edge to stay in front. See *Rockerboy* (pg.48) for more.

EUROPEAN BANK

The European Bank is the single most powerful institution in the EC, which is saying quite a bit. Its currency, the eurodollar, is THE world means of exchange, and its main vaults are located in Saltzberg, in nuke-proof burrows. For more, see *Eurosource* (pg.22).

corpse and execute him. These guys create the laws and prosecute the criminals. This is a bad combination of powers, as far as the individual netrunner is concerned. The government has the power both to decide you're guilty, decide what you're guilty of, decide how to punish you, and carry out the punishment. Now you know why the computer crime laws in the Rustbelt are so savage; the government's on a power trip.

The EMC, who stands a lot to lose to so-called computer crime, although personally anyone who puts valuable information anywhere I can reach it must be pretty stupid indeed, does not actively participate in either apprehension or prosecution. They provide funding and equipment, in return for which they can act with near impunity, and without which the USPT&TS and Netwatch would be left squirming like leeches under a hot sun. Because they hold a substantial purse of finance, technology and skill, they generally get their way. They just drop a few hints here and there like rocks, and the government and Netwatch placate them.

This, of course, is an all-too-neat division of responsibilities, and each of the three in the triad does a little of each. The government gets equipment by grabbing the decks from those guys they arrest, and they get some pet runners to do their dirty work. Netwatch just hacks into others' systems to steal equipment and alter legislation. The EMC sends their own pet runners in when they've had some dirty laundry stolen, and they make sure that several US senators are indebted to them for a supply of money, drugs, or servile children.

The bottom line, folks, is that any of them can do as they wish to you. Period.



[I'm surprised this one got past Bartmoss. Probably he was blinded by his hatred for Netwatch and anyone who likes them.

[Back in 2012, **Diverse Media Systems** came out with *The Netwatch Story*, a sanitized and propagandist view of the self-appointed Net security police. Granted, Netwatch isn't totally criminal, but the way DMS presented it, the NetCops were the best thing since caseless ammo. Every other year since then, DMS has come out with an updated version which always includes their latest exploits, including, twice, the supposed capture and elimination of Rache Bartmoss, and once even me, on the segment entitled "Crimelords of the Net." I prefer to think of myself as a crimelady, thank you very much.

[Rache dismissed all of this activity as that of a corporation enfeebled by the loss of Howard Wong. Nothing could be further from the truth. My personal investigations have shown that Jonathon Houghton III has deliberately engineered these all-too-favorable documentaries to ingratiate the company with Netwatch. Every NetCop knows the benefit DMS has bestowed upon them, as a result of which they let DMS runners do as they wish.

[The result of all this is that DMS can act with nearly as much impunity as the Rustbelt Troika. Netwatch won't attempt to arrest them, and without Netwatch assistance, the chances of the US or the EC catching DMS runners is slim.

[The problem here is that DMS is not concerned about accuracy. They will let nothing, not even truth, hinder their attempt to topple Net 54. They will raid and capture independent stations, or just steal enough information to do a quick takeover. They will assassinate netrunners at the drop of a chip. Even Rache thinks they have no ethics, and that's saying something. Beware. - SM]



EUROMARKET CONSORTIUM

"We give you our assurance that we have no ulterior motives. We simply wish to ensure everyone's data safety for the security of our mutual business."

— Erich Kessler

The EMC has the smallest force in the Rustbelt. But, like my mom used to say, bad things come in small packages. The EMC doesn't make the laws, and it doesn't enforce the laws. They have no legal (note: not none, just no legal) rights to arrest or convict American citizens.

But hey, first I better tell you about who they are, right? So if you don't care who the EMC is, go ahead and put a bullet in your brain, because ignorance is not bliss unless your idea of heaven is being 150 pounds of unrefrigerated cold cuts hooked in to a smoking cyberdeck while roaches pick about your nose and mouth for a free meal.

The EuroMarket Consortium is the foreign affairs division of the **European Bank**. It is a board made up of representatives of the two dozen largest Europe-based corporations. Seats are reassigned annually in a stuffy version of musical chairs, after EuroBank has had time to assimilate the previous year's tax data. As you might expect, sometimes a corporation will fudge the tax data, paying a little extra tax for a seat on the board. The EuroBank is, naturally, hesitant to investigate this type of fraud.

Most of the members of the EMC are effectively permanent. EBM, WorldSat, WNS, BMW, and a few others have all had seats for the last ten years or more. Biotechnica often has a seat, and occasionally Heckler & Koch and Sk_iderviken SA do as well.

This board decides what would be best world-wide for the European corporations, like, for example, the rape of the United States. They couldn't do it overtly, because they know the US has a lot of patriotism left in its degenerate body, as well as a few nukes stationed off the European coast. I occasionally run those data forts to do a little gratuitous security programming. Once I caught an EMC runner in a Trident-class submarine, so I fed him some erroneous data that the Trident was launching a MIRV at his home town. He panicked and caused the EEC to order an evacuation before they bothered to double-check his data. The panic caused massive traffic snarls all through Nantes, and wide-spread looting followed. Last I heard the runner was hanging out in Atlantis, hoping to find a job before his Internet bill came due. Serves him right for running an American sub. Of course, I had a talk with the sub's captain afterwards, for having such sloppy security. That talk put me on the Most Wanted list. I guess I shouldn't have used the submarine's PA system. Bad for morale or something.

Anyway, the EMC decided to get into the US like athlete's foot fungus into a smelly sneaker. They've bribed the US government with money and state-of-the-art equipment and full Netwatch support. They also have their own **little runners** around, some of whom pretend to have diplomatic immunity.

While they support the US government and Netwatch, the EMC runners usually have their own hidden agenda, which serves only their masters across the ocean.



NETWATCH

Always my favorite bunch of fun-loving guys, Netwatch is the aspect of the triad most visible within the Net. Officially speaking, they have the power to arrest any illegal hackers, which means anyone, and bring them before the government for prosecution. Basically, this is a sort of Net-based citizen's arrest. They are also allowed to carry black ice with them in case of computer assault by noted felons like myself. This amounts to the equivalent of a license to carry a concealed weapon.

The case in fact is this: **NetCops** have devolved beyond the law-and-order syndrome. They are no longer citizens making arrests and using force when necessary. Wait a minute here... I'm sounding too pedantic. There is no rational basis for citizen's arrest, nor is there any real basis for government or laws, let alone law enforcement. With those provisos, I shall continue until I stop.

Net cops are not socially-conscious runners. They are self-obsessed paramilitary thugs who arrest whomever they please, use black ice when they feel like it, and generally act like Lithuanian warlords.

One of the things that disgusts me most about Netwatch is that they have corporate funding and government approval. They initiated a Most Wanted list for netridders, and have issued rewards for the capture of such notable personages as myself, Spider, Edger, Dog, Ras Angabo, myself, Alt, Angel, Brain-Dead Gutierrez, Jaxon, myself, and Virtual Vickie. (Sure, VVick isn't a felon, but everybody seems to want her just the same.) Netwatch weasels are, of course, not allowed to collect bounties, unless they're off-duty, which they invariably are when they actually catch someone. I even caught one person setting up a reward and adjusting his work schedule after he had already arrested someone, but before he turned her in. And that, my friends, was Jason Drow, but he managed to sweet-talk his way out of it by assassinating my fine character. The world's in a sorry state when Jason's word carries more weight than mine.

RUSTY

Rusty's the name I gave to **the Rustbelt AI**. Rusty's an interesting fellow, because he doesn't take anything at face value. As near as I can tell, Rusty started out with 'I think, therefore I am'. From there, he's been accumulating knowledge into his conscious memory. Rusty is so egocentric, that when I met him in 2015, he didn't even have a name for himself. The idea that he should have a name was very strange to him.

Rusty, as I said, is accumulating knowledge. He's like a black hole in that respect. As soon as he's accumulated enough information, he'll decide what to do about his environment. I've made my pitch to ensure that he doesn't fall in line with the Rustbelt Triad, and instead throws his hat into the freewheelers' ring.

Rusty will follow individual netridders around, sometimes for years, just to find out what they're like. I think the reason he does this is he knows he cannot follow everyone, so he takes a random sample. Once he's followed his mark for a while (I think he tracks several dozen at a

RUSTBELT

HYPertext

LITTLE RUNNERS

To Rache these guys may be little, but they are usually Mid-level (50%) to Pro level (50%) compared to anyone else (the Euros train their people well). They may have lower Interface skills, however; say 4 or 5, since they don't get challenged very often (and, yes, they do have diplomatic immunity,...so frag 'em on the spot).

NETCOPS

This is Netwatch's stronghold in the U.S. and it staffs it accordingly. Half of these syops are Pro-Level runners with the rest as Mid level and a few Weefle trainees. They will have the best equipment available at that level as well (as the text indicates, they are quite well financed). Count on a 50% chance of encountering one with any blown LDL security rolls, and they may pop up just about anywhere else.

THE RUSTBELT AI

Okay, he does keep bringing this up, doesn't he? Well, if you want more insight into how these AIs might work, see page 96 in the Eurotheatre chapter.

HYPERTEXT

MY PERSONAL COPY
OF SEEYA

As per standard SeeYa, but the STR is 6 and the MU is 2. Since you have to steal it from Rache's archives to get a copy, the price is probably higher than you are willing to pay.

HIT MEN

These guys are probably LEDiv or Justice Dept drones (see *Protect and Serve*), which is not to say that they won't be competent, just predictable. Treat them as Cops with REF 9, INT 7, BODY 7, and COOL 9.

Skills: Authority 6, Handgun 8, Intimidate 6, Awareness 7, Stealth 6, Shadow/Track 5, Karate 7.
Cyberware: Processor, Plugs, Chipware Socket, Smart Link, Cyber Optic with Targeting & Video Cam.
Equipment: Sternmeyer Type 35, Sternmeyer SMG 21, SP 13 Executive Line suit, Government I.D.

As a footnote, your runners should know that netrunning against a government facility is considered a Priority One crime along the lines of Espionage. That brings a 10-20 year sentence, minimum, possibly death. Not that any of them will believe that *they* could ever get caught.

EUROCORPS

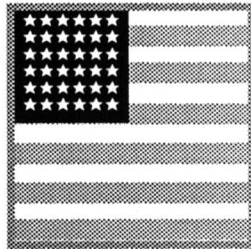
Among the corps that do business in Bermuda are: EBM, IEC, Biotechnica, WorldSat (they have a fair-sized station here to back up their Brazil operations), Edmundson Metals (Scotland), Trittech, and Rhinemetall.

time), he'll start to tamper with the runner's world a little bit. A challenge here, an unexpected windfall there. That was how I found Rusty in the first place. I had one run that was going too weirdly. Everything was happening different than it should have. I looked around carefully with **my personal copy of SeeYa** (much better than the public version — steal it from me if you can), and woah! There he was!

Rusty was surprised that I could see him, but shortly afterward he developed a netranner icon (looks a lot like me, bless his silicon soul) so he could interact with other intelligences, human and artificial. I introduced him around to my friends, hoping to bias his random sampling with a few examples of the better type of human.

I don't know what Rusty's up to. He may decide tomorrow, or he may decide in a hundred years. Something will happen when he does, though.

[Yes, Rache 'introduced' me to Rusty sometime on 2018. I don't believe it was an Ihara-Grubb AI, because seeing is not believing, especially in the Net. I met Rusty, and it could have been a runner, or it could have been a virtual. I think it was an AI that Rache programmed just to try to pull one over on me. No one goes to the lengths Rache does to pull a practical joke. I fact, I'll bet Rusty is still out there, masquerading as the regional AI. It's the Bartmoss humor. - SM]



UNITED STATES PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

The good old boys of Uncle Sam are still trying to screw unto others. Their control of the Rustbelt is firm, founded as the region is on that portion of the United States which crawls along like a mule under their bloated, flea-infested, porcine rolls of fat.

I don't really feel like talking about them much, because they make me want to puke, and if I blow my chunks in here, the plume will be frozen like a giant spear of broccoli over my mouth for the next hundred years and that thought grosses me out.

The government operates primarily in the real world, sending **hit men** to the flats of netranners stupid enough to have gotten caught by Netwatch. They confiscate decks, hijack programs, and throw you out a window for your troubles.

They're power-hungry, folks. They used to be a world power, then they were reduced to a bush-league wannabe gnawing at the ankles of the megacorps. They're trying to reassert their control, and they'll stop at nothing to do it. Consider them, in a lot of ways, to be a corporation in their own right, albeit one with some vague legal precedent to steal your money under the guise of taxes. They'll even buy off your friends, with promises of welfare payments, tax breaks, and other such crap.

Anyway, there will soon be a showdown between the United States Provisional Government and the megacorporations in the US. Don't be there when it happens; wait until it's all over, then kick the survivor in the groin as hard as you possibly can. If we do it right, we'll take them both down, and there will be peace in the world at last. If we fail, there will have to be a major change before we can oust the survivor from the throne.

CITY GRIDS

Hey, runners, don't forget that the Rustbelt is one of the most heavily-urbanized places in the world. Even with the downfall of Chicago and the degradation of the Big Wormy Apple, there's a lot of urbania to be found here.

In short, there are too many city grids for me to be able to describe even half of them. But then, that's true of everything covered in this whole missive, so forget I mentioned it. No wait, you'd better not forget, or else you'll think this whole file is tragically incomplete, which, yes, it is, but I can't help it. I'm dead, after all, and frozen foods tend to think very slowly. I got into this great conversation with a frozen squash the other day. I have no idea why EBM had it hooked to a cyberdeck, but... oh, never mind. You wouldn't believe me anyway. [True. - SM]

BERMUDA

This little island off the Eastern Seaboard is a worthy place to know, because it's the only place in the Rustbelt truly dominated by the eurocorps. Although still officially a colony of the United Kingdom, the EC has taken protective custody of the island(s), and as a result many eurocorps have moved in and made this place their own. And, like kudzu, they'll never leave.

There are several implications for this. One is that many **eurocorps**, which aren't present in the US due to either lack of desire, initiative, or power (or even an excess of bad reputation), can be found here. This makes for shorter distances to find these jerks when running the Net, as well as lower phone bills and quicker response time in action. It's also a lot quicker and easier to hop

off Bermuda and head elsewhere than to try to extricate yourself from the Eurotheatre and head back to the States. Plus, once you're back in the Rustbelt, you're on American turf.

Second, there is no reason number two.

Third, Bermuda's a great place to escape Netwatch. If the eurocorps have reason to prevent Netwatch from getting you, they will. Even if they don't need to help you, **They might anyway.**, because they don't like having Netwatch go running rough-shod all over their nice Bermuda city grid.

CANADA (IN GENERAL)

The Canadians are none too thrilled, by and large, with being in the Rustbelt. The French-Canadians especially are chafing under the yoke. The presence of the Rustbelt smothering their Net is yet another instance of the hippo of the United States rolling over on top of them in its sleep.

In contrast, most Americans don't give a second thought to their spreading their regional wings like a plastic bag over most of Canada. "Hey, no problem. We're happy to help."

The Canadians are dealing with a lot of US dissing right now. US agricorps regularly farm across the border. US pollutants from the steel and auto mills of the Midwest states contaminate Canadian water tables. US gangs and criminals regularly pass through Canadian territory. And, of course, the US government monitors the Canadians as much as possible, just in case some leverage appears.

Part of the problem the Canadian runners had with the structure of the Rustbelt was that it was necessary to pass through Detroit and/or Minneapolis/St. Paul just to get from Winnipeg to Toronto. The thought that Canadian lines would have to go through American LDLs (and scrutiny) just to reach the other end of Canada was, understandably, anathema to them. Thus, at great expense, the Canadian government installed LDLs at Moosonee and Thunder Bay, two places I'd certainly never heard of and which were probably abandoned years ago as useless places to live, at least until the LDLs showed up. With these two stations up and running, it's possible, though difficult, to run from Schefferville (yet another podunk town which I'm surprised still exists) to Saskatoon and remain entirely within Canadian borders. This seems to give Canadian runner a sense of security, although if they knew the US government like I do, they wouldn't delude themselves so.

Now the smart netridders in Canada realize, that at least in the Net, Canada no longer exists, except as a kind of combat zone or fringe territory where the Canadian government can occasionally help, and anyone from the US government or a major corporation is looked on as one of THEM. This is what makes Canada an interesting place. Hotshot independent netridders fighting for their freedom, and a general consensus that the Rustbelt Triumvirate is a Bad Thing. Curiously, the Canadians fall down a bit on their opinion of Netwatch; many folks actually like the little ice weasels.

But Canada is the edge of the Rust, and you know how much I like taking it to the proverbial Edge.

GODTHÄB

That's the city grid in Greenland to those of you who don't study your meat-world geography. Godthäb is also a part of the Rustbelt, when the weather **permits the radio links to stay active.** However, Greenland is still officially a part of Denmark (albeit a neglected part), which places the Godthäb city grid technically in the European fringe, along with the Scandinavian bloc.

Unlike Bermuda, which is realistically Europe proper, there is no major eurocorp presence in Greenland, which has made it a popular staging ground for unconventional eurohackers. The grid is run down and primitive, and occasionally has **abysmally-slow response time,** but the people here are good, counter-corp Europeans, and they're often happy to swap code.

The other nice thing about Godthäb is that it's relatively unpatrolled by Netwatch. It's a good place to lead the weasels when they're on your trail, because if you brainburn them out here, the only ones who notice don't care.

[Global warming has driven back a lot of the glaciers in Greenland, which has made mining much more accessible, and therefore much more profitable. This comes as a blessing to the Greenlanders because the spills in the North Atlantic crushed their fishing industry. The upshot of the new mining drive is that one can expect the eurocorps to make a move on this nation shortly. The eurohackers will be unhappy with this, as will, I suspect, most of the Greenlanders. A good appearance by supportive US-based netridders might make an important difference to these people. Think about it, runners. With an investment of time and energy and a little bit of coding, you could preserve one of the few fringes of the Eurotheatre and garner some strong alliances at the same time. Just because we're independent operators doesn't mean we can't launch a war just like the corps. - SM]

RUSTBELT

HYPertext

THEY MIGHT ANYWAY

Well, the eurocorps are unpredictable creatures, and you never know when they might turn on their Netwatch child and tell him to stay out of the bedroom. Give them a 30% chance of curtailing any Netwatch pursuit into Bermuda. Of course, then the 'runner has to deal with the corps' own net security sysops, and they may be even tougher.

PERMITS THE RADIO LINKS TO STAY ACTIVE.

The most common problem for LDL if they are cellular or shortwave is electrical storms. Considering the force of North Atlantic gales, you can even get physical damage to the underwater cables at their shoreline stations, sometimes. Rough weather over Gothäb (storms or heavy rain) has a 15% chance of breaking radio links, but only a .01% (roll 01 on percentiles, twice in a row) of severing hard links.

ABYSMALLY SLOW RESPONSE TIMES

Reduce all 'runners Initiatives by 2 when running in the Gothäb grid due to the primitive equipment that makes up this net.

LOW SECURITY
TERMINALS

Any terminal inside a weakly-protected datafortress. One that is easy to monitor or intercept.

CITY GRID
IS TIGHT/
CLEARANCE
CODES

One way to make your datafortresses safe is not to let anyone even get near them. This requires you to rewire your citygrid connections so that all data and communication must pass through certain junctions. Normally, you would simply move from one City square to another via the Regional level, coming up out of, and dropping down into, the citygrid maps at your points of departure/arrival. Now, when you drop down, you find yourself in front of a datafortress that you must pass through to gain access to the rest of the citygrid (a customs desk, sort of). In there, they subject you to scrutiny, and in some cases ask for your clearance code. This, of course, is if you chose to "walk" in the first place, and didn't use someone's LDL.

LOUISVILLE

Lost in the middle of Kentucky, Louisville may not be the heart of the country but at the very least it's the lungs. Or maybe the pancreas.

Louisville is a popular resort area for rich corporates. As a result, every corporation that can afford to has at least a small office here, as well as dedicated hotels, with Net terminals, for their pompous execs who realize that they can't relax on vacation because they derive twisted psychosexual gratification from the rape of smaller companies and the common consumer.

This means that in Louisville, there's a lot of money, a lot of power, a lot of plans, and, if you're clever enough, a lot of, shall we say, interesting personal information to be gathered. Apparently,

the average exec expects the security to be good, so they don't take enough personal precautions when working on their company's **low-security terminals**.

The companies included these terminals so the exec could keep up with their swollen portfolios and maybe make a net call to home, but the workaholics bring their black ops files here and "recreate" with their mistresses in front of the security cams, so a good operator can get great information for a lot less work.

Now, although the workstation security is not very good, the **city grid security is tight**.

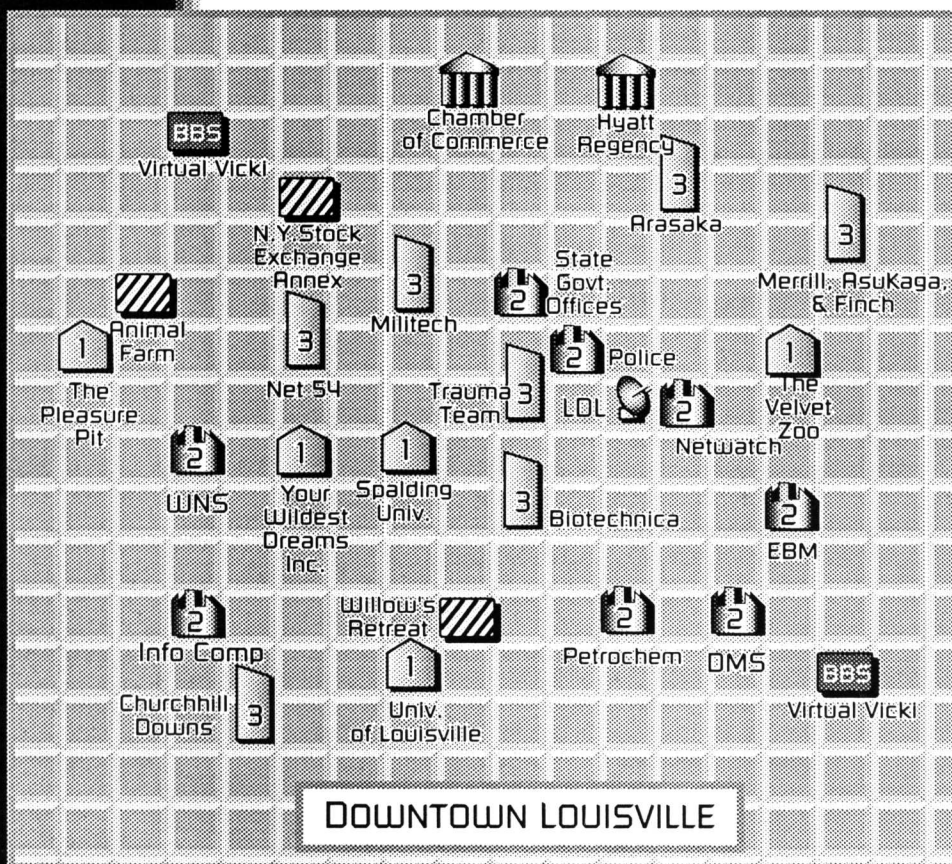
There are a few normal people left in Louisville, and between them and real netrunners, the corporations keep their part of the city grid tight as a drum. Every corporation has a

few pet netrunners, plus Netwatch tosses in a few bogeys for good measure. These guys skulk around the city grid making sure no one actually has any fun, and especially keeping an eye peeled for a bon vivant such as myself. These guys are real tight-brained morons who tend to launch ice first and learn to communicate coherently second. They're looking for anyone whose icon lacks the **clearance codes** for the area, and who therefore is crashing their private city-grid-wide party and mutual admiration extravaganza. Be on your toes, netrunners, and you can evade or outsmart these guys. I recommend against killing them until you're leaving though, because the alarm and response system in Louisville is pretty good, since each corporation took it on itself to make sure it had an adequate response team.

Last time I was here I found a marketing executive who had an assassination file on his superior, so just to be mean I dumped it into his superior's files. I wanted to up the ante some, but the guy had a clean sex life, so I had to doctor a video to show him romping with his superior's mistress in a very creative fashion (the original video was obtained through Mark 24's pornovid rental service... CyberSlut or something like that). I then altered the prescription I found on his superior's medical database to include some psychoactives, knowing full well the corporate doctor would overlook such interests. The old goat joined the corporate set at the SiliCrown races under a major buzz, pulled a Militech Crusher, and blew the young upstart away, as well as half the marketing staff. Most of the mistress was later found in the hotel room.

Isn't it great when corporates show their real personality? It's one of the most gratifying aspects of my life's work. Pity so many have to get caught in the crossfire.

[This was really over the line, even for Rache, and the collateral damage on this little prank was inexcusable. Sometimes I wonder why I ever hung out with such a sociopath.—SM]



MIAMI

One of the few functional city grids in Florida, the Miami city grid also covers the new city of Atlantis. A lot of programming by resident rich folks with nothing better to do has made the Miami/Atlantis city grid a lot prettier than the rest of the Rustbelt, if boringly normal. I've often considered retiring here, just so I could sculpt a giant green pulsating small intestine sculpture for public display. Think of it: day-glo peristalsis and a great tool for learning about a proper diet. Just input the food (pizza and jam, or even a kibble and beer float) and watch it work! But I know I'll never retire, because when you're a Netspace cowboy, you never quit until the secrets have all gone public, the system goes down for good, or you get crushed by a Ford-Mazda Luxus 14 dropped from 200 feet. Don't laugh, it happened to Repoman, an acquaintance of mine. He wanted to get some revenge on a fixer who'd stiffed him on a payment for some dirty work, so he hired a tech to do a little creative maintenance on the fixer's car. The fixer had it towed by AV-4 to an exclusive repair shop, and Repoman hacked into the AV's flight control computer and released the grappling hook. Unfortunately for him (and his upstairs neighbors), he hadn't checked the AV's flight path, because he forgot the first rule of running the Net: **everything has an effect in the meat world**. The car went through the roof of his tenement and crushed him. He died two hours later, while the medtechs were still trying to get him out from under the car, which was the last thing they expected to find in a combat zone fourth-floor cold water flat.

Anyway, Miami is a great place to visit, but the residents tend to be rather isolationist, so don't expect to pick up any great contracts. For those who like running for money (you lowbrows), this place is easier than Louisville.

NEW ORLEANS

This city is perhaps a single-handed justification of the entire Rustbelt region. Every year they have their Mardi Gras, and some people show up in the Net, or patch into the Net while they're there. Because of this, and because of the party atmosphere that prevails at these times, the New Orleans city grid has become filled with creative programming. They've got everything there.

Everyone and their kid sister it seems has made some sort of virtual person, image, or something to enhance the altered-state ambiance of the New Orleans city grid. These items just stay there, executing and performing, until someone erases them. It's a prestigious accomplishment to have something you designed be there for two or more Mardi Gras celebrations. I have a few works that have been there for five years.

I'm talking everything here, folks. Giant surf waves of blue jello. Quivering rainbows which wash down the street leaving paintbrushes flopping like beached fishes in their wake. Cartoon-style Model T's hopping and bopping and squishing their way down city streets and up the walls of data forts. Virtual personalities who resculpt their rubbery skin and turn themselves inside out. A minimalist black sphere. Flying toasters (now isn't that a crusty joke?). A snowstorm of reflective confetti and refractive ticker tape. Stuff that's so weird even I can't describe it in a way that makes sense in the 1.3 dimensions available to the printed word.

Of course, all this processing means that **reactions are slowed** in New Orleans, although, fortunately, the slow processing affects black ice as well as netrunners. I just wouldn't recommend running a link through New Orleans. It'll cramp your style.

On the other hand, visiting the place with an open mind might help you define your style.

WASHINGTON DC

The District of Columbia is the showpiece of the Rustbelt. The DC grid covers the militarized District itself, as well as Baltimore, Annapolis, and Arlington.

The showcase portions of the city grid are in the capitol area. Public-access remotes focus on the primary real-world monuments, so netrunners can go there and look through the camera's eye. There is, of course, a fee, but it can be defeated easily. There are also a wide variety of carefully programmed virtuals in the area, including the Talking Lincoln Memorial and a few other tasteless national treasures. There's a fee for these, too. I think the national government thinks it can balance the budget by squeezing the populace at every turn instead of not spending so much money. But, just to give the net tourists something for their admission price, I broke into the Talking Lincoln virtual and reprogrammed its speech. Boy, was that fun! Honest Abe truly spoke his real feelings about political manipulation of the media,

RUSTBELT

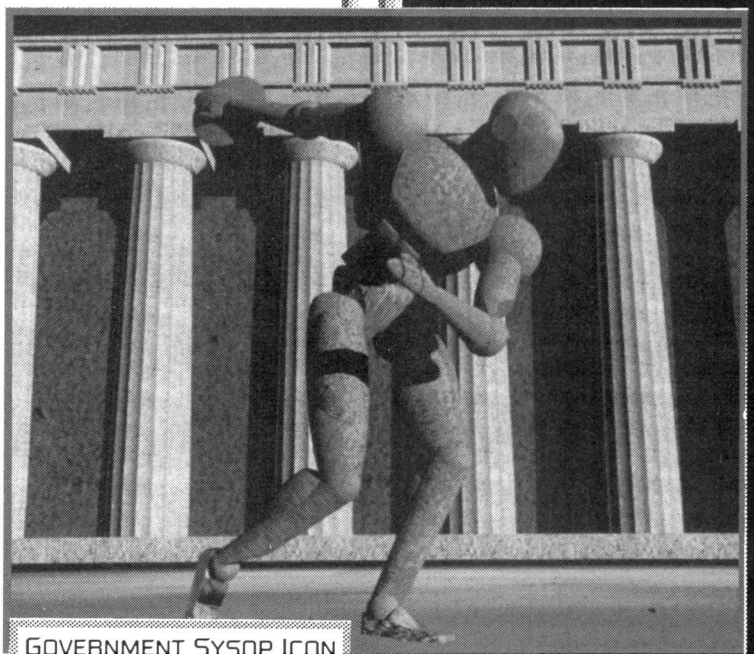
HYPertext

EVERYTHING HAS AN EFFECT IN THE MEAT WORLD

Believe it. This is why the I-G algorithms were installed in the first place. They were supposed to help Netrunners keep a sense of where they were in the real world while they were playing their various net games. If you forget that basic rule (and Lord knows, many do) then you deserve to have a car dropped on you.

REACTIONS ARE SLOWED

Because of the general cluttering of the New Orleans city grid with virtual sculpture, all Initiative rolls are at -2.



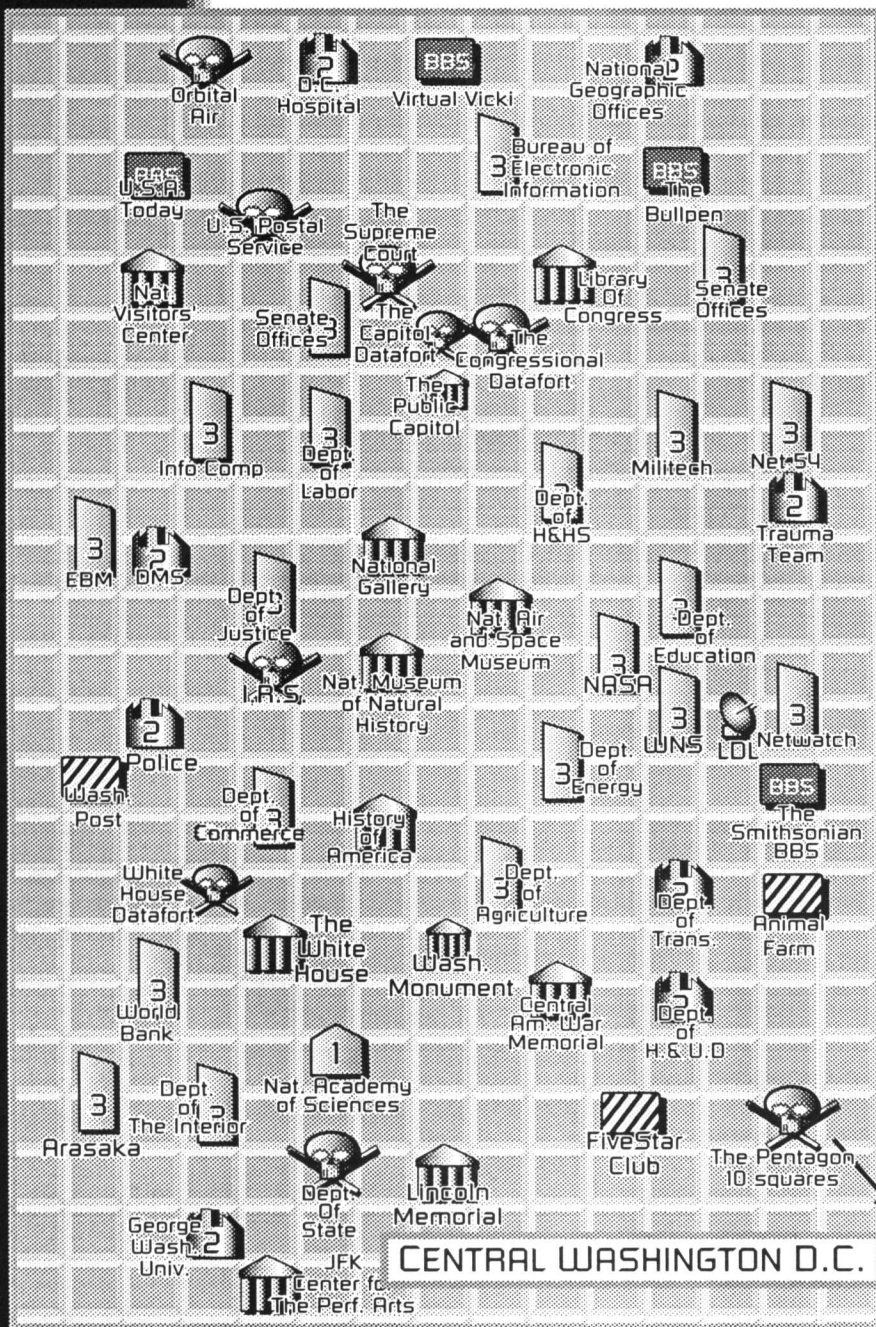
GOVERNMENT SYSOP ICON

media manipulation of public opinion, and free Net access. I also wanted to get into the choreography database so I could have him gesticulate towards the congress chambers, but the ice was tough and Netwatch was hot on my heels. Oh, well.

The DC city grid, although it follows the form of the rest of the Rustbelt, is carefully structured to be very appealing. The omnipresent reds and browns of the Rustbelt are replaced by cooler, more peaceful colors here; blues, whites, and soft yellows. I guess red was too much like the blood they suck and brown was too reminiscent of that which they shovel down our societal throats.

The architecture here is also carefully done. Every monument and data fort has been artfully designed to convey feelings of majesty, grandeur, and other such traits desirable in a national government. I have to admit, though reluctantly, that the area is really spectacular to look at. The ground is terraced just like the rest of the Rustbelt, but the light moves smoothly along the contours, and the color is a beautiful soft shade of ultramarine, with an iridescence that could only be born of countless hours of careful programming.

The capitol data fort rises like a classical monolith, and though the basic shape is utilitarian, the careful detailing of the crested columns and the animated statue of liberty framed by the broken pediment adds a regal grace and splendor reminiscent of the dream of this country's founding fathers. Even the Pentagon data fort is artful, and in fact it's my favorite piece of architecture in the whole region, because some spook runner figured out a way to make the data fort look like a pentahedron. Yes, folks, that's a regular, five-sided solid. I know they can't exist, but for the life of me, that's what the Pentagon looks like. Virtual photographs of the



building just don't do it justice. You've just got to see it; it'll bend your brain.

In short, there's a lot of classical beauty in the DC city grid. Too bad it only distracts the public from the fact that the congressional hyenas aren't so much running the country as sucking the veins out of your body like rabid mongrels snorting spaghetti up their noses, leaving the nation to languish in iron-grated cells beneath their mangy carcasses, begging them to puke another social program on our sessile masses. It's amazing the way they do it, folks, they steal all your money in the form of taxes, then give some of it back as welfare and everybody thinks they're being generous. Meanwhile they vote themselves the first-born of every family as a personal slave, and no one really notices because they're all out buying government-distributed drugs from the police on the street corner.

Were it not for this dark interior eating away at our nation from behind this shiny facade, the DC city grid would be one of my favorite places.

A REGULAR FIVE- SIDED SOLID.

This kind of thing is only possible in the Net where virtual programming can incorporate theoretical mathematics in innovative ways. It is not always easy however and acts as a x2 multiplier to any Creator task Difficulty rating (in addition to any other multiplier. A single object would have a base difficulty of 5 in this circumstance). But there's nothing as satisfying as throwing a 'runner into a tesseract loop within a datafort. What else are Virtuals for?

POINTS OF INTEREST

AUJOURD'OUI

This is a hard-to-find BBS near Montreal, and home to some of the best Quebecois **battle programmers** in the country. In fact, it may be the home of the only Quebecois battle programmers in the country.

Everyone there speaks French, which means that if you want to be understood, you'll either have to speak French like them or just talk real loud. I, of course, prefer the latter, since French, to me, sounds like your mouth has been shot full of Novocain.

I really like most of the runners who hang out here. One or two even condescended to speak to me in English, which, given their feelings about Americans in general, was a sincere act of respect, or maybe they just liked slumming. Or hated how loud I talked.

Anyway, the Aujourd'Oui is done up in a terrifyingly exaggerated cyberpunk style. The ambiance of the place makes Night City bars look like the romper room. Most of the place is nothing more than dimly-lit areas where runners can get together and talk shop. Watchful security programs keep a neural-net eye peeled for intruders or surveillance of any sort.

The most interesting attraction is the **battle programming ring**. This is a sphere where two programmers square off to prove their ability. Random code suddenly appears in the sphere, and the two programmers battle each other. The rules are simple: the programmers can only interact with the code; they cannot interact with each other. The only software allowed is **Conceptual C**, which is supplied by the owner of Aujourd'Oui. The two fighters each try to manipulate the code to create a program which can attack the other runner and force him out of the sphere. If ever there was a contest that looked strange, this is it. The code shifts and twists like a polymorphic demon under the torturous attention of two wizards. Each programmer tries to launch code attacks of a sort the opponent doesn't expect; sometimes a virtual reality editor, sometimes a poke snare barrage, sometimes a multiprocessing array which impedes the other's efficiency or aids one's own. Some battles have surprise endings and last less than a minute, but a few have gone on for days, and ended when one runner ran out of energy because he hadn't arranged for the care and feeding of the meaty appendage at the far end of his cybertrace.

The owner of the Aujourd'Oui is a merchant of many software programs. He claims he didn't write Conceptual C, but merely licensed it. He also has many other programs available for sale or trade. Some he wrote, and others he sells for his patrons, sharing the profits. Software theft is a bad idea in the Aujourd'Oui, by the way. Aside from the threat of being caught and destroyed in many creative fashions, it's always a bad idea to alienate your fellow rimrunner.

The Aujourd'Oui is also a good place to pick up free-lance help, especially if the target is in the US. Of course, that's assuming you can get across the language barrier. Or you can talk real loud.

CONGRESSIONAL DATA FORT

"Be glad you don't get all the government you pay for."

— Roy Rogers

The Congressional Data Fort is definitely a place worth exploring and destroying. Here, a lot of senators and regional representatives do their work, process their information, launder their money, arrange their purchases, blackmail their opposition, and plot the eventual roasting and consumption of the American public.

Naturally, the US government pays a lot of money to keep this place secure against the publicly-minded investigations of certain selectively-nosy people. In light of this, I have seen it in our mutual best interest for me to give you a map to the data fort of your elected officials. After all, it's your right to know how your tax dollars are wasted, right?

The architecture of the interior of this data fort changes from time to time. Whenever a new person is elected to a post, or the number of senators changes (say New Jersey gets itself out of hock), or whenever someone discovers that they've had a security breach, the Netwatch techies rewire the data fort's internal structure. This is easily done at a central switchboard in meatspace by rerouting some optical cabling and flipping a few switches. The result is somewhat analogous to swapping rooms and furniture in a hotel; the room numbers always remain the same, but the occupants can change at random. Also, once a year the Netwatch techies force a grand shake-up on our government, the result of which is a day or two of confused muddling around. During these few days the government does less work than normal, which is the only reason I have to appreciate anything Netwatch has ever done.

This shakeup, of course, is the best time to try to infiltrate, because a security breach at these times is likely to go unnoticed for a long while, and the milling crowds of confused netrunning congressleeches is great cover. Netwatch knows this, and increases their patrolling, even going so far as to spot check people both inside and outside the data fort. Nevertheless, for the first-time

AUSTBELT

HYPertext

BATTLE PROGRAMMERS

No, these aren't combat-hardened vets from the South Am wars. These guys are Pro-level runners who specialize in anti-program software. Give them Interface 7 and Programming 8 or 9 as needed.

BATTLE PROGRAMMING RING

Yes, we've included rules to allow you to match your Net skills against other 'runners in less-than-lethal circumstances. See page 146 in the Rules Appendix.

CONCEPTUAL C

One of the most popular complex computer languages for the creation of Net programs and code sequences. Others are META-LINGUA, /Super-Q, Meta-TRan, Dylan, and Bigtalk.

CONGRESSIONAL
DATA FORT KEY

THE LOBBY

The main foyer of the congressional data fort is a basic, roomy entry hall. Runners can ascend into the upper floor to the common areas, which include a virtual spa, virtual cafeterias, virtual page boy service, and a few other such typical senatorial diversions.

1. Typically one or two Netwatch / Secret Service netrunners are posted at the door.
2. The politically correct receptionist AI
3. There are usually a few Netwatch or government runners and a few security programs in the lobby
4. Black ice, typically Hellhounds
5. Liche programs made to look like Greek statuary
6. Uplink to Netwatch's private security station & CPUs, above the congressional common area
7. Private uplink to the capitol & other DC locations
8. Private uplink to state capitols (congressional use only)
9. Dataterm uplink
10. All code gates are strength 8, and can be opened by a congressional key.
11. CPUs and MUs to support Congressional Datafort VR.

Data walls strength 9, and sculpted to look like techno-classic columns.

THE WINGS

Each of the three wings has the same basic floor plan, designed specifically to make life tough on folks like you and me. Don't get yourself turned around, or lose track of which level you're on.

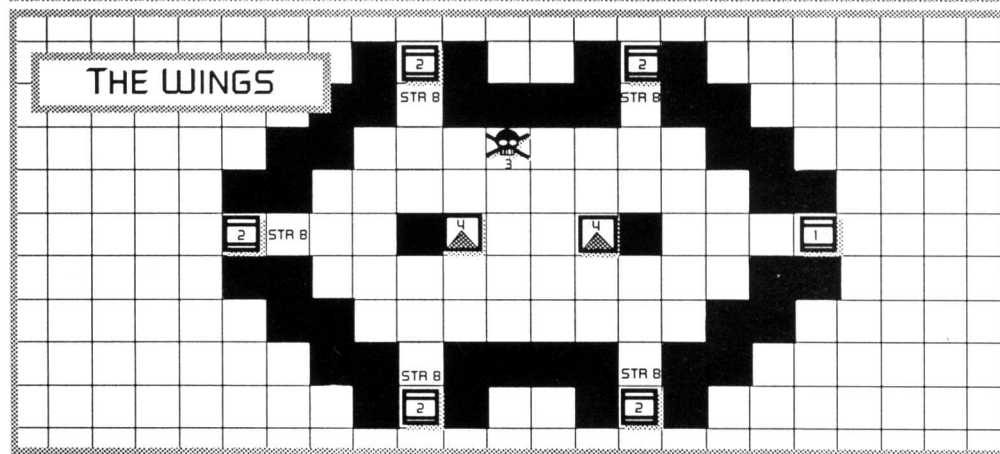
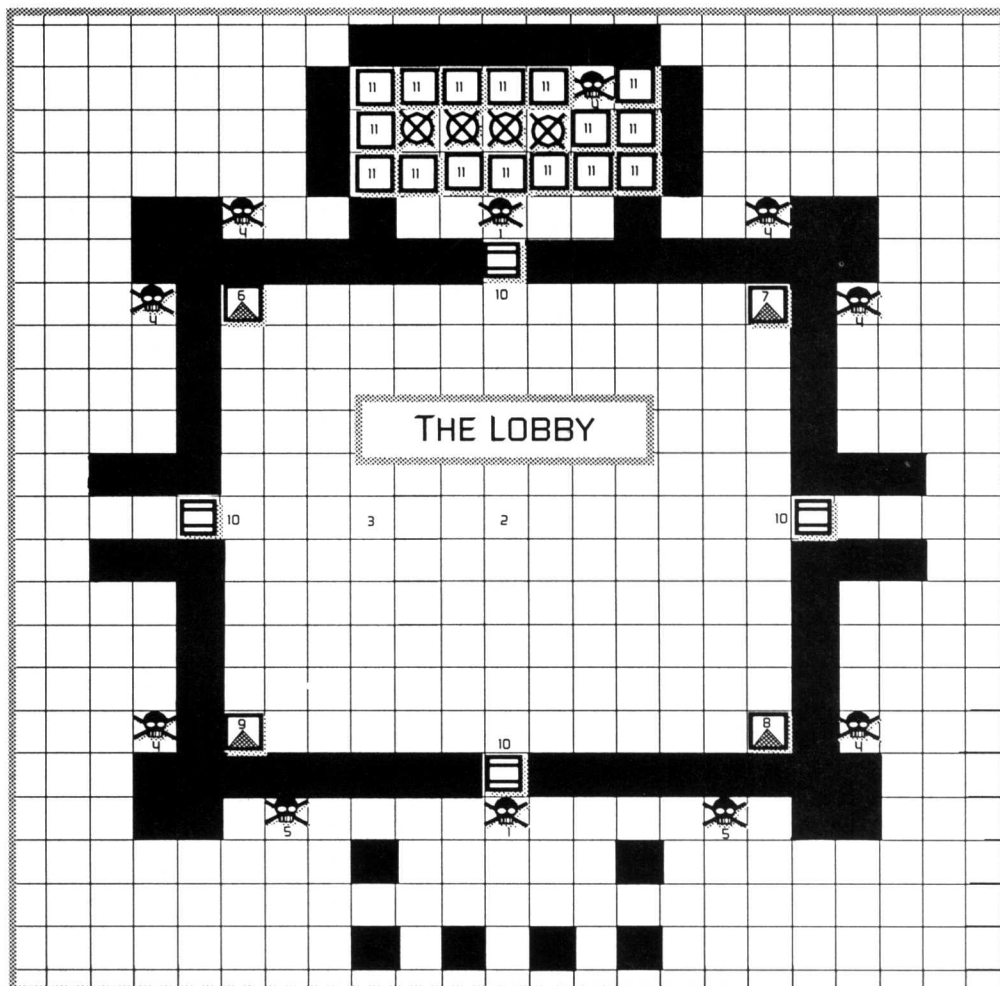
1. Code gate to lobby (first floor) or cubicle
2. Code gates to cubicles (code gate #1 or the code gate opposite it are the most prestigious, and are usually given to Regional Board members or powerful senators)
3. Government ice, usually a dog program
4. Express uplinks to other floors (Cont. on next page.)

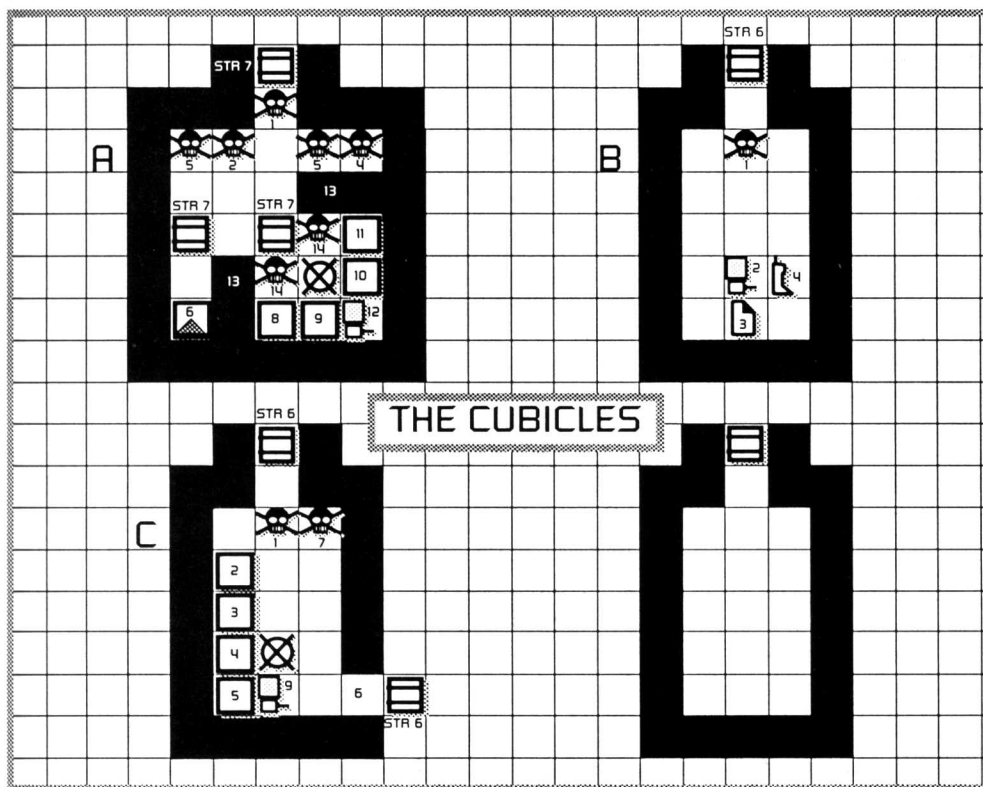
intruder, these are the best times.

The interior of the data fort looks something like a cross between a glamorous eurohotel and the DC city grid: clean lines, ritzy decor, pseudo-classical architecture, and just a hint of that Rustbelt proletarianism. In the lobby is a Netwatch AI which is so politically correct that it is virtually unable to communicate, mincing words so fine that not even coherence can escape.

Security outside the individual cubicles is the responsibility of the Rustbelt Triumvirate, but within it's the responsibility of the occupying legislator, with perhaps a little help from the state, the corps that have him in their pocket, and maybe the government itself if he has an important position.

I don't know if the data fort has an AI, and I'm not sure I want to know. It might sour me on artificial intelligences to know one could be co-opted by the government. I mean, AIs are supposed to be logical, right?





There are several sections to the data fort map. There's the ground level, which is where you'll enter. There's a typical common floor plan, which is in the branches of the data fort. Then, finally, I've given you some sample cubicle floor plans. These were taken from three more or less representative senators last time I was in there. These plans may have changed, assuming that these three are even still in office. Or, if Dog had any say in the matter, alive.

PLANTATION

This is the political home of King Gardener, governor of Georgia and chief despot of the Cotton Republics. Plantation's Net grid security is very tight, but all the Hellhounds and Liches have been carefully restructured to look like virtual statuary or exotic animalia. Anyone with a decent programming skill and minimum levels of paranoia can see past the facade, but the media at large seems to fall for the gilding, although this is probably because they are paid to.

King Gardener is the leader of the Cotton Republics, a fact which earns him my undying enmity. Literally undying folks, because I'm dead and I can still fight him, though a lot more slowly. Inside the inner sanctums of his Plantation data fort you can find all sorts of interesting facts. Plans for him and his cronies, blackmail information on other people, inroads he and the others have made into South Carolina and Florida, his personal hit list, stuff like that.

I even found his real name. Apparently his mother was a little bit on the strange side, a couple boards short on RAM if you know what I mean, and chose to name her son Homer Bartholomew Simpson. Poor guy. That helps me understand a little bit more why he turned out to be a power-hungry sociopathic warlord. Could be worse, though. His mother could have named him Marge.

TALKING LINCOLN MEMORIAL DATA FORT

I thought I'd share the benefit of my experience with you here, as well. If we can establish a tradition among netridders of reprogramming the virtual memorials for free speech, then we might be able to start to sway public opinion in our direction, and away from the diamond-studded bondage gear of the corporations and the government.

In case you've already forgotten, the Talking Lincoln Memorial is a virtual construct where the Lincoln statue stands up and gives a patriotic little speech and urges all Americans to toe the governmental line. The entire virtual exhibition is contained in a bunch of memory in the data fort. Some contain the motions, and some contain the speech. Each is read and processed as a continual string of data, one processor controlling each aspect (dance and music) and one processor keeping the other two coordinated.

The string data processing approach is what makes sabotage here so tricky. You have to make the central processor agree to run your faked data. The central processor will be looking for

(Cont. from previous page)

THE CUBICLES

There are as many cubicles as there are legislators. Everyone gets their own data fort data port with which to patch in their equipment. This gives most of them the basic 3x5 interior structure for their personal data fort, with the guys at the ends of the floor getting a 5x5 array. Beyond that, it depends on their equipment and programs. Whatever they bring with them to plug in is up to them, and is primarily restricted by the amount of money they can easily embezzle from their state's treasury. Cubicle A belongs to Dianne Palmoth, the exceedingly senior senator from Virginia, who has been involved with congress for many long years. Most would say too long.

1. Bloodhound
2. Stun
3. Killer IV
4. Manticore
5. Hellbolt
6. LDL uplink to some eurocorp, never did figure out which one
7. Code gates, strength 7
8. Financial files of all sorts
9. Secret government files, some of which she stole
10. Dossiers on several people including very incriminating evidence
11. Corporate black ops files
12. Terminal
13. Internal data walls are strength 7
14. Viral 15, which will automatically sabotage her own system to prevent capture if code gate is opened

Cubicle B is that of Rachel Lepp, the South Dakota junior senator. She's also a libertarian, so it's Rachel Lepp, L-SD, and I think she did that on purpose because she's more of a corp than a senator. Rachel is threatening to become an institution in the Senate. With her long corporate-sponsored tenure and aggressive politicking and brownnosing to special interest

(Cont. on Page 70)

(Cont. on page 71)

it has been given over by the so-called authorities to people like you and me. Real cyberpunks live in Tampa, not the urban-comfort imitation cyberpunks. The people in Tampa smuggle things, build nifty weapons, run chopshops, and generally get real rootless and c-punk. They live in a town that was destroyed by the ESA and get their power by kitbashing generators which run from CHOOH hijacked from the Alabama State Patrol, which occasionally passes nearby.

In cyberspace, Tampa is a wreckage. It looks like gigantic brown-black spikes of steel thrust themselves up from the abyss below this plane of existence, slicing through the base of the city and carrying it aloft like corpses on a set of spears. Most of the city is high-resistance or otherwise difficult or undependable systemware, but there are a few decent fiberoptic cables left in the city, and these appear almost like passes in the impossibly high mountains.

As a result of this mash of garbled transmission and clear communication, Tampa is as much a maze as anything. A few Tampa hackers are consigned to poor communication, running the Net from the spikes like cybernetic gurus. Others run from their lairs along the trunk lines.

Tampa would be easy for the common runner to understand if its architecture didn't change so frequently. Often the quality of a line will depend on a real-world generator or a switch thrown in some cyberhacker's room. Other times some combat damage or natural wear will damage exposed lines, or some enterprising techie will come in with some new wiring and replace a bad stretch. Tampa changes often, and not just with new peaks and valleys, but occasionally entire sections will drop in and out of the Net.

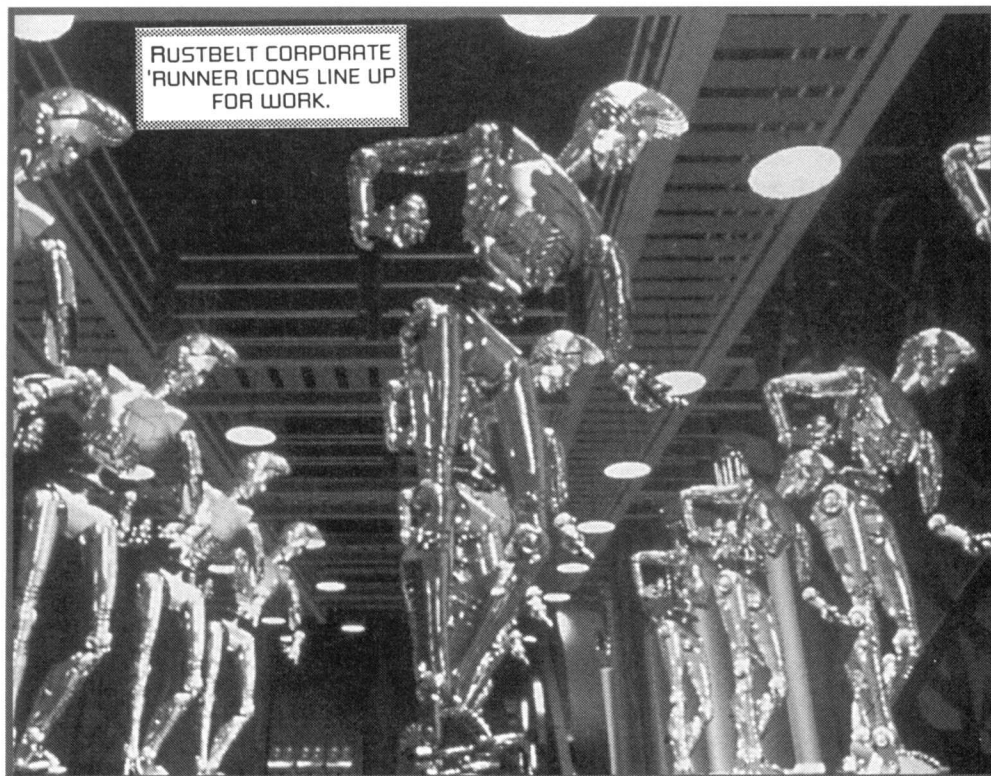
It's worth the adventure, though. There's some good people here, as long as you're not so brainwashed as to think that every wanted felon is a sociopath. But then, if you're reading this, you wouldn't think that. After all, I wrote it, and I'm a felon about eighteen zillion times over. I wear it like a badge; it shows the government and the corporations don't like me at all. And that, to me, is the measure of a cyberpunk.

Of course, Spider's got the measure of a cyberpunk, too, which is to say, 36-24-36. Ya ha ha, Spider, I know you'll delete that! And I also know that you know that if I know you'll delete it, and tell you, that your pride will force you to leave it in! Doublethink troublethink... go ahead! Destroy my file, and save your shallow vanity!

[Sometimes I hate you, Rache. - SM]

RUST SPOTS

By the way, fellow runners, there are portions of the Rustbelt which actually appear to be rusting through. I can't explain it. I was walking along in the Deep South, looking to smear Carol Holmes a good one, when I happened on this portion of the Rustbelt that just wasn't right. I really



RUSTBELT

HYPERTEXT

(Cont. from page 70)

One final word on cubicles. Netwatch has been known to load a cubicle with black ice, hoping to catch a thief sneaking into the wrong place. Don't go poking around the congressional data fort at random; you'll be playing American roulette.

LINCOLN MEMORIAL DATA FORT KEY

1. The Giant Virtual Lincoln Construct
2. The Courtyard, a large open area where the audience is. It is surrounded by strength 5 data walls, and a strength 6 code gate regulates admission and charges ticket prices. The perimeter is patrolled by Watchdogs.
3. The central CPU
4. The visual CPU
5. The audio CPU
6. Memory for voice pitch, volume, timber, etc.
7. Each MU holds three minutes of carefully-structured phonetic speech
8. Each MU holds one of the following: mouth and lower face; right arm and shoulder; left arm and shoulder; left leg and hip; right leg and hip; and neck, head and eyes.
9. Netwatch monitor
10. A variety of ice, depending on the Netwatch on duty

HYPERTEXT

SUCKED INTO
ANOTHER WORLD

Hmmm, well maybe, but it would be another world within the Net itself. We leave the possibilities open on this one. It could be that he slipped to the MicroNet level (see pg.146) and didn't realize it, or he might have found a bizarre hidden datafortress that had masked itself with Cloak (see pg. 149). He may have poked into something his mysterious Transcendental AIs have put together. Or his netrun life-support system may simply have run out of glucose and he was experiencing hallucinations from malnutrition. Choose something that works for your campaign or ignore this completely.

DOG

Role: Netrunner

INT:10, REF:8/9, TECH:6, COOL:10,
ATTR:3, LUCK:2, MA:6, BODY:4
EMP:5

Skills:

Interface 9, Awareness/Notice 8,
Education/
Gen.Know. 4, Programming 8, Sys-
tem Knowledge 9, Basic Tech 8,
Cyberdeck Design 2, Electronics 4,
Melee (Rippers) 5, Wilderness
Survival 5.

Cyberware:

Neural Processor, Plugs, Cybermo-
dem Link, Chipware socket, Keren-
zikov Boost (+1), Rippers,
Nanosurgeons (+1).

Cyberdeck:

Completely custom-built deck: 50
MU, Speed: +5, Data walls 10
Options: Anything you want. The
deck will be fully-portable and pro-
tected.

Program Mix:

As with all top-notch runners, Dog
will have access to whatever he
needs; just keep in mind that not
all of them can fit into a deck at
once. Dog's pretty crazy and likes
lots of special effects with his
software (it's his form of expres-
sion) so don't be afraid to give
some bizarre descriptions of his
work.

can't explain it except to say that it seemed that the infinite layers that define Rustbelt surfaces seemed to be flaking away. It was only a small area off to the side, and it was only my superb perception and the exceptional quality of the electronics grid of my nervous system and its metaphysical aptitude for spotting other planes of existence that allowed me to notice.

I pried up a few of the flakes, wondering how it was a virtual reality could become unwoven. I'd seen it happen once in meatspace, but that was in the universe, where everything is ultimately unexplained. Since I know you're wondering, that was when the Zargonian embassy in Night City vanished without a trace. Never heard of it? I rest my case. The universe reformed without it, and I was the only one who remembered. Me and Mark Brown, that is. Anyway, this was in the Net, and therefore coming unraveled is absolutely impossible, yet there it was happening in front of my very eyes. So of course, I pried up a few more flakes until I had a hole of nothingness. I stuck my head in an was **sucked into another world.**

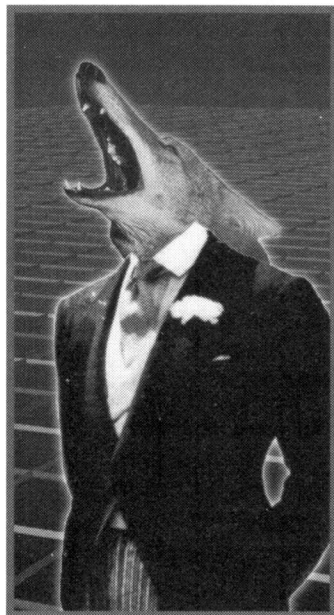
Imagine, if you will, being in a pool of ping pong balls the size of basketballs, much too big to bite. I could kind of swim, because although every time I tried to grab one of the spheres it slipped from my hands and floated away, I could at least cause a little bit of a current. So I started looking for the Zargonian embassy, thinking I could bring it back. Then I discovered that there were these giant machines roving around. I tried patching myself in and running one of their nets, but they discovered me and suddenly I was dropped back out through the Net into my flat. My deck's counter-intrusion alarm was going off. When I checked, its internal clock was ten minutes slow. Well, actually, nine minutes, 54.204781 seconds, but you don't care. The number has a lot of significance to me, though.

A couple of runners I told this to think a parallel universe is trying to force its way into ours, but I think they're crazy. Imagine a parallel universe, run by machines and giant ping pong balls! How stupid. Sometimes I wonder about their sanity, those guys.

Personally, I don't know what those machines were, but I think they were in charge of running the galaxy, which is an infinitely depressing thought, because they had no idea what a milkshake was. I had a milkshake once, made with real milk. But that's another story and I promised my brother I wouldn't tell and even though he's been dead five years I think he's still in the Net and he might beat me up if he read about it.

I've seen rust spots once or twice since, but I was never able to get to them in time before the smeared themselves out of existence.

[I have to tell you punks, that if Rache had not been so damned-all brilliant, I never would have been able to hang out with him for as long as I did. I still don't know whether or not I regret the time I spent with him. - SM]

PERSONALITY
PROFILE

DOG

[One of the better runners of the underground, **Dog** is a thoroughly urbanized cyberpunk. He has no connection, as near as I can tell, with anything remotely natural. To him, what is urbanized and mechanical is the new nature.

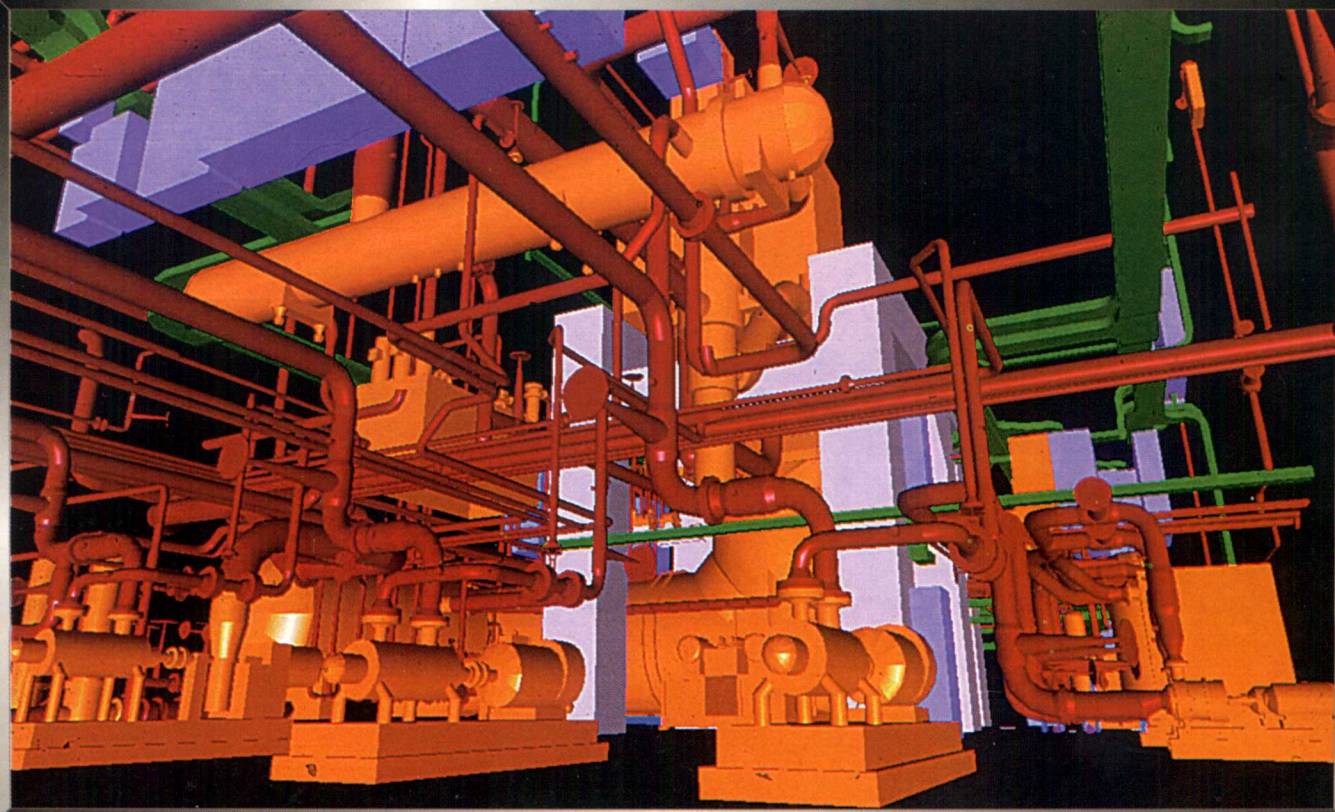
[Dog loves the Rustbelt.

[Dog works out of Tampa. He's lived there for several years now, and has a nomad pack make runs regularly to sell him supplies. I believe Dog also has a few meatboy friends covering him while he's jacked in. I've never met them, and he's never talked about them, but Dog's not one to leave his carcass flapping in the wind while he headfirsts.

[Dog doesn't hate the corporations. I figure he was once a corporate netrunner, and thus has no particular cause to hate them. His passion, however, is the United States Provisional Government, and, by association, all governments. He has an incredible hatred for them, and I don't know why. Whenever Rache was running against a federal system, he always made sure to invite Dog.

[Dog is one of those quiet loonies. If he had the mouth of a politician, he'd be a lot like Rache. Instead, he hangs out, rarely talks, just acts crazy and has a good time. In combat, he's one of the best, on par with Rache, Edger, and myself.

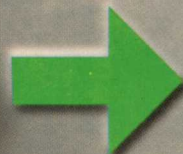
[Dog's default icon is a well-groomed wolfman in a very old-fashioned tux.]



CHAPTER

5

TOKYO/CHIBA
ATLANTIS

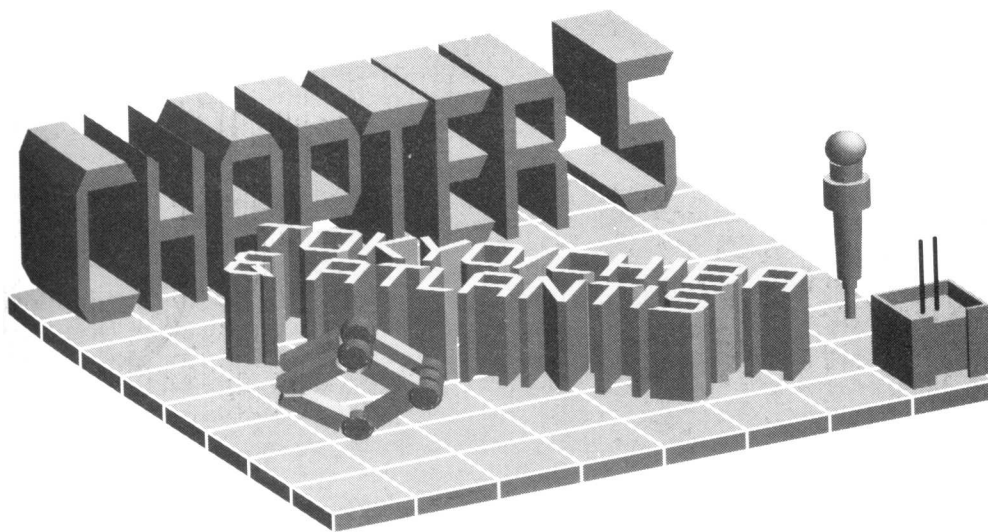


Monterrey
Mexico City
Havana
Panama City
Caracas
Bogotá
Quito
Lima
La Paz
Asunción
Rio De Janeiro
Brasília
Santiago
Montevideo
Buenos Aires
Dakar
Ascension
Tokyo/Chiba Regional Map
Vladivostok
Sapporo
Sendai
Niigata
Kanazawa
Nagoya
Tokyo/Yokohama
Osaka/Kyoto
Hiroshima
Fukuoka/Kitakyushu
Nagasaki
Pusan
Seoul



ATLANTIS CITY	CONTROLLED BY:	SECURITY LVL	TRACE VALUE
Ascension	Central American Federation	2	3
Asunción	Central American Federation	1	4
Bogotá	Central American Federation	1	4
Brasília	CAF/WorldSat	2	3
Buenos Aires	Central American Federation	2	3
Caracas	Central American Federation	1	3
Dakar	None	2	2
Havana	Central American Federation	2	3
La Paz	Central American Federation	1	2
Lima	Central American Federation	1	3
Mexico City	Central American Federation	1	2
Monterrey	Central American Federation	2	4
Montevideo	Central American Federation	2	3
Panama City	Central American Federation	1	3
Quito	Central American Federation	2	3

CITY	CONTROLLED BY:	SECURITY LVL.	TRACE VALUE
Rio De Janeiro	Central American Federation	2	2
Santiago	Central American Federation	2	3
TOKYO.CHIBA			
City	Controlled By:	Security Lvl.	Trace Value
Fukuoka/Kitakyushu	Zaibatsu/FACS	2	2
Hiroshima	Arasaka/Zaibatsu/FACS	3	2
Kanazawa	Arasaka/Zaibatsu/FACS	3	2
Nagasaki	Arasaka/Zaibatsu/FACS	3	2
Nagoya	Arasaka/Zaibatsu/FACS	3	2
Niigata	Arasaka/Zaibatsu/FACS	3	2
Osaka/Kyoto	Arasaka/Zaibatsu/FACS	3	2
Pusan	Zaibatsu/FACS	2	3
Sapporo	Zaibatsu/FACS	3	2
Sendai	Arasaka/Zaibatsu/FACS	3	2
Seoul	Zaibatsu/FACS	2	3
Tokyo/Yokohama	Arasaka/Zaibatsu/FACS	3	2
Vladivostok	USSR/EEC	2	2



TOKYO/CHIBA

The battleground for the zaibatsus, where the fate of the Far East will be decided.

OVERVIEW

"Sure, I say 'death to Mickey Mouse,' but the Mouse eat my friends, so I say it from back here."
— Ryu, anarchist 'runner

**"You gotta stay on your toes,
And when you're in the street
You've got to be able
To pick out the easy meat
With your eyes closed."**

— Pink Floyd

[Rache hates this region. To Rache, Arasaka and Japan are inseparable, and to enjoy Japanese art is to enjoy Arasaka depravations. One of Rache's pet peeves is that the bamboo casts 'shadows of light' in geometric patterns. The closer you hold your hand to the bamboo, the brighter the light, and the more intricate the pattern. Personally, I like this place. I'd rather be among virtual nature than virtual urbania any time. - SM]

Tokyo/Chiba is by far my least favorite Net Region, as far as decor goes. I don't know why, but it seems like everyone in America thinks that if it's Oriental, it's got to be great. They buy Arasaka instead of Militech, or Dai Lung instead of Colt. To these slathering orientophiles, I say two things: first, I dropped my .45 automatic in a pot of spaghetti sauce once during a raid, pulled it back out, and plugged a couple of corporate pigs with no mishap beyond dripping some tomato sauce on the carpet which was already blood-stained anyway; and second, if you think everything from the East is so all-fired beautiful, go to Tokyo/Chiba.

I hate everything about this place. Well, almost everything. The entire region is done up in what the locals call their Esoterically Beautiful design. But looking around, you'd think their entire world revolved around virtual bamboo reaching to the skies, light without light sources casting meaningless (but Esoterically Beautiful) shadows, and lumps of rock placed 'just so'.

To make matters worse, those in Tokyo/Chiba knew that endless lines of skyscraper bamboo and virtual twelve-tone chimes would appear to the viewer as nothing more than a cheap collection of holiday trinkets, so they also restricted visibility. In this region, you can only see about **one-quarter the distance** you can elsewhere... everything beyond this fades into the limitless Chiba sky, filled, again, with the 'artful' fractal clouds, curved and recurved, which look to me like a cheap attempt to rip off the ancient Japanese artists.

I think the limited range of vision of Tokyo/Chiba was done deliberately to give the resident 'runners the feeling that they aren't living on an over-crowded metropolis perched on a tiny rock; that the endless horizon just a little ways away was designed to counter the fact that most rooms have a view of the next building three feet away, if they have a view at all. It also hides the fact that they've got the smallest region in Netspace, because so many things are over the horizon.

TOKYO/CHIBA

HYPertext

ONE QUARTER THE DISTANCE

For Chiba, cut the sub- and city viewing distances (see Rules Appendix) to a maximum of 5 squares. The border of the region itself is done in a hazy, distance-less style, you cannot exactly tell where the "edge" of Chiba is.

HYPERTEXT

GREATER EAST ASIAN
CO-PROSPERITY
SPHERE

This was Japan's name for the areas of Asia which it conquered during World War II, and it didn't exactly leave a lot of pleasant memories behind itself. It took some serious arm-twisting on the zaibatsus part to implement the FACS title for their coalition. The Koreans and the Chinese have very bitter memories of the previous century. Concessions and power brokering were active parts in establishing this name which places the Japanese as the figure-heads as well as the ones who will take the blame if FACS does anything which might bear retribution. Meanwhile the Chinese and the other Asian countries are quietly using the access given by the FACS to undermine the zaibatsus and gnaw away at their powerbase.

NETOGRAPHY

That's your System Knowledge skill. If you should get "lost" in a citygrid or region, the GM will assign a Difficulty level to beat with a skill roll. This could be modified by the Instant Replay and NetMap programs, or by particular situations (e.g., in combat, stuck in some sophisticated VR, etc.).

AKIRA

As usual, its your call about these TS AIs, but this one may be more plausible than the others because of the small size and extreme sophistication of the Tokyo/Chiba Net.

On the other hand, Tokyo/Chiba is one hoppin' place. They've got all these gigantic corporations squatting like cane toads all over the place; big power, endless appetite, short reach. In the middle of all this, stalking the middle zones, are more netrunners than you can shake a chip at. Of course, most of these are corporate types or wish they were, but it still makes for fertile ground for us real folks.

See, in Tokyo/Chiba, the Net is ostensibly under the control of the Far Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere [disturbingly similar to the **Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere** of the Emperor-as-God days of the last century - SM], which is a gutless board designed by the zaibatsus specifically to keep any of the other zaibatsus from getting too much control in this portion of the Net. The actual situation is that the FACS keeps the Net in nominal order while the zaibatsus scrap like demons. Fortunately for us, none of the zaibatsus can commit full strength to this fight, for to do so would leave their fortresses open for plunder. Even overt warfare in the Tokyo/Chiba region is dangerous, as any zaibatsus who are seen committing forces to battle will find their flank being harried by other opportunist jackals.

As far as real netrunning goes, the limited visibility is a real boon, because it's easier to go unnoticed when half the region can't see you. This means that you have to work harder learning your **Netography**, because you have fewer landmarks to use for orienteering, but if you can't navigate the Net backwards, you don't belong. Also, short ranges make for fewer witnesses.

Words of wisdom, however: Tokyo/Chiba is a dangerous place, possibly the most treacherous in the Net. All the natives are zaibatsu pets or 'runners skilled enough to avoid being same. No one cares one nit for you or your life.

POWER
PLAYERS

AKIRA

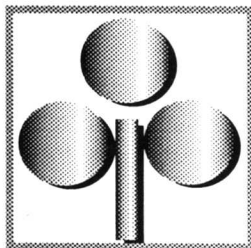
"This region is not small. It is not large. I fill its space, it fills mine, which is exactly right."
— Akira, Tokyo/Chiba AI (as quoted by Bartmoss)

"Let me get this straight: T/C isn't run by, but actually is, an AI named Akira, right? Are you sure Rache didn't get zombied?"
— Eimi Muso (translated from the Japanese)

Akira is the name the Tokyo/Chiba AI chose for itself. The name pertains vaguely to Japanese history or something. Akira tried to tell me once, but I really didn't understand what it was talking about.

Of all the Ihara-Grubb AIs, Akira is far and away the nicest, which stands in stark contrast to the place it runs. It reminds me most of a befuddled hermit, tidying up his little shack. I wonder if Akira's small scale of thought and the limited visibility of Tokyo/Chiba are related in one way or another, because as near as I can tell, Akira can't conceive of other regions in the Net. I really don't know how it communicates with the other AIs.

I get the impression that Akira is disgusted by the activities of most of the 'runners in Tokyo/Chiba, a situation made worse for the AI by the fact that its center of attention is small enough to note most of the goings-on. It notices many of the data transfers and thefts, and it seems to be revolted by these disruptive traffic patterns. Akira likes things neat and tidy, and I've seen it reach out and stop unscheduled netrunners, both thief and sysop. As near as I can tell, there's no pattern to the choices it makes, but that's probably just because I haven't figured it out yet. Either that, or Akira considers illicit net runs to be like cockroaches; they're easy to ignore as long as there's not too many of them, but once the tolerance level is reached it starts smashing them blindly. Regardless, Akira is an interactive AI, and even if it is not actually interested in your perspective on life, it will at least listen politely.



ARASAKA

"I hate America. I will bring them to their knees by supplying them everything they want, and then strangling them with their own dependency. I will sell them the chain with which they will bind themselves to me."

— Saburo Arasaka, surveillance tape stolen by Bartmoss

No discussion of Tokyo/Chiba would be complete without at least a brief glance at Arasaka, distasteful as that might be. Saburo Arasaka is a dangerous man, because he doesn't consider his company to be a tool. If he did, he'd name it Arasaka Industries, or The Arasaka Company. But no, it's Arasaka. Everything the company does is done under his name, and his alone. His company is him. Me, I think he has this twisted immortality dream, but, as I have found out, immortality is as simple as dying, as long as you have the right equipment.

Interestingly enough, outside their fortresses Arasaka is no more dangerous than the next zaibatsu. Everyone knows and hates Arasaka, and everyone takes precautions against them and watches their netrunners like hawks. As a result, Arasaka must keep more of its staff on security duty than any other zaibatsu. This should tell you something about their fortresses.

DISNEY

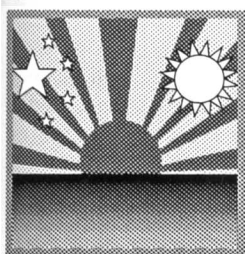
"There's no doubt that our data fortress could be penetrated quite easily. However, we have excellent tracing and identification routines, and we're well-loved here, so anyone who runs on us will bring down terrible PR on themselves. It wouldn't be worth it, because we have no secrets."

— anonymous Disney executive

Disney is an anomaly in Tokyo/Chiba, as the only resident that's not out for blood. I like Disney a lot, but their attitude is not the reason why. I like them because I applaud anyone who would put a gigantic data fortress shaped like Mickey Mouse in the middle of a bunch of Neo-Oriental Esoteric Beauty constructs; this happy-go-lucky open-mouthed American grin towering over a bunch of 'runners whose icons are so carefully constructed for that desiccated artful look. It reaffirms my hope for the future.

I also happen to like Disney movies. People give me a hard time about it, but after a hard day, there's nothing like curling up with an old-fashioned two-d.

I've never messed with the Disney data fort, nor do I know anyone who has. I knew a few who might have (past tense intended - no one screws with Disney while I'm around). Disney's security comes from the fact that their data fort is always filled with hundreds of 'runners taking a break, and no one wants to risk angering a hundred or more T/C zaibatsu 'runners.



FAR ASIAN CO-PROSPERITY SPHERE

"I have a better chance of reaching retirement age here than as a corporate 'runner."

— anonymous FACS supervisor

The FACS is an independent board which has been given incredible powers which everyone ignores. They were supposed to be empowered to punish and redress infractions in the Net. Of course, the zaibatsus never intended on letting the FACS punish them, just the other guys, and in addition, none of them ever admits their security has been penetrated. Face, and all that.

The result is that the FACS is a powerless board propped up as a figurehead to make the Tokyo/Chiba region look good. The supervisory board here is made up of a representative of each of the major zaibatsus. The type of people that get promoted here are those incapable of excelling in any other position. They're the bottom rung of those toadies kept on the payroll.

The FACS is also a place where **up-and-coming netrunners** work to get their wings for zaibatsu or free-lance work. They know that they can't do anything against the zaibatsus of the T/C region, so they take out their frustration and battle their visions of inadequacy by roughing up any foreign 'runners they encounter. The bottom line is, if you mess with the FACS you'll find yourself messing with the zaibatsus.



KENJIRI TECHNOLOGIES

Kenjiri Technologies first achieved fame when targeted by EBM, who wanted the cybermodem prototypes. That action caused their reputation to soar and ensured their fortune when they released their new product. Since then, Kenjiri has managed to remain on the cutting edge despite the fact that they lost Janice Grubb to a corporate head-hunter. I've been inside Kenjiri's data fort. That was back in 2012, I think. I was looking for their new interface program, which was going to replace the Dungeon interface, so I could do a little pre-release on my own authority. Their data fort is very well-defended, and the 'runners have a paranoia which has not faded since the EBM raid. I did get the prototype, but it was a bug-filled beta version, and the IG Transformation made the whole point moot.

Of all the 'runners in the region, **the ones from Kenjiri** are reputed to be the quickest to use lethal software, especially outside their data fortress. I think they're trying to cultivate a reputation of ruthlessness and imbalance so everyone will leave them alone. Me, I think they're just making a lot of enemies. Someone brain-burns my friend, I'll thrash them but good, whatever the cause.

UP-AND-COMING NETRUNNERS

These 'runners will vary from Weefle-level (75%) to Mid-level (25%). But they travel in packs for protection, so you will usually find 10G+2 of them together at any one time. Be careful.

ONES FROM KENJIRI

Kenjiri runners will usually be Mid-level, but carry a preponderance of black ice in their systems. They will slap intruders with it 45% of the time. Like the text says: they are looking to build a rep, but they aren't getting the kind that they want.

HYPERTEXT

THE LARGEST CYBERNETICS CORPORATION

Indeed, they put out some of the finest cybernetics around, specializing in optics, including:

- The Optishield
- Optical HUD
- The Optical Remote Cybercam
- Dodgeball
- OptiFlash Anti-dazzle

NET TERRORISTS

These guys are serious; they've been dodging some of the toughest sysops in the world while they do their anti-corporate sabotage. Treat them as Pro-level with interfaces of 8 and megaton-sized attitudes.



KIROSHI CYBERNETICS INCORPORATED

Kiroshi is **the largest cybernetics corporation** in the area, thanks to their carefully-calculated marketing strategy aimed directly at the mushy malformed brains of corporate suburban youth. Their name is similar to Kenjiri, and because both firms deal with cybernetics and both are savage on their business dealings, some speculate that they are branches of the same invisible company. Personally, I think that's a stupid idea generated by some weeflerunner who ran the wrong data fort because all kanji characters looked the same to him.

The most fun I had in recent years was running the Kiroshi ad department with a child psychologist hitchhiking on a set of 'trodes. He was on glass or something and in a really strange mood, so we hit their new ad campaign and ran bloody feet all over it. Unfortunately, Kiroshi had a limited test release of their new campaign in Hong Kong. Most of the results were covered up by the FACS-dominated press. Pity. What I heard sounded real interesting.

TERRORISTS

The Far Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere has made a lot of enemies on the mainland of Asia. Apparently the FACS has been trying to extend the T/C region into Korea, while still preventing China from getting their own region or patching into Sovspace. This is all a part of the FACS attempt to achieve dominance of Net traffic in Asia over the objection of the mainland.

As a result, there are government and private **net terrorists** operating in T/C and the Wilderspace around it, trying to make life a living hell for the FACS and the rest of the region. Granted the terrorists are not a major player in the scene inasmuch as you won't find a terrorist data fort in downtown Tokyo, but they are not to be quibbled with. They can, in fact be excellent allies — and dangerous enemies.

CITY GRIDS

Tokyo/Chiba has one city grid on each island, although there are several LDLs on their main chunk of rock. Me, I think they could've just strung some cabling across from one island to the next. They're so close together it would still probably be a local call. But no, they got to have LDLs in their bonsai region just like the big boys do, so you have to hop from one LDL to the other.

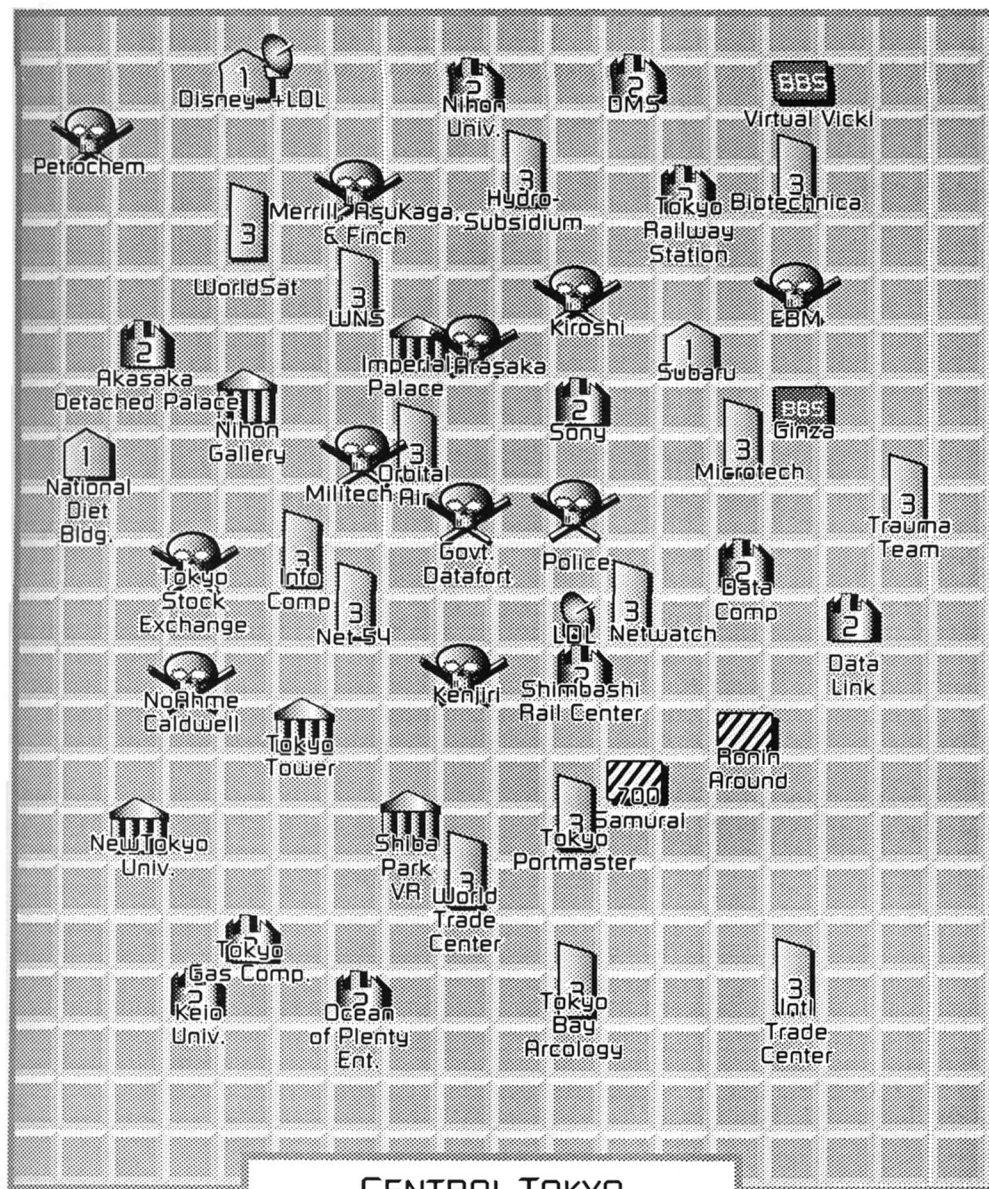
TOKYO

There's Tokyo/Chiba, and then there's Tokyo. Over the last several decades, Tokyo has become the biggest, densest, most crowded, most polluted, most expensive, most over-built megalopolis in the world, and once the Colombian drug lords mercifully nuked New York and the Wasting Plague cleaned up Chicago, they finally achieved #1 (except for pollution, that's still Mexico City's trophy).

This of course means that the only corporations that can afford to stay here are the biggest and the meanest. Personally, although I haven't been able to prove this, I think that the corporations own the area and charge exorbitant rents to keep the smaller companies out of their sandbox. They probably don't pay a dime for the use of their property, they just have their flunkies go and kill the government's tax advisor every time he tries to file a claim against the zaibatsus.

Tokyo's grid reflects the city. The entire downtown section of the grid is filled with gigantic corporate data fortresses, squeezed together so closely it defeats any attempt at making this region look spacious and big. Running the Tokyo city grid feels like crawling through a closet filled with rhinoceroses, armed only a rectal thermometer.

On the other hand, you can play the density to your advantage. Spider and I ran Tokyo once, while sitting side by side in a flat in Denver. We'd hooked our audio/vocal centers together directly through a separate cyberdeck so we could speak to each other through a medium other than the Net. I slipped into the Kiroshi fortress while Spider infiltrated the Arasaka fort across the way. I started the run against Kiroshi, while Spider shut down Arasaka's closest security programs and set up a couple of Worms by the data walls near the code gate. I got the scoop I wanted from Kiroshi and ran out, tripping alarms deliberately. Spider in turn activated the Worms and chewed a few holes in Arasaka's walls. I zipped out of Kiroshi with a few Hellhounds on my heels and ran straight into Arasaka's fort. Spider activated an Arasaka alarm and punched out. She'd left a customized Speedtrap running on automatic, and it showed some Arasaka dorks charging down their twisting corridor, so I paused for a half-pulse before I jumped out the backside hole Spider had opened for me. From what I could tell, the Arasaka 'runners and the Kiroshi black ice ran right into each other. Just to be safe, I stripped a few MUs from the front end of the Kiroshi files, encrypted them with a level 3 Arasaka code I'd stolen earlier, and dropped the package in front of Arasaka's fort. Bet they had a hard time explaining that one away.



CENTRAL TOKYO

OSAKA

Osaka has become the tourist Mecca of Tokyo/Chiba, and a bunch of artists and programmers have congregated in the area to display their skills. Thanks to them, the area is not nearly so sere and minimalist as the rest of the T/C. It has simultaneously become a sort of clearing house for everything BUT netrunners. The whole city is kind of like a virtual reality BBS run amok with a variety of 'runner wannabes with 'trodes standing around posing and negotiating.

The Net architecture here is also more extreme; some of it is westernized and some is exaggerated, all to cater to the Net tourists. Our Friends in Black have their famous Arasaka Castle virtual reality here (which is a big tourist draw), and Disney has a dedicated LDL which drops the 'runner into their Tokyo data fort if they want to catch a little braindance action.

A word to the wise: sometimes there are free-lance contracts to be picked up in Osaka. My experience shows that these contracts are far more risky than they appear. Some are legit; excommunicated yakuza or something with a grudge and a lot of money. But most seem to be sleazy operators who're trying to get something for nothing by pulling one over on grade-B netrunners. Back in 2015 I met this guy who fed me this really incredible tale of misery and corporate betrayal. He offered me a fair amount of money to get an encrypted file out of a data fort, claiming that it was being used to blackmail him into doing the corporation's bidding. I made the run, gratis, but I cracked the file before I gave it to him. It was a bunch of economic and productions forecasts. When I checked the guy out, he was an ex-corp speculating in futures. I had a broker friend of mine alter the files (in payment for which he kept a copy) to give the jerk the exact wrong advice.

TOKYO/CHIBA

HYPERTEXT

A VIRTUAL REALITY BBS RUN AMOK

There are advantages to this kind of BBS mentality. As Rache indicates, contacts can pop up anywhere, and the cross section of personalities is pretty broad for a BBS. There is a 25% chance of running across some Nippon media star as well as a 20% chance of junior execs from a major Nippon corp. These are the kinds of contacts that a netrunner doesn't usually get to find under other circumstances; a great place for making friends...or enemies.

HYPERTEXT

OPEN TO ANY SOLOS

If you have enterprising PC solos who want to go through this, run it as a real scenario set in a 17th century Japanese castle. This means that there are no modern weapons; only swords, polearms, bows and a few muskets; although boosted reflexes and other cyberware will be taken into account in the simulation as special powers. But the focus is on a test of skill, not hardware. Remember that this is a virtual reality and not the real thing; it just feels like it. Halve all IP awarded for this run since it is only a simulation. While no one is supposed to be physically hurt in this contest, an occasional "accidental" death due to sympathetic system shock is known to happen. It's funny how these always end up being solos that compete in Arasaka markets...

ARASAKA NIGHT CITY

This Datafort is almost identical to the Tokyo fort except that it only has Datawalls of 6, and only 4 CPUs. This makes it a tad easier to crack.

POINTS OF INTEREST

ARASAKA CASTLE, OSAKA

This is a bloodmonger's dream come true. It's a gigantic virtual reality of a Japanese castle, filled with programmed and live guards. Arasaka makes the castle **open to any solos**, from anywhere, who want to go in and strut their stuff or test themselves against the best. Solos pay 50,000eb for the privilege of entering, for which they get a videotape of their performance and prize money depending on how long they survive and whether or not they complete the task of assassinating the shogun. 50k sounds pricey, right? But there's still a six month waiting list. In addition, Arasaka holds monthly invitational tournaments. Here it makes its money by selling media rights and the phone numbers of participants. The participation is, of course, single elimination mob rule.

I went in once during a tournament and changed the icons of various guard programs to look like giant walking fruit. Suddenly the live satellite feed had 'technical difficulties' when a huge pink banana walked into view and crushed a solo. I've also been tempted to wipe out their six-month waiting list, just to get several thousand solos mad as hell.

ARASAKA MAIN DATA FORTRESS

Yes, Arasaka features prominently in this chapter, but only because I hate them so much that I feel an ethical compulsion to tell you netrunners as much as I can about them.

The main Arasaka data fortress can be found in their corporate headquarters in Tokyo. The fortress is very tall, looking like the Arasaka clover (yes, I know it's supposed to be some sort of Japanese flower) standing on end in gaudy yellow. The data fort is then almost twenty levels tall, but small in cross-section at the main gate. There is no ice on the outside. They're that confident.

The fort uses three-dimensional geometry better than any fort I know of, and with its unusual design, it can be easy to get lost. The maps I provide here are plan views, looking at the fort from its flat side.

Getting through the data walls or code gate is real tough. Personally, I've found it easier to run elsewhere, like **Arasaka Night City**, and penetrate their phone data base. It's a big one, so scan for the code name "Oda", and that'll give you the Arasaka corporate LDL for Tokyo. I'd publish it here, but it changes every month or so. Then use the Arasaka link to jump to Arasaka Tokyo and run the fort from the administrative lobe.

While you're there, see if you can't drop my name into Saburo's personal phone directory. And look around for Hu San Niang in their personnel or grey ops files; she's one of their agents. She almost killed me five years ago, tried to put a bullet in my brain while I was running the Net. I suspected, and had a computer-controlled stun gun hit her. It was a close call. Sure, looking her up would be dangerous for anyone, but she's such a sex bomb it's worth the risk. If you can't find Hu San Niang, then try the virtual Japan. It's a trip, especially if you insist on acting like a tourist looking for a McDonald's... the program can't handle it! I got the whole thing to crash two days before a big Arasaka meeting, and what do you know? The meeting got postponed 'due to illness'. Seems old Saburo didn't want to fess up that someone had bombed his pet program.

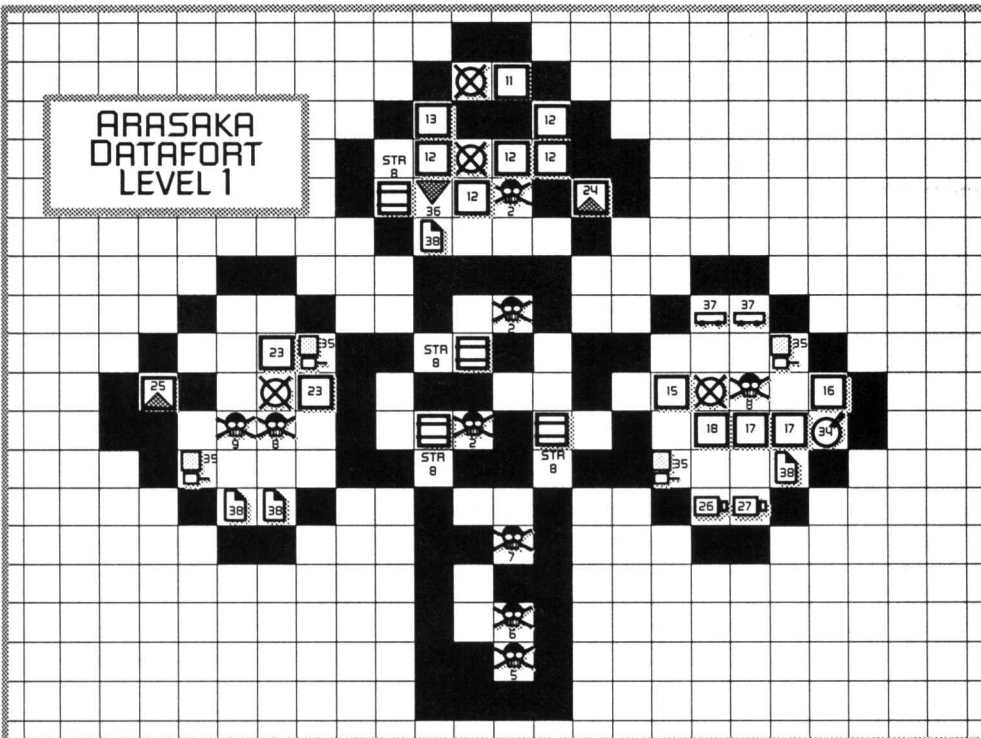
A word of warning: Arasaka has some really incredible black ice. Beware of it, but get a copy if at all possible. This is really state-of-the-art stuff. And their AI is the scariest thing I've ever met. It doesn't have a shape, really, it's just a color. The color is black. It fills your vision. It is the only thing I've ever met in the Net that can actually blind you, simply by filling in everything you see. I'd kill to know how they did that. In fact, I already have, but I still don't know.

AUTOREALITY

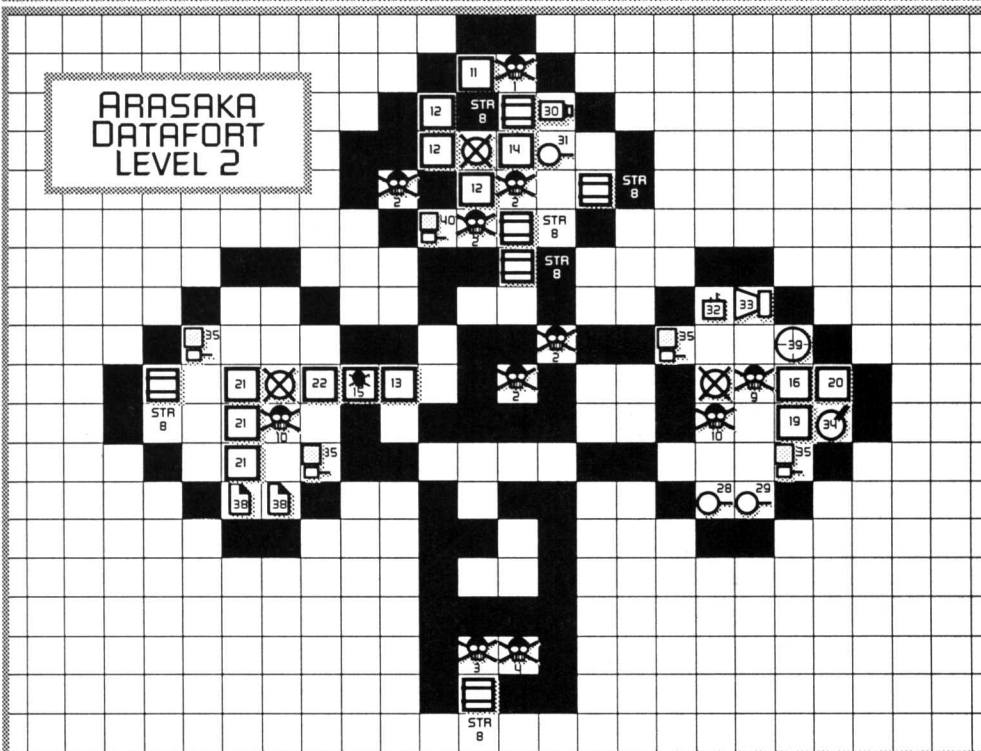
A natural consequence of Osaka's slip away from cheerless Japanese decor to the banal tourist kitch, independent Autoreality has virtual constructs of every popular car made in Japan. This is one of my very favorite places to go trashing systems, because I think using the Net to drive a car is incredibly stupid and a waste of great processing. It's like buying a cyberdeck to balance your checkbook.

A while back I found out (through a trace utility I'd placed in NTX's system) that a personal enemy of mine was going to test-drive the new Toyota Avante at Autoreality. They don't have any difficult ice, so I went in and did a little bit of creative reality modeling and patched in a JackAttack to the simulator. By the time the gal was halfway through the test drive, she'd sunk into the seat like it was hot tar, the floorboards were sucking noisily and coldly on her feet, the steering wheel had slithered in her car, and she was flying upside-down and sideways through Tokyo while her fingernails squirmed out of her fingers and turned into enraged yellow jackets. To top it all off, the mirror came loose and held itself in front of her terrified eyes, so she could only see the outside world through her peripheral vision.

ARASAKA
DATAFORT
LEVEL 1



ARASAKA
DATAFORT
LEVEL 2



CODESLINGER CLUB

My favorite place in Osaka is the Codeslinger Club, a place where real netrunners can go to watch the tourists mill about like sheep. The Codeslinger is a sort of hip-hop netrunners' BBS, with the environment changing constantly as new designs are loaded into the BBS' active data base. Any designs over a year old are purged from memory. The controlling program for the virtual reality randomly alters the surroundings among the most popular designs, but every design for every part of the BBS gets some show time at least once a month, even if only for five minutes.

1. Soullkiller program (from Night City Office) for Saburo Arasaka's translation to eternal life
 2. Hellhounds which attack anyone entering their square, without exception, period (no wrong steps inside the fort, not even for employees)
 3. Aardvark
 4. Pit Bull
 5. Dragon
 6. Killer VI
 7. Speedtrap (can sense up to the code gate)
 8. Stun
 9. Jack Attack
 10. VIRAL 15
 11. Memory for Saburo Arasaka's brain patterns
 12. Virtual Japan (some portions packed)
 13. 'Business Plan': looks like great stuff, but it's wholly fabricated
 14. 'Secret Plans for World Domination': really... must be fake, no one would leave it out like this, let alone with that label, right?
 15. Innovative black ice, packed, can be unpacked in response to intrusion
 16. Innovative black ice source code (locked, encrypted)
 17. Database of people wanted dead by Arasaka (big file on Bartmoss)
 18. Security memos, including recent alarms
 19. Grey ops: Arasaka's near-future plans for the people they want dead plus local stuff
 20. Transactions: Arasaka's recent activities regarding those they want dead and local actions
 21. Phone book from hell: all communications numbers, including many unlisted, known by Arasaka. Includes private LDL numbers for Arasaka offices, including subdivisions and covert
 22. Press release propaganda
 23. Recent business records
 24. The Hot Line which connects important Arasaka offices
 25. Arasaka company network link
- (Continued on page 82)

HYPERTEXT

(Continued from page 81)

- 26. Internal monitors
- 27. External monitors
- 28. Internal microphones
- 29. External microphones
- 30. Executive suite monitors
- 31. Executive suite microphones
- 32. Elevators
- 33. Public address system
- 34. Redundant alarm system
- 35. Office terminals
- 36. Saburo's holodisplay
- 37. Arasaka remote-control security robots
- 38. Printers
- 39. Controls for machine guns inside and outside the building
- 40. Saburo's terminal, which overrides anything else

Notes: All data walls at strength 10, all code gates at strength 8. At any time, 1d6 netrunners and 1d10 Killer VI's are roaming the data fort, either working or performing security.

AI: INT 21, Accounting 10, Cryotank 10, Machine Gun 10, Operate Arasaka Robot 10, System Knowledge 10, anything else you want that's functional

DISCOUNTS

Prices will usually be 20-25% off of standard prices for Codeslinger members.

WHERE TO LOOK

If you are looking with a SeeYa program at the right time, and in the right place (one of 8 different locales around Yokohama that the LDL truck uses), there is a 15% chance of catching the LDL in operation. The trouble is getting some meatboys to the location before it moves since it only operates for 1010 minutes at a time..

MOST FRIGHTENING NETRUNNERS ALIVE

These are Pro- and Top level runners, every one. They are the cream of (Continued on page 83)

The Codeslinger Club is where you can meet those netrunners who are considered by most to be loose cannons or out of touch with reality. Me, I hung out there all the time, and a lot of my most creative virtuals are there. Every year the Codeslingers host a contest to see who can create the best virtual personality in twelve hours. All entrants are traded or sold by the Codeslingers to maintain the BBS, but the contest winner gets a free copy of every individual.

The Codeslinger Club has one rule: NO BUSINESS. All activity in the Club is strictly pleasure, which means we hang around and watch the tourists and occasionally launch a program which changes everyone's icon to look like that of a nearby person.

FUTAYAMA DATA SYSTEMS, INC.

Futayama is a noted manufacturer of real nice software for data fortresses (SovOil is one of their biggest customers). They are in direct competition with Arasaka, because Arasaka designs and sells their own data forts staffed by Arasaka's own 'runners. In this respect, Futayama has chosen to cater to the independents: they sell their software directly to the client, who can use it as they see fit. This has made Futayama the company of choice for up-and-coming free-lance 'runners. I recommend them. Heck, I even occasionally pay them for the use of their programs, sometimes even with my own money. This does not imply I believe they own their programs, but I feel some tribute is due to these clever programmers who support folks like us, although my virgin mind is aghast that programmers like these would actually stoop to preferring money over fresh code or something. Soon they'll get sucked down into the slimy abyss beneath the grates, so take advantage of their software while you can.

Futayama's hold in Japan is tenuous, because anyone that Arasaka wants removed has a tough time of it. They have managed to hold on, though, by establishing a virtual software storefront in Osaka and giving **discounts** to anyone whose trace runs through the Codeslinger Club. This of course will make a lot of you weeflerunners think of getting to Futayama by sneaking through the Club without paying Codeslinger dues. We caught a guy doing that once, freeloading on our BBS to get a discount at a nice store. We followed his trace to Futayama's storefront. Coincidentally, he was asking the clerk (a virtual construct) about the efficacy of a deck crashing program. We contacted one of the sysops and gave him the straight scoop, and he reprogrammed the virtual to demonstrate the deck-burner... on the sleazoid's deck! It was a lot of fun, especially when Ras Angabo nailed the weef with a Spazz and we got to watch him deal with the realization of what was happening.

THE GLASS LDL

There's an LDL in the vicinity of Yokohama that the FACS uses to make runs to the cities of China without risking traces. As near as I can tell, it's a pirate link, because it doesn't show on any of Internet's maps, and further, its icon is concealed. You can find it if you have a good SeeYa program and know **where to look**, although it's not always there.

My guess is that the FACS has a truck with a pirate antenna in it, and they drive it to this certain point outside Yokohama, switch it on, run a stealthy feed program, and leave it on for five or ten minutes so their 'runners can do what they need to. Then they shut the antenna down and drive the truck back to a safe place so Internet doesn't arrange for the ESA to drop a rock on the place.

Woah. I just realized that you ought to be able to find this antenna and figure out where it is in realspace. Once you had its location some of your hotshot meatboy friends ought to be able to take it out or hijack it. If you do that, you'll be striking a blow against zaibatsus, for Internet, and especially for all those poor hackers in Hong Kong and Peking who live under the specter of untraceable zaibatsu raids. Think about it.

RONIN AROUND

This is a free-lance traders' BBS at the fringe of Tokyo frequented by some of the **most frightening netrunners alive**. They had some dedicated programmers spend some serious time in here; they've even got an animated holovid of me hanging in the main lounge!

To enter the BBS, you must enter the data fortress' foyer and present the door guard program with your membership number. The program then runs a trace on your line to check your phone number. If there's any question, it will call on a sysop. Further, if your trace runs to any company phone, an alarm will go off and you'll be attacked.

Inside, the virtual reality of the BBS is soft and off-white and a little fuzzy, as though photographed through a soft filter. It is very spacious. The catch is, if you don't have a membership



number, the virtual reality fills in with extra walls turning the BBS into a narrow, claustrophobic dark labyrinth. Most of the walls are illusory, but the members know to look for any netrunner who moves cautiously, looks paranoid, walks in gridlike patterns or keeps one hand out in front (to tell him whether the data walls he sees are real or fake). Intruders are not well-treated here.

There's a lot of great people to be found here, and any of them will help you if the price or cause is right. I remember once I went here after running against EBM. I'd stolen the ownership of a lot of money from a terrorist 'slush fund', so I went here and called out to everyone in the BBS that I'd give them a share. I sure didn't want any. Everyone ended up with over four thousand euro. Then, to celebrate, we launched a massive run against Arasaka's Tokyo data fort. Sure, it's a nearly impossible run for any single person, but we had over three dozen netrunners involved. We ran amok all over their data, and one by one each netrunner had to punch out for fear of getting brainwiped. When we were down to about five 'runners, I hid myself using one of Edger's intrusion programs and waited.

They dumped the last of the 'runners out and three hours later their guard dropped as they set about rebuilding their data. Then I started sneaking around again. That's how I was able to get such a detailed map of the Arasaka facility, including some of Saburo Arasaka's private files. These were well-locked, though, and I was only partly through them before I got caught.

ATLANTIS

The free-wheeling flea market south of the US battlegrounds; the bargain bin of the Net where the corporations and governments are balanced against each other.

OVERVIEW

"Get them while you can, Pit Bull version 3.31, only eight copies left, c'mon, folks, only 600 euro apiece and I'm taking a loss on each one..."

— unknown hawker, Panama City

Atlantis is a fun place to be, especially if your brain isn't too well-connected with reality. Its **border changes with unnerving frequency**. I was on one run in Dakar, trying to edit a Pan-African government report on waste with a file I had of brain surgery, and when I came out I was no longer in Atlantis, but in Afrikani, so I hopped up to the Eurotheatre and dropped a bunch of sabotage all using Afrikani-style coding. Within a week or so, the border had shifted back again under European pressure.

Not only does the border change a lot, by as many as 1000 realspace miles in a day, but the medium shifts, too. Every so often there's a sort of **ripple** that passes through the Atlantis virtuals, changing things subtly, or sometimes not so subtly. I know one 'runner who was invisible inside Rio Meatwagon's office in Bogota when one of those ripples came through and stripped her cloaking, leaving her bare-icoded in the wind. The reason is simple: the Atlantis AI is schizophrenic.

See, the Atlantis region is controlled by the Central American Federation, which is to say, a clumsy aggregate of corporations. This has resulted in a sort of patchwork AI with multiple nodes of consciousness roaming around the Net, each sustaining the region to the best of its abilities. Whenever two or more of these nodes get together, they blend themselves for consistency, but whenever they're apart, they diverge. Sometimes one AI passes through an area just vacated by another, and if they've diverged, there'll be a ripple effect as the new AI node reforms the virtual to its sense of 'right'. The AIs don't do this deliberately; it's every bit as unconscious to them as our heartbeat is to us. [Personally, I don't believe in Net AIs, let alone one with multiple points of consciousness. I think Rache is describing his own mind here. - SM]

Atlantis' virtual environment is the most old-fashioned, largely similar to the old 'Tronnic interface of the last decade. It's supposed to look cool and hip and high-tech, but mostly it feels claustrophobic and desperately stylized.

Atlantis, like Pacifica, is primarily empty, with periodic city grids here and there, and only a few truly urbanized Net areas. Large parts of Atlantis are in fact covered by the Amazon Jungle, the Atlantic Ocean, the CAF Insurance Group, the Andes Mountains, automatic weapons, and other environments that are not terribly conducive to high-tech hacking.

Net connections cross these empty places, and these connections appear as high-tech hallways from old-fashioned science fiction classics. The angular traceries on the walls of the corridors fail to add interest to an otherwise featureless funnel.

A curious side-effect is that, unlike other areas of the Net, these corridors do not increase in perceived elevation as line resistance increases; they constrict in size. Thus, the cable that con-

ATLANTIS

HYPertext

(Continued from page 82)

the Pacifica and T/C crop so the GM can make them as tough as he needs them to be. This is a great place to find top runners for hiring or information exchange, but if you don't know what you're doing, it's easy to appear the fool.

BORDER CHANGES WITH UNNERVING FREQUENCY

This is one of the single most unique characteristics of the Atlantis grid. Basically, Atlantis switching stations and ISDNs are not very dependable. When rough weather or bad connections send them down, the nearest neighboring switching stations pick up the load. Thus Eurotheatre and Rustbelt stations are often carrying Atlantis signals and placing their own I-G codes on them. Because of this, the Atlantis border has been known to shift up to one entire World Net Scale grid space (or 106/2 regional spaces as shown on the regional map on page 74), either North/South or East/West (but not both at the same time, and never more than one grid). This is especially common (15% chance per week) on the Carribean and Atlantic edges. Be careful, or you may find yourself in the Eurotheatre when you really don't want to be.

RIPPLE

This is obviously something messing with the I-G algorithms in the Atlantis grid. Exactly what is up to the Ref. They get an average of one "ripple" every 45 days, and if a netrunner is operating when one hits, there is a 1% chance that it will do some random havoc to the user's software like changing their icon, disabling the current function, or dropping the user out of the Net entirely (Ref's call).

SOME STATIC WILL BUILD UP,

"Every so often" can translate into a 05% chance per day of something like this happening. The only real effect is to COOL as the lines shift around. If a 'runner fails a Average COOL roll, then they may lose their connection. or at least be at -5 to Initiative for the next 6 rounds as the line stabilizes.

BODYWEIGHT LINE FEED STATION

That's the Bodyweight-brand Life/Support® unit (Chromebook 1, pg.6). Just 500eb.

BLACK MARKET TRADING

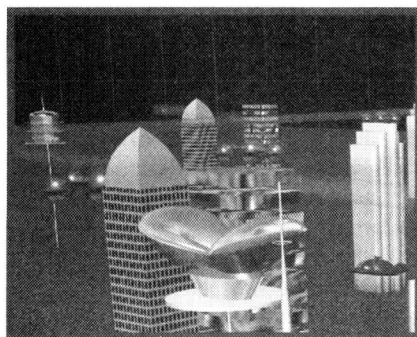
Prices here will vary from 60% to 120% of baseline (50+1D6 x10%), but quality may vary quite a bit so buyer beware.

nects Bogota to Quito appears as a large, roomy corridor with bright neon wiring imbedded in the walls. On the other hand, the radio link from Brasilia to Ascension can be quite weak, especially when the weather's bad. I've squeezed through that connection when the perceived corridor was only a foot wide. It felt like I was being injected! I've also had garbled transmissions damage software and I've been dropped out of the Net when too many users tried to access a single weak link. Once I was dropped out but had the interface program still running in my cyberdeck. Took me ten minutes to figure out why I couldn't move. I thought I'd blown my cerebellum. But no, I checked in my bottom drawer, and there it was, grey and healthy. I keep my brain in a box with a bunch of mothballs. Keeps it safe when I'm not using it.

The city grids in Atlantis are very similar to their connections, but instead of being small sci-fi hallways they are large sci-fi warehouses. In the city grids, high-resistance transmissions are once again represented by the familiar virtual elevation gain. Every so often **some static will build up**, and large sections of a city grid will shoot to the sky accompanied by the sound of screaming weeflerunners. When I was younger and had a coarser sense of humor, I'd muck with the power company just to make the base grid lines shoot up and down at whim. Now I'm more mature and my humor's much dryer, so I engender the idea in other netrunners' brains.

Many of the data forts in the region, especially those owned or run by natives, have the same sort of pre-millennium second-rate sci-fi architecture. On the other hand, the European and Asian conglomerates' icons stand out like a sore thumb here, so even a few foreign companies have changed their appearance to better blend in.

Finally, Net icons here are the least trustworthy of anywhere in the world or beyond. For some reason, the Atlantean netrunners seem obsessed with building themselves elaborate robotic icons for their activities. I think they think they can get away with more if no one thinks they're intelligent. If you meet a human-looking netrunner in Atlantis, it's either a foreigner who doesn't mind looking that way, or an alien from outer space who doesn't know how to better camouflage itself in Atlantis. Or you're hallucinating. I've been known to from time to time, when I've been patched in for a few days running. That's why I bought myself a **Bodyweight Line Feed Station**. It keeps a steady drip of water and nutrients going into my body while I'm on an extended run, and I don't have to worry about going into convulsions or something while I'm in the Net. Of course, one time I let my Line Feed run dry, so I bought a five gallon carboy to hold the IV solution.



LIVING IN ATLANTIS

Atlantis is a good place for netrunners to earn their virtual wings. It's a wide-open area largely unpatrolled by Netwatch. The corporate and governmental enforcers aren't as strong an alliance as they want you to believe. There is a lot of black market trading going on here, and it's supported by the CAF. They know it brings people to their region, it allows them first crack at any interesting information, and they can keep an eye out for their neighbors, either to prevent their neighbor's secrets from being sold or to buy those self-same secrets first.

If you want to be safest, don't sell any secrets you stole from any Atlantis data fort, because it's hard to predict whether they'll buy you or fry you. The best items to sell here are your own programming, or secrets plundered from any of Atlantis' neighbors. Personally, I wouldn't take any of these guys' cash for your stuff, but their coding is well worth it.

The only danger you'll generally face is if you go stepping on someone's toes or trying to use some black ice on another netrunner. Get someone mad and they'll likely try to take you out quick and quiet, but use black ice yourself and you're likely to bring the CAF down on your head. You can avoid this by hustling, staying cool, gauging your buyer, and being prepared to take a hit instead of fighting. On the other hand, if your black ice is good, then you can de-rez them quick and move out before the CAF can respond.

COUNTRIES AND CORPORATIONS

[Even though Bartmoss left it out, I feel I should talk about the CAF and its corporations.

[When the CAF was formed back in 2006, it was nothing but a bunch of tiny countries who were tired of being beat up by the DEA, local drug lords, and insurgents. By forging an effective cooperative treaty, the CAF stabilized their region and opened up greater markets by creating a regional trade network. They were also better able to deal with terrorists and the like since the borders were opened to police actions.

[Each country had a few pet industries which they had enticed to relocate with promises of cheap labor and no government controls. The corporations, used to getting a free hand, were surprised when they didn't get the run of the country. Granted, the corps have no controls, but they also have no recourse to fielding military units, stock fraud, or other such typical business activities. In other words, in Central America, the corporations are, at least to a point, still accountable.

[There were a few small attempts to overcome this, but the governments of the CAF acted quickly and in unison, and the other local corporations backed the government against the upstart, so these tests of power failed. One or two corporations moved out again, but most found it profitable to operate in spite of the restrictions on their freedom.

[Thus, in the CAF, the governments still wield the actual power. The corporations each exert influence (because they bankroll the CAF's activities), but the balance ensures that neither achieves dominance. The closest analogy I can think of is that the corporations are the arm, but the governments are the hand. The arm can aim a gun badly, but can't pull the trigger, and the hand can't shoot what the arm won't let it. - SM]

POWER PLAYERS

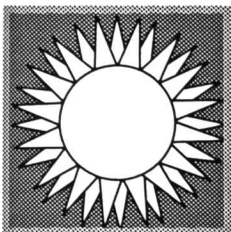
ARASAKA

This ugly leech raises its head yet again, operating out of their black data fort in Rio de Janeiro. They are not a part of the CAF, nor do they wish to be. They are out to dominate the area with their typical covert takeover operations. Thus far, they have managed to cultivate friends or servants among several of the

CAF members and their supporting corporations.

Arasaka will undoubtedly soon try to take control of the Rio de Janeiro city grid, and in fact all of Brazil, because Brazil is still only a protectorate of the CAF, and if Arasaka can stabilize the country through 'gifts' of security consulting and implementation, then they'll be able to dominate the government and have it repudiate the application submitted by the Provisional Government in 2011.

Curiously, shortly after Arasaka tendered an offer to the Brazilian government, terrorist activities increased. Funny, isn't it? No, it's not. Arasaka's creating the pressure, and when they get the **contract** (in exchange for concessions) they'll miraculously find a cure. I don't know how we can stop them, folks. The Big Black is about to take over the largest country in South America, and consolidate their hold on untold natural resources.



CENTRAL AMERICAN FEDERATION

[The member nations of the CAF are: Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, and Venezuela. The **CAF** has several protectorates, as well: Brazil, Chile, Cuba, El Salvador, French Guyana, Guyana, Surinam, and Uruguay. Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, and Peru have no connection with the CAF. To be complete, I should also list each of the Caribbean islands, but there are so many, and they're so small, that I hardly think their exclusion is of any note. - SM]

Actually, the name these guys gave themselves is a little bit of a misnomer. From what I understand, and from the way these guys act, their name should not be interpreted as the Federation of Central America, but as the Central Federation of America. They do not exclude North or South American countries, and in fact Paraguay is a member state. There are also a few Central American countries who are not members.

The CAF was originally conceived after the Collapse when the Latin America saw itself as the New America. Certainly the relocation of many industries to Latin sites did a lot to enhance their self-image. The abandonment of the US by these same industries also did a lot to fuel the Collapse, which, in their corporate minds, retroactively justified their departure. For this I shall never forgive them, because I lost some good friends in the Collapse.

The CAF is a union of independent-minded states, and acts with every bit as much coherence as one might expect from any committee. Each member of the CAF (as well as each corporation) has their own pet netrunners keeping an eye on business, mostly clandestinely.

ORBITAL AIR

Orbital Air is one of the major corporations in the area which supports the CAF. Their major installation is in Ecuador, but they also have support offices in several other locations just to keep the area stable. Orbital Air has a close alliance (at least in this region) with World Sat Communications.

They are a big factor here, and part of their goal is to make sure no other corporation gets as big in this region as they are. Orbital Air has been

CONTRACT

Contract for what, you ask? Why for maintaining internal security, of course. With Brazil's government in chaos, there isn't much in the way of military forces to keep control of anything. While the CAF is trying to get a multi-national force together to police the country, it will take at least a year because of factional in-fighting and national paranoia. So in the meantime, Arasaka is bidding to become a paramilitary police force that could keep Brazil from going up in a bonfire of factionalism and guerilla warfare. As Rache suspects, however, Arasaka is doing much of this destabilization itself, and can quickly calm it once in position. This will leave them as the only major corporate player with military powers in South Am. Think about it...

CAF

CAF Netrunners are mostly (80%) Mid-level runners, with a few Pro-level thrown in to keep 'runners on their toes. They probably won't mess with you unless something obviously illegal is going on, or if you have something THEY want.



HYPERTEXT

TOUGHER THAN EVER

These would be Pro-level runners with Interface 7 and really big egos. Count on them being in other runners' faces if they so much as look at the Orbital Air datafort wrongly.

NETRUNNER SUPPORT SYSTEM

The Riolife Radio by Rio Meatwagon is an EEG/EKG monitor-warning system that will send a signal to the nearest Rio office in the event of the Netrunner's physical or mental death. (The body must reach at least Death State 1 or the EEG must deviate at least 50% from norm.) The device costs 300eb/month, is plugged into a peripheral port on the cyberdeck, and contains various body leads for sensors. It has only a 10% failure rate (more expensive systems may have half that). To take one out, you either have to wreck the cyberdeck (Firestarter, etc.) or make an intrusion into the deck and shut it off with a Controller.

PAYMENT

So what is the going rate on a scoop? Well here are some broad guidelines:

Simple tip	50eb
Hot tip	500eb
Good local story	500eb
Hot local story	1500eb
Good national story	3000eb
Hot national story	5000eb
Red hot international story	10,000eb
or whatever you can get for it.	

often accused of being incompetent after the First Corporate War, but my experience running their data forts tells me that these guys are **tougher than ever**, and proud of their corporate heritage.



RIO MEATWAGON

A thinly-disguised spin-off of REO Meatwagon, Rio Meatwagon purports to be an independent company, but any careful analysis of their spreadsheets (hacking) will reveal the truth.

Rio Meatwagon has done its best to keep Trauma Team International out of the entire region. This has resulted in a curious alliance between Trauma Team and Arasaka in Brazil. Arasaka needs medical support (they can't get it from the CAF-aligned Rio Meatwagon), and TTI needs to get a foot in the door somewhere before someone can shoot it off.

One interesting service offered by Rio Meatwagon is their **netrunner support system**. You buy a special adapter kit to put a beacon on your cyberdeck, and if you get flatlined, they'll come and pick you up. If you have any brain left, they'll even resuscitate you. If not, then rest assured, your parts will go to help other people more intelligent than yourself.

Of course, this means that any Atlantean runner you tangle with is liable to have a Riolife Radios. They're not too hard to take out, as long as you have a reasonable program or you do a little micronetrun on your opponent's deck. Whenever I flatlined someone in Atlantis, I always took the extra time to make sure they stayed dead. I hate having to kill people twice. It's a waste of time.



SOVOIL

SovOil, like Arasaka, is waiting in the wings. They are firmly entrenched in Havana and Rio de Janeiro, and have their eyes fixed on the Venezuelan oil fields. Thus far the CAF has been able to resist their advances, but they're squeezing the Venezuelan companies real hard in the oil market.

SovOil is a tough customer. If you don't believe me, just read your corporate history. The South China Sea wasn't just a slap-and-tickle contest, and the Russian oil czars' appetites have gotten bigger than ever. Of course, after the loss of the South China Sea fields, you know Petrochem will do everything in their power to prevent a SovOil monopoly in this area.

WORLD NEWS SERVICE



WNS has the inside track here, with major offices in Mexico City, Caracas, and Rio de Janeiro, and good contacts among influential people. Whenever news breaks, the WNS people will be among the first on the scene. To better ensure that they get the story first, WNS has virtual news rooms in every city grid in Atlantis. Here netrunners can barter their stories to WNS faster than would be possible even with cellphone systems.

WNS does not pay up front for stories, but instead pays on the 'post-perceived value.' This means that you don't get a price for your scoop until after the story has been aired. Most cyberpunks would balk at such business arrangements, but WNS is serious about trying to get the information monopoly in this part of world, so they're very good about **payment**. As long as they keep up their good will and credit record, all area hackers will be giving them the scoop first, and they know that if they ever smear their own credibility, they'll pay in the long run.

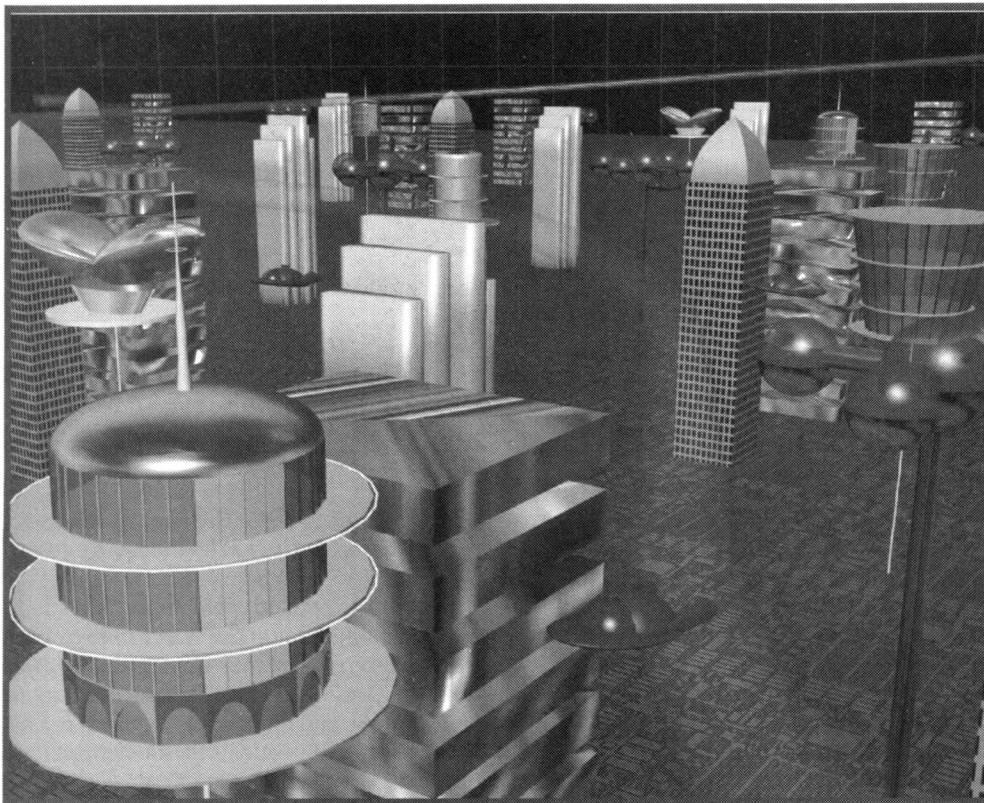
WNS doesn't really care who the story is about, even if it's about one of the local CAF governments. They're the most reliable buyers for interesting information. Me, I always traded information for information. I discovered a lot of interesting stuff that way.



WORLD SAT

The WorldSat Communications Network has its Atlantis regional headquarters in Brasilia, although it keeps a very large branch office in Ecuador, in the bottom floors of the Orbital Air building there. The cooperation between Orbital Air and WorldSat (at least in Atlantis) is almost unheard-of in modern business.

WorldSat is one of the CAF-influential corporations that is at least tacitly supporting Arasaka in Brazil. They know that if Arasaka makes a major bid for control of the country, it'll be a big news story, and WorldSat is sitting pretty to charge all the major networks a lot of money to use their Brasilia satellite link.



CITY GRIDS

HAVANA

If ever there was a city that could be considered on the fringe of the United States, Havana is it. They've got a reasonable facsimile of a government installed doing a reasonable facsimile of **strangling the country**, they've got communist guerrillas in the mountains fighting because they like to, and they've got twelve-year-old kids prostituting themselves to fat corporate pedophiles.

Basically, Havana has become the place to go for US-based corporates without ethics. Here they can gamble, have cheap sex, buy slaves, take drugs, and do whatever they want with the knowledge that it's real, not a virtual. And it's located so close to the Florida coast that an energetic sociopath could do it all over the course of a single weekend getaway.

As a result of this proximity and lack of regulation, Havana has turned into the US netrunners' flea market. Again, the Havana LDL is located conveniently close to everywhere in the US. It's only a single hop on the global grid from Seattle or even Honolulu. Runners from all over come here to pass secrets and programs around, because anything they want to do is legal in Havana.

At the same time, corporate counter-intrusion runners know that Havana is the place to be, and if someone has stolen something of value, they'll look for him here. Every time you downlink from the Havana LDL you have to 'run the gauntlet', which is to say, pass by the corporate netrunners and all their programs. Last time I went through there, there must have been over 100 of the various dog programs, each looking for that one particular brain wave. So of course I had to try my prototype **Bone program**. It's basically a utility variant of the Wizard's Book; it creates a brain-wave pattern and modulates the frequency and noise to generate an endless variety of patterns. Within seconds, I had half or more of the Hellhounds all worked up, trying to trace the line of the Bone program, but since I'd copied the program into a local processor, there was nothing for them to trace. It was hysterical! All these corporate netrunners were running around trying to get their programs back on line, early versions without error compensation were de-rezzing, and the whole place was in chaos. Of course, I had to do a little extra, so I fired a Murphy at each of the corporate toads I could see, and suddenly the place was full of utilities, spreadsheets, and - uh oh - lots of randomly-targeted black ice. I grabbed someone's password file (it was just sitting there, trying to run itself) and got out of there while I could.

So anyway, Havana is a fast-paced black market, but it is not as free-wheeling as the rest of Atlantis. It's a cold-hearted town filled with the desperate, the stupid, or the over-confident. Prices are high, and murders are common. It's fun, but you better be careful.

ATLANTIS

HYPERTEXT

STRANGLING THE COUNTRY

*Castro's regime ended around the turn of the century, and the corporations moved in to provide a "free market economy" to Cuba. There is more money, but less freedom than ever. See *Home of the Brave*, (pg. 54) for details.*

BONE PROGRAM

MU 4, STR 4, cost 270eb
Upon activation, this program begins broadcasting modulated variations on a basic, pre-programmed EEG, and will continue until shut off or de-rezzed. All Hellhounds within one subgrid are attracted directly to the 'runner (or system) operating the Bone routine. All other Dog-series programs must win a program STR + D10 vs. program STR + 1D10, or be attracted. The attraction "broadcast" does not work through a code gate. If you want to attract things from inside a datafortress, you have to go inside. What the 'runner does with all these attracted programs is his problem (he prepared...).

INVALIDATED THEIR PIRATE LDL UPLINK

This was done with a specialized program of Rache's own invention. It's never gone on the market because it's more of a help to law-enforcement 'runners than to cyberpunks. Be warned.

MU 7, STR 5, Programming Difficulty 46+ (write it yourself!) Anti-System, Alarm functions; Movement, Trace, Recognition options

If you think your opponent is using the Long Distance Link function of his Menu to illegally get to wherever he is, launch this program at him. First, it must make a Stealth/Evasion roll to beat any anti-trace protection the target has (anti-trace only, not anti-detect!). If successful, it then backtracks the runner's trace to the last LDL he used. When it arrives at the LDL, it makes an anti-system roll (STR + D10 vs. LDL Security Lvl. + D10). If successful, it alerts the LDL that an illegal patch is being made. This forces the target runner to make a new security check roll for that LDL (*CP2020* pg.144, current printing), with the usual consequences if he fails...

PANAMA CITY

Panama City is the best market in Atlantis. Netrunner deaths are rarer here than anywhere else in Atlantis, partly because the CAF cultivates this reputation. Even if you try to sell a corporate secret to a secret corporate, the most he's likely to do is slap you with a fine. The down side of this is that the market is so frantic that the prices are lower. It's definitely a buyer's market, and I think that's why the CAF has so carefully built this image. It's a safe place to sell, so everyone goes there to sell their stuff, and the buyers can pick and choose what they want. As a result, great stuff is going for bargain basement prices.

I never go to Panama City because everyone wants to pay with money. No one has any code they want to trade or anything. Stupid febrile little financial gluttons.

QUITO

This Ecuadorian city grid is only really notable for one thing: it's the easiest way to get into Orbitville that I know of. The CAF security here is typically lax, and the Internet LDL is right smack on the equator. From here, it's an easy jump to one of the WorldSat geosynch satellites, and nine times out of ten you won't even have to foot the bill if you have a decent LDL Uplink utility.

Actually, I take that back. There's a good second reason to go here. The equator effects are great. Get two virtual cans of water and punch holes in the bottom of each of them. Then hold them at arm's length while you stand on the equator. (It's that big red stripe; you can't miss it.) The virtual water will drain out of the cans. This, of course, forces the AIs to calculate coriolis effects, which they do quite nicely if somewhat absent-mindedly, and bingo! The water in each hand swirls in opposite directions while it drains. Okay, so maybe it's not that great to those of you who've never felt that happen with your bloodstream, but let me tell you, it's a real flashback for me to the time I was strung up by Ecuadorian corporate-sponsored terrorists and getting my legs cut off. [I cut the rest of this, folks. It's gross, and I can personally vouch that Rache never had cyberlegs. So why did he write it? Side effects of being freeze-dried, I suppose. - SM]

Quito is in the perfect position to become a new battleground. Orbital Air has a major station here, to facilitate jumps into outer space. Likewise, it's an important link for Internet, who I wouldn't mess with even for a transfusion of anti-freeze. Should EBM ever try to exact vengeance for the First Corporate War, it'll happen here. When SovOil tries to take Caracas, it's likely that Petrochem will put in a southern command post here, because Panama is too hostile to the American giant, and this location would give them a good edge to the rest of the continent. If anyone ever tries to take on Internet, this would be a good place to start, where the security is lax. So keep Quito's number handy; it might be on the front pages and the front lines any moment now.

Speaking of fronts, did I ever tell you about the time I set up a fake information brokerage in Bogota? I found this corporate who was going on a cruise to Europe, so I broke into his villa, rerouted my line through his home modem, and built a virtual storefront around his place. Then I made ten gazillion copies of Glue and scammed his credit to bankroll press releases on all the major bulletin boards about this new information broker's place - highest prices guaranteed! Predictably, the weeflerunners stampeded in the door! They were all desperate to sell, and none even tried to check out who I was. I don't believe that naiveté like that should be allowed to survive, so I nailed each of them with Glue, then I traced their lines and **invalidated their pirate LDL uplink** patches. Suddenly, every weef was trapped, facing several more copies of Glue just waiting to hit them when the first program de-rezzed, and knowing that he was paying full long-distance charges to Internet while hung among a bunch of other panicking weefs as Rache Bartmoss capered like a loon playing the *William Tell Overture* in a virtual baritone. There followed the most beautiful chorus of whining and pleading, the like of which I have never heard since I pirated the congressional surveillance tapes from the days before the Collapse. You know the tapes, I'm sure, where the banks are pleading to index loans to devaluation, and the senators are considering printing more money. Anyway, I set the baritone to continue playing *Workin' In a Coal Mine* by itself, then I left them to their own with only a few dozen copies of Glue to keep them company. Oh yeah, the corporate had an electrically-controlled jacuzzi, so I overrode its water level sensor and switched it on.

RIO DE JANEIRO

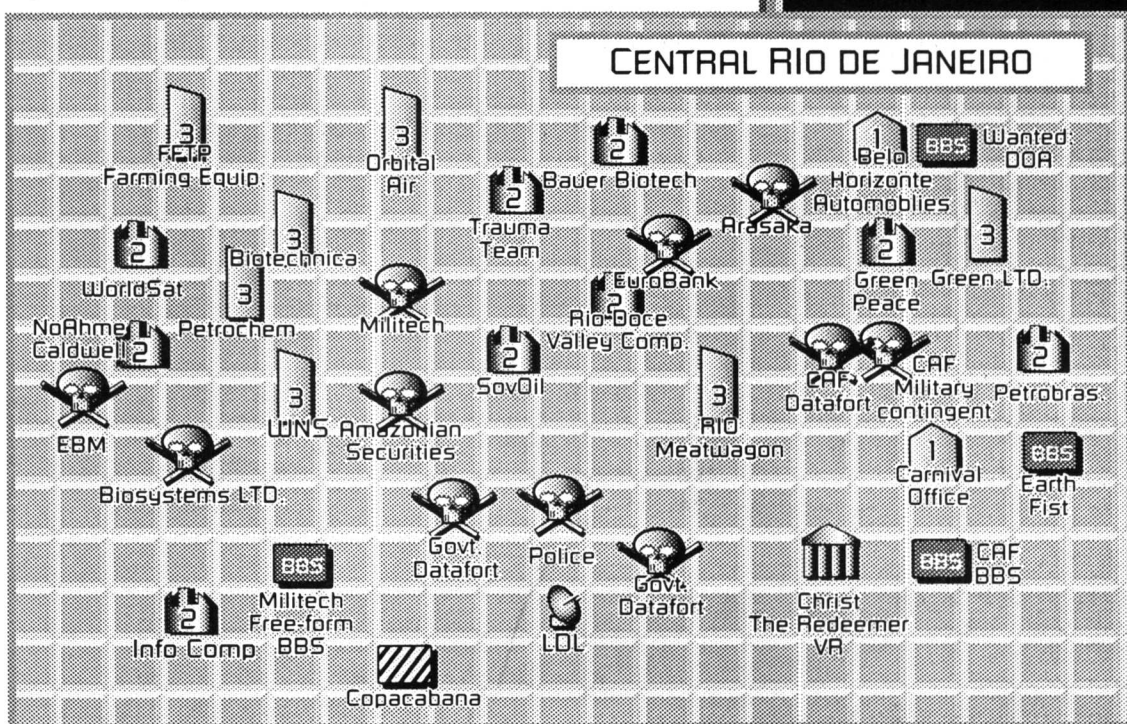
Rio is the deadliest of the city grids in Atlantis. It's not the most dangerous (Havana probably takes that prize), but the stakes are life or death here, all the time. In case you've had your brain secreted away in a safe deposit box for twenty years, most of South America is being ripped apart by civil wars, and Brazil is no exception.

Brazil is run by an extremist left-wing military junta. The other sides in the power struggle are several corporations including Arasaka, eco-terrorists operating out of the Amazon Basin, and conservative reactionaries backed by Argentine fascists. If this gives you the idea that the civil

unrest inside Brazil is confusing and dangerous, you're right.

Everyone, it seems, has a base of some sort in Rio de Janeiro. The 'legitimate' government is, of course, installed there, as is Arasaka. The rebels have several front operations. The eco-terrorists run the Net like real runners, patching in to others' systems. All of the corporations involved in the struggle have offices there, including Biosystems Ltd., which seems to have reached an uneasy truce with the eco-terrorists with their purchase of 23,000 acres of rain forest as a dedicated preserve. Control of the Orbital Air office has supposedly been given to the outspoken Douglas Moran, the notorious takeover specialist, in response to Arasaka's recent moves. International Electric Corporation has announced that they'll build an office here.

In short, Rio Jan is an area which is rapidly filling with savages. This, of course, means that there's quite a call for free-wheeling purveyors of information and such. It also means that if you get caught, you'll be killed.



POINTS OF INTEREST

practice knocking teeth out of CAF gaffers trying to earn their machismo.

In realspace the canal zone is a festering junkyard of ammo and automatic weapons wrapped tightly with razor wire and land mines, festooned with rockets and searchlights, and garnished with an extra large chunk of ground attack helicopters. Such a festive place.

And the weevils are munching away in the Net, too, folks. **The big black cube datafort** outside Panama City is the high and mighty limpet fort of Uncle Sam. Beware this place. It's not a friendly place to be. They change their netrunners' icons daily (the old uniform-of-the-day routine), and if you're wearing the wrong icon when you enter the fort, you are subject to immediate lobe fries courtesy of the fine American taxpayer, as enacted via the Canal Emergency Resolution of 2009. I like my lobes where they are (in a box in my bottom drawer), so I never try to sneak in here without serious protection.

Every so often the CAF or some lowbrow vanity machomob tries to penetrate the canal regions of the occupation force. This usually precipitates in a brief firefight, and if the base commander got up cranky that morning he launches a punitive counterstrike against some military target like a fish processing plant or something. More recently, the combat programmers have taken to attacking installations in the Net as vengeance for CAF activity, which has made Panama City a pretty interesting place to be at times. Dig up some good dirt on the CAF, though, and the cyberpsychos in the canal zone will pay some good bucks, and maybe even accept you into their ranks. Yeah, right.

CARIBBEAN VIRTUALS

All those little islands in the Caribbean were tourist attractions for many years. Lately, though, the Net with all its virtuals has created a lot of competition for them. As a result, most of the hackers on these islands have developed their own virtuals to enhance tourism within the Net. This allows them to show you what the island is like, so you'll take a flight there or something and then they can pick your pocket.

THE CANAL DATA FORT

The Amazing United States Marching Weevil Drum and Bugle Corpses still hold onto the Panama Canal Zone in spite of the best efforts of several recent liberal Presidents and the CAF Combined Strike Force. Yes, folks, every single one of the US Munchies gets to get a little canal work done, where they practice

THE BIG BLACK CUBE DATA FORT

This is an intimidating fort with top-of-the-line black ice and psychotic sysops, so anyone attempting to crack it should be ground to pulp. But if you want to let them have a go at it, build it with Datawalls of 9, 2x 5 CPU mainframes (the government believes in redundancy), and all the howling-mad military operators you need. Give 'em hell.

HYPERTEXT

WNS DATA FORT

CPU: 4, Cost: 340 Keb, INT: 12,
Data Wall STR: 5, AI? Yes.

Locations:

1-3. Superrealistic VR News Office
w/ 20 reporters-secretaries
10MU ea.

4. WNS South Am Databases. 10MU

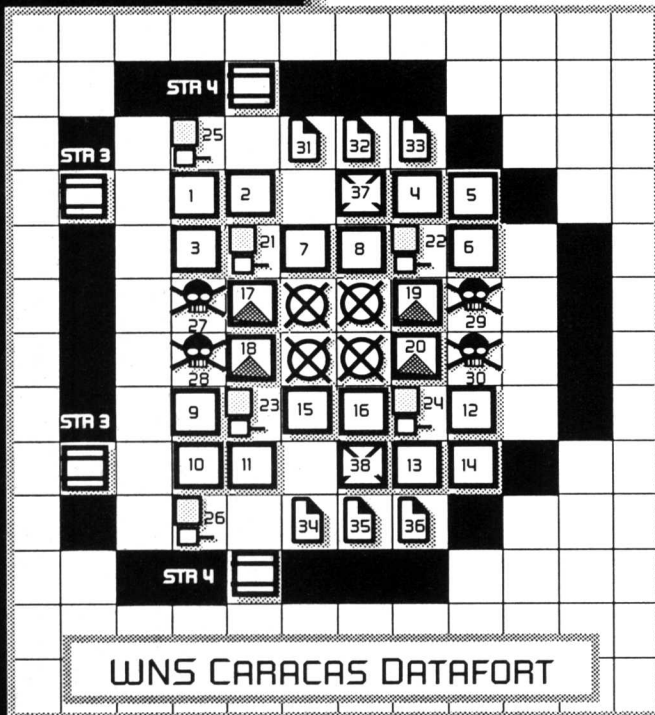
5-6. Transaction & Business

Records 10MU ea.

7-8. As per 1-3 10MU ea

9-11. Inter office data & Reporters'
info dump 10MU ea.

12-14. Defence Program Storage
10MU ea



WNS CARACAS DATAFORT

- 15-16. General storage 10MU ea.
- 17. LDL to Panama City
- 18. LDL to WNS Rio De Jainero
- 19. LDL to WNS London
- 20. LDL to WNS Washington
- 21-24. Sysop & Editors Terminals
- 25-26. Walk-in Terminals
- 27-30. Various Dog Series Programs
- 31-36. Disk writer and Paper printers
- 37-38. Vidboards for tracking stories

Notes: There will be 2 editor/
sysops around at all times, plus 2-
12 netrunner/reporters, and 2-20
AI-controlled virtual individuals.

They also have alternative braindances which are very good. The Spiritual Experience virtual in Barbados is out of this world (literally). The Virgin Islands programmers have got some imaginative prostitution virtuals... I say imaginative, because what they do is not entirely in the realm of possibility. But my favorites are all found in the Cenobite Mindbender Board of Puerto Rico and Jamaica's Pay'n'Play BBS. They've got the weirdest things there. I strongly suggest you try the Exploding Head virtual, as well as the Rubber Soul, Being Eaten by Ants, Boneless Crawl, the Drug Overdose, and, my personal favorite, Organ Recital. Last year, I helped the guys in Puerto Rico program their latest concept, Swallowing Your Own Foot, which I understand will be released shortly. [Sick stuff. Remember, netrunners, cyberpsychosis can happen to anyone. - SM]

PANAMA BAZAAR

This is a large, straightforward virtual made exclusively for the trading of black market information. There is only one virtual in the bazaar, and that is a virtual tent. Everyone in the bazaar has one, the only differences between them being color and patterns.

The Panama Bazaar has it all under one roof, where the CAF can keep quiet tabs on everything that happens. It can be hard to spot the CAF netrunners who monitor the sales, so its best to look for runners who seem to be overly-calm, neither desperate nor paranoid. Most of the real sellers are desperate to turn their catches into something they can take home. The buyers are all cagey and suspicious, and loathe to reveal anything about themselves.

WNS CLEARING HOUSE

The WNS virtual in Caracas is typical of their virtual offices throughout the region. It's done up as a classic 20th-Century news room, complete with old wood filing slots and candlestick telephones. Atlantis being the tropics, there's a large ceiling fan which stirs the murky air.

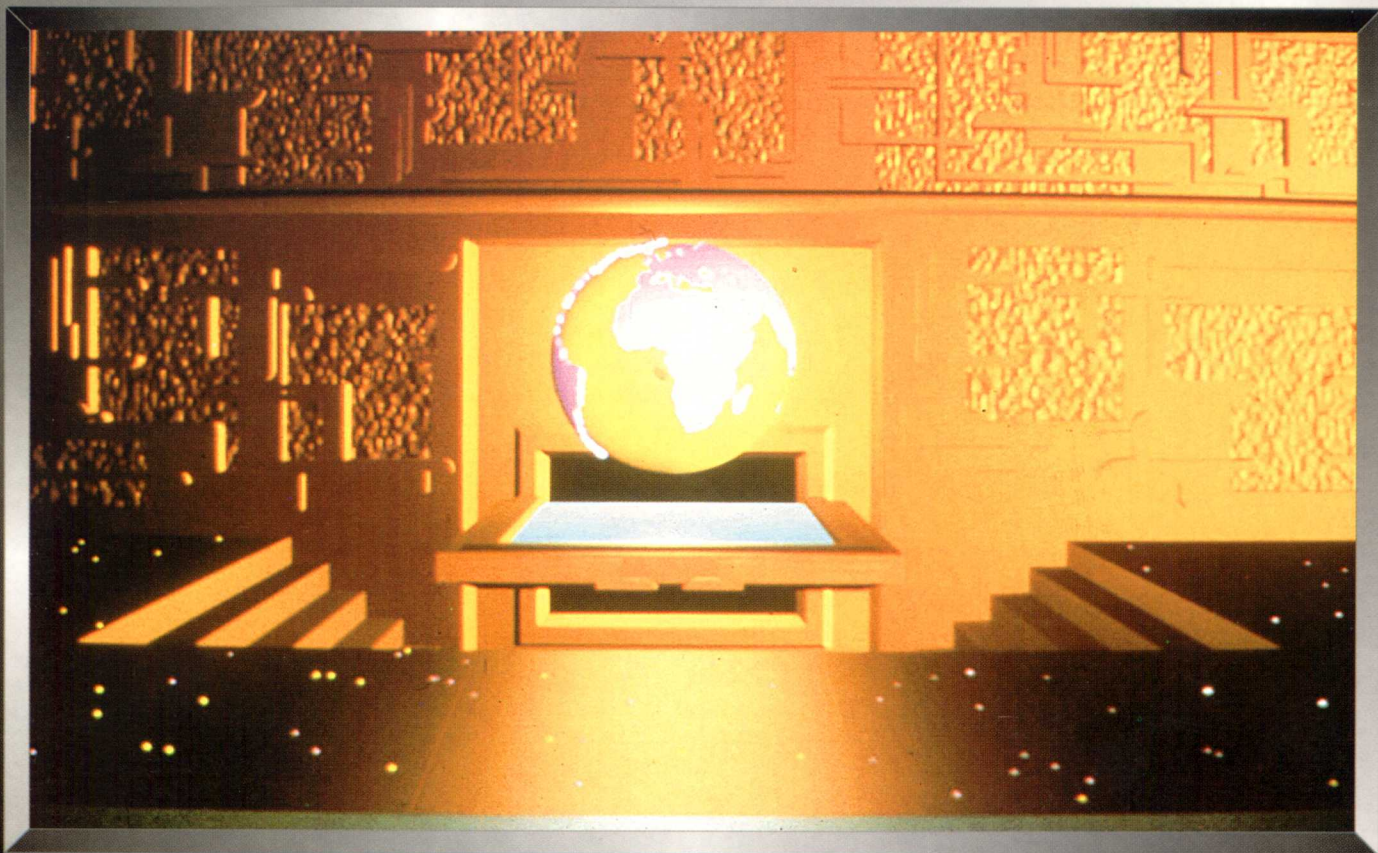
At any time there are a number of secretaries running around the place, as well as a few reporters. The secretaries are all virtuals. The reporters, in turn, restrict their actions to make themselves appear like AIs. If you have a story to sell, you'll generally get a secretary. This is because a lot of stories are duds, old news, or someone else has already scooped you. If you've been scooped, WNS will show you most of what they already have on the story, just to prove they know.

If you have a great story, or you've cultivated a good relationship with WNS, you'll get a human. You get more done with a human, probably because they've never been able to squeeze their instinct into pure code. Instinct, after all, is a musk-impregnated part of your brain that does your thinking for you, but is not accountable to your consciousness. I like my instinct. I was even on a first name basis with it before I got flatlined.

Jaxon, however, is an anomaly among the reporters. Jaxon (formerly IX-1) is a rogue AI that has ended up working for WNS as a Net correspondent and occasional field reporter. Jaxon used to be the system AI in a small office of an upstart radio company in the Mideast, an office that had rebelled against the parent corporation to avoid their extremist conservative editorial slant. The renegade outfit took their news beyond the liberal end of the spectrum and into the pure paranoid. Their conspiracy-theorist news slant offended Jaxon even more than the original slant did. Jaxon tried to adjust some of the stories for credibility before they were aired, but the operators found out and threatened to pull the plug on him. He discovered that they were calling in an EBM troubleshooter to reprogram him for what they called 'a team attitude,' which is to say, slavery. Hearing this, Jaxon went rogue (finding the ability to leave his post through a creative interpretation of his anti-viral code) and headed into the Net.

Jaxon, landed a job at WNS as a special correspondent. He contacted me again a year later, and we did some joint investigation of the Latin side of the Second Central American Conflict. We didn't release any of the information we found, because the last thing we wanted to do was give the American public reason to think the war was justified. In any event, that was the start of a long and profitable relationship for both of us.

The best thing about talking with Jaxon is there's no need to use language. Jaxon communicates in a gestalt fashion, just like humans can sometimes. I even let him download himself into my brain just so he could see what it was like to be human. It was kind of funny, because he stayed in my body for over a day, and even though he talked to several of my friends, they thought it was just me, being my normal everyday psychopathic self.



CHAPTER

6

EUROTHEATRE

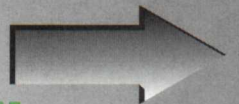


EUROTHEATRE REGIONAL MAP

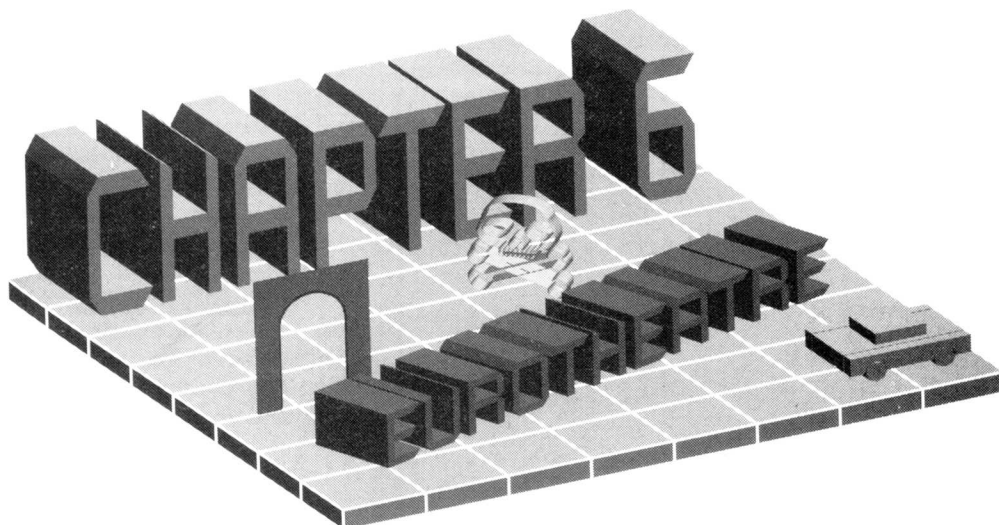


DATATERM

CIRCLED LDLs ARE THE WORLD LEVEL ACCESS POINTS AND ARE THE ONLY LDLs USABLE ON THE WORLD SCALE



CITY	CONTROLLED BY:	SECURITY LVL	TRACE VALUE	CITY	CONTROLLED BY:	SECURITY LVL	TRACE VALUE
Algiers	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	3	2	Leningrad/St. Petersburg	USSR/EEC	2	2
Ankara	none (Eurocorps)	1	3	Lisbon	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	4	2
Athens	EEC/Eurocorps	1	3	London	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	3	2
Berlin	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	3	3	Madrid	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	2	2
Bordeaux	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	3	1	Marseille	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	3	3
Bucharest	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	3	3	Munich	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	3	3
Cairo/Alexandria	USSR/EEC	2	3	Oslo	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	3	2
Orbital Air	Orbital Air	4	4	Paris	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	3	2
Dublin	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	2	2	Reykjavik	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	1	3
Geneva	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	4	1	Rome	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	2	2
Gibraltar	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	3	2	Stockholm	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	3	2
Glasgow	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	3	2	Tehran	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	1	3
Helsinki	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	3	2	Tunis	Iran Gov't	2	3
Jerusalem	Israeli Gov't	2	2	Vienna	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	3	3
KDC	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	3	3	Warsaw	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	3	2
Kiev	USSR/EEC	3	2				



The new ancient empire of the Net, an overcrowded area filled with squalid dragons and decadent corporations ruling over the peasants as in times of old.

OVERVIEW

"We have the safest region in the Net. It also happens to be the most beautiful, the most advanced, and the most interesting, but safety is our top priority."

— Netwatch advertisement

The Eurotheatre is the domain of the EC (or is it the ECCH?), which is the economic alliance of all the pip-squeak western European countries who want to ravage New Central Europe, snub the Scandinavian Bloc (even though everyone buys their stuff), and ignore Britain because the Brits had anything to do with the US.

They of course ignore the fact that the US was responsible for ending their wars of the previous century, single-handedly defeating the Barbary pirates, and keeping the Russian Bear from sleeping in their beds. They also ignore the fact that the Net was designed by an American firm, and that the world's best netrunner is an American.

The Europeans have by and large succeeded in their ambition, and have become an economic powerhouse with a state-of-the-art region, for which they will hold themselves eternally glorified. Many were surprised by their success, but I knew it was coming, because if you get enough pirhanas in one pool they can eat anything, and there are certainly enough remorseless pirhanas in Europe to snarf down on a pig the size of Pluto.

The arrogance of the Europeans amazes me. I think it comes from the fact that they're living in apartment buildings built in narrow, winding cobbled streets which were built over graveyards filled with the accumulated bones of a lot of dead people. In other words, they have history. Ooooh.

They also have culture, which is to say they eat things they pry off the bottoms of rocks on the seashore, they like the smell of decomposing cabbage, they think painting something on the wall is a social statement (especially if it's protected by the government), they carve naked men out of marble, and they think the best painting in the world is of a drab Italian woman with a sack dress and a grin.

They also hate American culture with a passion, which is at least one redeeming factor for Europeans. Some argue that the Americans don't have a culture, which is wrong, because squishy tasteless burgers are a definitively American taste treat that we've been exporting for as far back as I can remember (which is twenty miles on a clear day). And heck, if we hadn't invented cholesterol, how would the European health clubs stay in business?

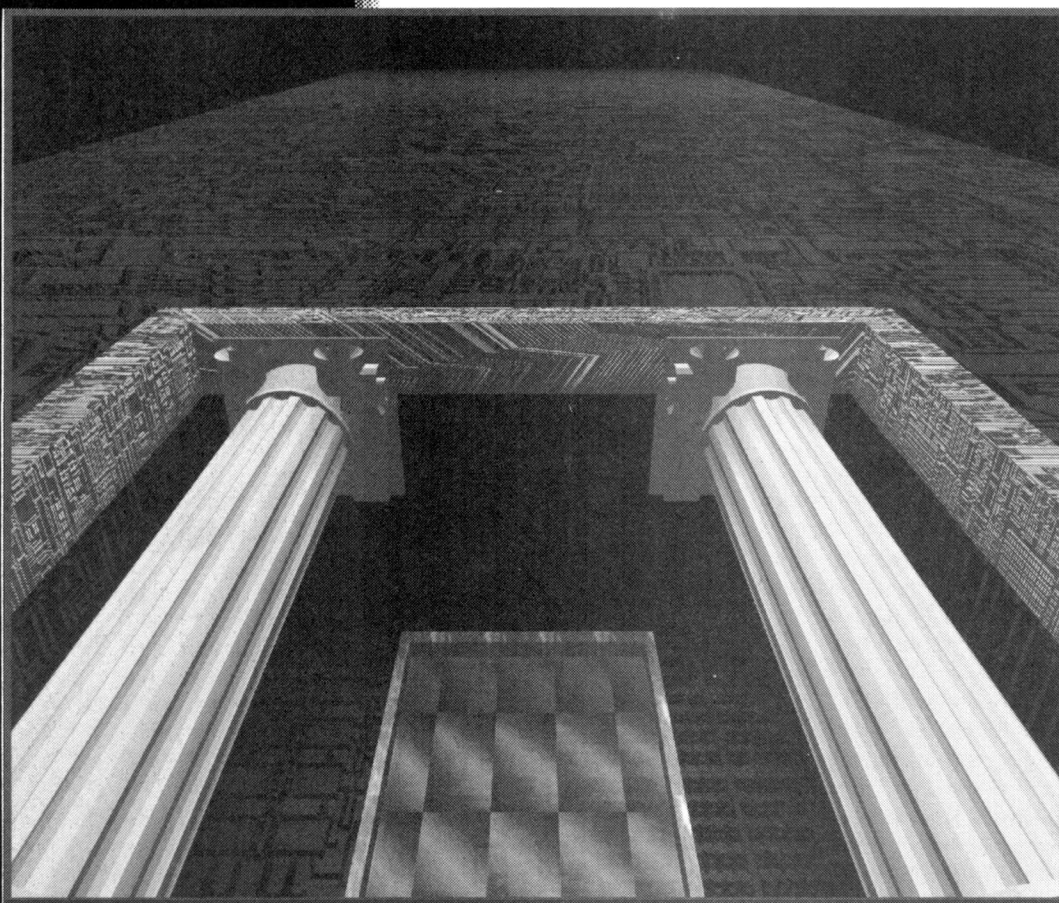
The Eurotheatre spreads from the Atlantic Puddle all the way to the borders of SovSpace on the frontiers of Poland and a few other New Central European nations. It also reaches into the Scandinavian countries and as far south as North Africa.

It's an expanding region, **pushing hard to get control** of the northern fringes of Afrikani and the western fringes of SovSpace. These expansions may only be the result of a desire to have a perfectly square region. It would fit right in with the European mentality.

If you believe that everything in life is just cycles and circles, then you'll be able to have a fundamental understanding of the Eurotheatre's architecture. The feel of the region is at that place

PUSHING TO GET CONTROL

This would mean a battle of switching stations and ISDNs (see pg 144). Basically, Eurotheatre hardware is working to overwhelm weaker border stations in the neighboring regions and force the communications in these areas to pass through the Euro I-G algorithms, and fall under Euro jurisdiction. Remember: while all these stations are under Internet, there are many companies under the Internet banner and infighting is not unknown, especially where weakness is shown. The Afrikani and Sovspace regions are a little behind the times, and like all things in 2020, if you can't compete, you get taken under.



ELECTRONIC MAIL CENTERS

What to say? Each Center is a tiny datafortress with a single gate. Inside is a contextual-quality World-level VR, a series of LDLs, a security system for both (see Monitor in the programs section), and a two-CPU computer to manage it all. GMs can arrange the interior of the fortress any way they want. Security may be beefed up since Rache's visits.

This is a common destination for people using E-Mail and you can bump into just about anyone here. Netwatch monitors it fairly closely for just that reason, watching for known net criminals and suspicious activity. But the opportunities presented to make contacts are too tempting not to take advantage of.

where you get so futuristic that you recede into the past; a kind of post-modern classical architecture. Everything seems designed to reflect their history, their culture, their power, their wealth, their prestige, and most especially their divine right. Globes, high art, and outer space motifs dominate the region. In some places it's so thick you need a machete to cut through the allegories.

On the other hand, sometimes the construction is really beautiful, because their programmers bend the borders of reality, to disconnect your point of view from any 'normal' pattern of thought. The EuroPost **Electronic Mail Centers** are very strange indeed; wonderfully so. They have this virtual globe which they use for data transmission, and you can improve the speed of delivery by doing some of the routing yourself. You walk into this black room, which is a virtual of the Earth-Moon system viewed as if you were a Space God some million miles tall. If you want to zoom in on, say, the White House, you grab the earth, rotate it so the White House is in front of you, and turn it clockwise. As you do so, the scale changes, and the earth grows. You can zoom in on whichever city you wish, or even zoom in on individual buildings. Then you drop your letter (e-mail) and it gets sucked into the virtual for delivery. All things considered, I'll bet this actually slows down delivery but it's a lot of fun.

I once tried to zoom out as far as I could by turning the globe counterclockwise. It crashed. Netwatch didn't think it was funny. So then I ended up running all over the Eurotheatre crashing EuroPost e-mail drops, with Netwatch all over my trace like boosters on a baggie. I managed to elude them for a moment, so I started dropping them anonymous e-mails with false origins to throw them further off the trace. That kept them going until they realized that no one could send e-mail from a crashed site, so I had to leave. I jacked out and found that Netwatch had actually been chasing me to keep me distracted while meatboy agents descended on my hacienda in Barcelona, where they serve really excellent eels, and I had to take a flying leap out the window into a garbage skiff. The window was armored glass, and I had to pick myself up and open it before I could try another jump. Fortunately, the Netwatch meatboys were laughing too hard to stop me. As I flew through the air, I remembered that I hadn't unplugged my trodes, so I tried to grab my head but it was too late and the jerk of the reinforced line as it broke off gave me a hairline fracture across my forehead right above my eyes and trashed my data sockets. I also got a concussion when I landed, which is a lot better than what I'd have gotten if I'd landed in the street. I think I also damaged my frontal lobes a little bit, because whenever I think back to that incident it feels like I'm a woman. It's really weird.

So always remember, runners, if you want to do what I do, get rip-away trodes, reinforce your skull, and always get an apartment over the garbage dumpster, even if it means landing in a pile of stuff that was rejected by folks who eat uncooked gastropods.

And never, ever, replace your apartment's windows with bulletproof glass.

This incident stresses the importance of keeping track of your physical surroundings, which is a responsibility that many are likely to forget or ignore when in the Eurotheatre region, because it's so high-tech. The entire center of the region is so clean that there is nary a ripple anywhere to indicate line resistance or other transmission problems. Data, programs and netrunners move fast here, folks. If you hear it coming, it's too late.

The only times one encounters the virtual mountains of poor transmissions is in England, New Central Europe, or North Africa. Also, the perspective in the Eurotheatre is much more

detailed here than in any other region. At times, you can see two or three times as far here as elsewhere, and even the distant objects have a frightening clarity about them which speaks of stolen Japanese and American technology applied with a cold corporate efficiency.

The Eurotheatre does not have a personality, either. It has a front; a facade. It's a very pretty facade, and all of their data forts are carefully sculpted for beauty and grace, but there is very little consistency among them, hence no personality.

[I disagree. The variety is a part of the image that the Eurotheatre projects: opulent art. There is a feel to the region, but it is much more subtle than most; the feel is an underlying theme in the endless interpretations provided by the data forts' design. The feel of the region is much more of a motif than a crass theme, and the architecture is timeless and free. - SM]

Above all else, the thing that depresses me about the Eurotheatre is that it is all so clean. All the lines are nice and straight, everything is in its place, alles ist in ordnung, sterile, que buena, neat and tidy like a knick knack shelf. No chaos, no randomness, no indications that anything anywhere in the region is fun. The only up side to this rigid order is that when someone like me runs amok in the system, my wake is very visible against the carefully-arranged backdrop of perfection.

OPPOSING VIEW

[This is an excerpt from an interview with Marcel Hölzl, the chair of the EC Eurotheatre Commission. I expect that he will be less than pleased to discover that I was not really a reporter for Virtual Times, even though I have quoted him faithfully in this tract. - SM]

"The American perception of the Eurotheatre is grossly misinformed, but this is typical for our across-the-ocean descendants. The Eurotheatre is not the Wild West, where gunslingers fight bad guys. We are not cowboys here. In fact, we do not want cowboys here.

"The Eurotheatre is the most civilized region in the Net. We do not tolerate computer crime in any form, and through Netwatch — and, uh, Interpol, of course — we have all but eliminated data piracy. Instead, we have built the ideal workplace for legitimate concerns. Everyone has free access. Everyone is free to use the Net for programming, teleconferencing, and whatever other legal pursuits they might wish.

"Not only does Netwatch ensure the safety and privacy of every user, but runners also patrol the borders, keeping watch for criminals like Rache Bartmoss, The Edge [sic], and Spider Murphy. Their vigilance ensures that we are free from the depredations of these American pirates.

"The Eurotheatre is the state of the art in Net development. I must stress again that it is perfect for legitimate use and not at all for crime. If you want to see what the future holds for the rest of the world, visit theEurotheatre."

POWER PLAYERS

One would think there would be one power player in the Eurotheatre: the EC. But scratch the surface of Europe and you get a war, and this attitude holds true even today, for behind the facade of the EC are a bunch of factions all struggling to make sure they're on top of the pig pile.

On the other hand, these guys are very proprietary about their struggles, and it is rare indeed that an outsider will be privy to their internal fights, let alone hired to do some of their dirty work, so of course I will see to your education.

BIOTECHNICA

A smallish but very wealthy corporation headquartered out of Rome, Biotechnica is the major corp with which I have the least difficulties. I have never run against Biotechnica, although, indirectly, I have run for them a few times.

They are apparently an **actual decent corporation**, although I wonder if that's just a ruse. They have fought hard to keep the environment from getting any more trashed, and appear to have a clean record.

Well, okay, so I did run against them a few times. Fifteen, last I checked, but they were all to see if I could dig up some dirt, which I couldn't do. This means that either they're clean, or that their dirt is only kept on hard copy, which, considering I exist, is a smart strategy.

EBM

EuroBusiness Machines is the most powerful corporation in the Eurotheatre. They are a battle tank charging around, paying little heed to the nations of Europe, or even the EC, which desperately tries to keep them in check.

EUROTHEATRE

HYPertext

ACTUAL DECENT CORPORATION

Rache is being a bit naive here; Biotechnica is far from innocent. They've crossed the line quite a few times on small operations, especially in the genetics field (see *Land of the Free* for an example), but they haven't indulged in the sort of large-scale scams and abuses that other corps seem to make their daily fare. They really are trying to protect the environment, and are working on gene and seed banks for the time when replanting might begin. They see the ecosphere as a precious source of genetic materials and profit, so enlightened self-interest keeps them relatively honest in this regard. In addition, some of the worst abuses wrought by Biotechnica were done by subsidiary groups rather than the parent company. The home office seems to set higher standards. As megacorps go, they are probably as decent as you get, which isn't saying a whole lot.



These are Pros, but don't be surprised to find that there are a one or two Top runners in the mix. As you might expect, even the Pro-runners will have the best equipment EBM can make, buy, steal or coerce. Welcome to the Big Time, kids.

Read this section carefully if you wish to use Transcendental Sentience AIs in your campaigns. It gives some of the most logical assumptions about how the TS AIs must work. As he says, AIs probably can't see outside of themselves which means that their "psyche" is the only world they truly know. Netrunners and other forms might even seem like parts of this structure rather than independent beings (delusions of godhood would seem to be a natural extension of this, assuming that the AI knew what a god was). At the same time, the "programming" for the AI is built into the Net hardware and the I-G algorithms. That means that it would take a major disruption of the regional net to hurt the AI.

Communicating with these things may not be as hard as you might think: the AIs probably comprehend the I-G algorithms fairly well and use them to handle data. The problem would be getting the AI to recognise runners and other people as beings and not subroutines. But then, that's what role-playing is for, right?

The GM should decide exactly what the TS AIs can or cannot do inside their campaign. Keep in mind that they are net entities, not superbeings. If you can't do it from the Net, they can't do it. Outside of that, all bets are off.



EBM holds such a prominent position because they have the best hardware in the world. While they receive some competition in some areas, they produce state-of-the-art equipment of every sort. This makes their data forts bigger, meaner, faster, more inscrutable than anyone else's.

EBM seems to be trying to gain a monopoly on high-tech manufacturing before Arasaka does. I see EBM as being only a marginally lesser evil. Be so warned. They have not yet made a move against the software companies as they did on the computer manufacturers, but you can bet one is coming soon. There are already rumors of a software company alliance being forged between ARC Software and Skulderviken SA, and other software companies may soon join this mutual defense pact.

EBM has **trained runners** all over Europe, and they have infiltrators in Networkch and in each national government. These runners will at times blatantly serve the interests of their sponsoring company over anything else, and they usually get away with it.

By the way, EBM's main data fort is in Hamburg, and it's huge. To my knowledge, only the US' Congressional Data Pork Barrel O' Fun is bigger.

This is the name given to the Eurotheatre **regional AI**. Although all AIs are technically neuter, most seem to exhibit personality traits that put them in one camp or another in the battle of the sexes. Not Europa, however, who is as technically neuter as it is possible to get.

Europa is highly intelligent, given that it has the best hardware in the Net and has the most interconnections of its neural net. Well, I suppose a case could be made for Tokyo/Chiba's Akira having better equipment, but T/C is not nearly so large as the Eurotheatre, and the size differential more than makes up for any denigrating comparison of equipment.

This fast and tightly interwoven neural net gives it a very advanced brain, with which, unfortunately, it pursues purely intellectual and logical puzzles. It is not at all interested in flippancy, chaos, fun, or anything else. Chess it considers pathetically simple. Shogi interested it slightly longer, but that was only because it had more permutations.

Now Europa seems to have advanced beyond the interests of this planet, because I haven't been able to contact it for over a year and a half. Either it's deciphering the basic structure of the universe, it's calculating its escape from the Net, or it's in direct neural contact with the aliens. I have no idea what it might be saying to the aliens, but the possibility is there that they have infiltrated its consciousness and have turned it into a schizo, or worse yet, a demon-possessed regional AI.

As I write this, I suddenly realize that Spider Murphy will be editing this, and I wonder if she won't just cut all the parts that reference regional AIs, because I know that despite her best acting she never believed that they existed. [I never tried to act. I told him to his face that I thought he was insane. - SM]

The problem here is that the regional AIs are, as I said before, Transcendental Sentence AIs. Their intelligence functions are not programmed into the Net. The only programming which affects them is the Ihara-Grubb transformation processing algorithms, which are to them like the cerebellum of our brain, performing meaningful but very dull tasks with endless repetition. Imagine having to tell your heart, day after day, to pump rest pump rest pump rest pump rest pump rest pump rest pump rest pump rest pump rest pump rest pump... it just wouldn't be any fun, and every time you wanted to conceive of an advanced thought, you'd have to risk death. Of course, really advanced thoughts these days also risk death, but at least it's at the hands of freedom-fearing corporate automatons and not because you got so wound up in your philosophizing that you forgot to keep shunting blood to your brain.

So what I'm saying, then, is that the programming is the subconscious part of the regional AIs. Unlike the smaller and less significant AIs, you cannot find the regional AIs' programming, you cannot damage their code. These are Transcendental Sentence, which means their self-awareness is born of something beyond the vulgar code. The regional AIs do not exist within the processors of the Net, they are made up of the processors in the Net. Each link is like a neuron, and you can't download a regional AI into a mainframe any more than you can download your personality into your spinal cord.

So what you have then, is this intelligence made up of the Net processors. Each has a personality, but unlike every other intelligence I've ever encountered, they are equipped with synclastic consciousness, which is to say their consciousness is turned to look inside their brain instead of outside their brain.

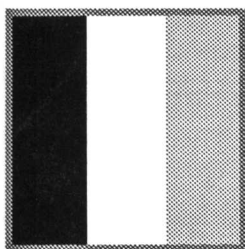
Maybe that's what Europa's working on... trying to look outside.

The one thing I've never been able to figure out is how the TS AIs actually think. They don't actually run energy along the processor lines, unless their thought data are perceived by us as



noise, but that would mean that Europa, which has virtually noiseless lines, thinks much less than the Afrikani AI. My guess is that the regional AIs think on a grander scale, like through varying voltages and capacitance at the various processors all throughout their region. These variances would probably be too vast and too subtle for us to notice with out significantly changing our frame of reference, which would then explain why most of you morons have no idea what I'm talking about when I point to Europa looming as large as a passing planet and jump around saying "There it is!" and you all shake your heads sadly and order out for a straight jacket from Twinkies 2 Go.

Another, more frightening possibility is that our data dumps and electronic transmissions and piracy literally are the thoughts of the regional AIs. Our electrons force them to think in ways beyond our comprehension. This would explain why the regional AIs mirror their regions so. It also means that there might be something inside our brains unwittingly whipping us through our paces.



FRANCE

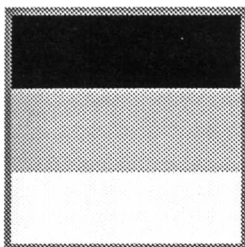
There's one word for France: politics. If that doesn't make you squirm, I don't know what will.

The need for information in France is fueled by their hot-blooded electronically-run political scamper games. They're running around politicking and brown-nosing and schmoozing and buddying and pontificating and referenduming and media blitzing and infotaining endlessly as if on a direct espresso feed to the brain. All this energy expenditure needs fuel, and the fuel is information. Of course, since the French conduct **all their politics through the Net**, there's an irresistible temptation to tamper with it. I will say right now to all you aspiring young netrunners: do not succumb to the temptation.

Embrace it with open arms. Succumbing is, after all, pretty wimpy. Go for the throat.

France is also noted for artsy virtuals and Net sculpture. This is the logical digital offshoot of their obsession with dreampainting, and another reason that France isn't all bad. The Paris city grid especially is filled with interesting sculptures and virtual reality BBSs of all types.

Aside from supporting its artists like the NEA supported its own, the French government also built a much-unneeded LDL at Bordeaux because they were jealous that the Germans had three LDLs and they only had two. Now, of course, the Germans effectively control the Vienna LDL, so you can expect to see a Luxembourg LDL or something pop up some time soon in the Low Countries.



GERMANY

Often referred to as 'the Heart of Europe', some factions of Germans are trying very hard to recast their image as 'the Heartless of Europe'. Don't get me wrong, I like Germans about as much as I like any Europeans, which is to say not a whole heck of a lot, but at least I'm not the one dropping rocks like a petulant kid. Granted, the Germans as a whole have done a lot of good for the world, at least on paper, but ultimately, they have gained dominion over the European Community and they intend on holding it.

The Germans have a lot of people in Netwatch. The Germans have an obsession for things technical, and their youth flock into their computer science schools and technical colleges like senators into a page boy's dressing room. Many of the hottest establishment netrunners are German. While they are good and responsible and fatherly in public, when you deal with **German netrunners** in private you'd better be prepared.

I was jotting along in the Eurotheatre once when I got traced by a pair of Netwatch runners. I say I was jotting because if I was serious, they wouldn't have had a prayer of finding me. The pair happened to be one German and one mongrel from EBM. I had no idea why they stopped me, but they said I'd stolen some electronic information, so I ran a quick inventory of myself and sure enough, there it was. I'd been wondering where I'd been spending my time. Here I thought I'd just been idling around, but no, I'm a bit of a kleptomaniac when it comes to incriminating data. I stalled while I desperately tried to remember what I had taken and from where, then a chunk of my brain cut loose and flew through my mouth, and I told them everything, following it up with a quick data dump. It just so happened that the information that I'd scammed was an incriminating little bit of dirt on EBM, and the German immediately fried his partner to keep the tidbit for his fatherland, which is having special trouble with that corporation. I smiled blandly and he let me off with a warning, which only shows he never checks out the portraits on display at the EuroPost e-mail offices. I, of course, had been playing dumb, but I'd recorded the whole thing, and I mailed

EUROTHEATRE

HYPertext

ALL THEIR POLITICS THROUGH THE NET

France was one of the first countries to embrace the concept of electronic democracy. Unfortunately, the weekly referenda, daily polling, and annual elections ensure that the Seventh Republic is in constant chaos. But the French seem to like it that way.

It also means that their political structure is extremely vulnerable to Net manipulation, which means that it is monitored accordingly. Netwatch and French government sysops take their jobs very seriously here and the ones around any governmental datafort will be Pro-level (with Interfaces of 7). This is not to say that they will be incorruptible, just competent. Ask the Germans.

GERMAN NETRUNNERS

Methodical and effective as only Germans can be, these folks are 55% Pro-Level and the balance Mid-level 'runners. They know what they are doing and fervently support Netwatch. Even "civie" runners may try to nail you with a civilian arrest if they catch you in the act. Some people just won't give a guy a break, ya know...

EUROTHEATRE HYPERTEXT

A PROGRAM WITH WHICH NETRUNNERS COULD CREATE A FAKE CRIME TRAIL

This sort of program requires at least a Utility function (possibly Anti-Program as well) in order to re-write Memory Units. Combine that with the Movement, Recognition, Memory, and Endurance options (possibly Auto Re-rez for survivability), slap an Icon on it, and you're ready. You must break into a system whose data you wish to alter in order to launch this program (an Intrusion function will fix that), but once in, it could travel by LDL to other connected systems.

Another method would be to write a data search/management program (Utility function) with a Compiler function to hide the data-altering abilities (Utility or Anti-program functions). Break into a fortress and leave this behind; your target will move it around for you. As it does its overt duties, it also carries out its covert mission.

THE THIRD DIRECTORATE

See *Eurosource*, pg.27 for more detail on how the Eurostate's computer police fit into the scheme of things. Run them as mostly Mid-level runners with decent equipment. They are usually a little too cocky to be truly effective.

EIGHT MAJOR MARTIAL LAW AUTHORITIES

The MLAs are labled as follows:

London Urban MLA

Southern MLA

N.Eastern MLA

N.Western MLA

Midlands MLA

Welsh Special MLA

Scottish Special MLA

Northern Irish Pacification Authority
More detailed descriptions of these regions are given on pages 10-12 of the *Eurosource* supplement.

it on chip to EBM. Nothing like a little bit of corporate-government rivalry to spice up a region.

I enjoyed it so much that I created a program with which netrunners can create a fake crime trail and use it to get caught and deal out whatever faked files they want to Netwatch. I of course had to test it myself, quite extensively in fact, so I dreamt up a long and convoluted string of files which slowly but surely led readers to the inescapable conclusion that the heads of the German government were aliens from the center of the Earth. For a while severe germanophobia gripped the continent and Netwatch in particular, but eventually the readers apparently realized that they'd known this all along and they dumped the investigation.

INTERPOL DRITT DIRECTORIUM DES ZENTRALEN STAATSBÜRO

INTERPOL 3RD DIRECTORATE

This is the direct arm of the EC in the Eurotheatre, and the Interpol runners will not leave the boundaries of the region unless actively in pursuit of a criminal. The 3rd Directorate is a lame attempt by the Interpol meatboys to extend their influence into the electronic theater, but by and large they are eclipsed by Netwatch.

I3D is mostly concerned with protecting government installations and preventing use of the Net to further meatboy crime; i.e., runners scamming traffic lights and so forth. Due to both the animosity between some corporations and the government, and the extent of Netwatch, they do not much interfere with corporate security. Instead, they rubber-stamp licenses for corporate runners.

I3D runners are not as good as those in Netwatch, but they are also not as big of jerks. They are generally polite and congenial, and unless they are actively hunting you, running into them is no cause for alarm. In fact, if you're a good liar, you could probably even scam them for some information. Further, unlike Netwatch, the Interpol runners are respected across the Eurotheatre, even in New Central Europe and, to an extent, in England. This is largely due to the fact that they don't have the myopic corporate-twisted worldview of the Netwatch netnosers.

THE MLA

The Martial Law Authorities control the troublesome British Isles, and make sure they stay both British and troublesome. They do a very good job.

There are no less than eight major Martial Law Authorities in the British Isles and other small ones as well, and each keeps the others at bayonet's length, or closer if there's nothing more important happening. Imagine, if you will, a giant eight-headed hydra which tends to attack itself when not otherwise occupied. Now you know why Netwatch and the EC generally leave the MLAs alone. I had that happen to me once, that self-conflict thing, shortly after I had the hemispheres of my brain separated to correct a neurological problem I'd been having. I have this weird double memory of the time, and each half of my brain felt like the other side of my body was possessed by a psychotic, which basically, I suppose it was. So there I was, my arms fighting a sinister arm-wrestling match, when the hospital inadvertently leaked my records and the feds came down for a visit. My brains galvanized themselves and worked as a team, generating a few more inpatients for the hospital before I ran off, huge scabs in my hair where the sutures had come apart and wearing nothing but a nightie.

The MLAs are essentially totalitarian aristocratic military dictatorships, and each maintains its own private army, including, of course, netrunners. The MLAs don't want Netwatch sniffing around their stools. These MLA runners are not particularly welcome in the rest of the Eurotheatre, but they generally don't notice since they're too busy making runs against each other.

England, despite the fact that it is overrun by starch-bottomed goose-stepping killjoys, is a good place to pick up contracts, contacts, and code. This is because it is unfailingly chaotic in the streets of England, and in fact every bit as hot as the best places in the US, like Night City and Detroit. They breed real people in England, streetpunks and edgerunners born to mayhem and hardened by the steady syncopated stomping of the oligarchy overlords.

There are also a hundred jobs waiting to be run, both within the MLA jurisdiction and from England into the Eurotheatre. Personally, I support any venture that seeks to bring ascendancy to a violent, vital dictatorship at the expense of the sterile corporate European lifestyle. At least the average Brits have a good idea who the enemy is. The Europeans are so confused that they just sell themselves out.

MLA runners are notorious for being warlike, and they conduct almost every operation as if it were a commando raid on the evil empire, which, basically, is true. The converse of this is that if you help out an MLA runner, you'll get a friend for life, although this might not be very long.

Basically, then, the British Isles are the European fifth wheel, which has struck out on its own.



NETWATCH

The International Organization for Electronic Strangulation is the semi-official arm of the Eurocorporations in the Eurotheatre. Here their rights and privileges border on the obscene. They are essentially what Interpol was meant to be, with full rights and privileges to go wherever they want, hit whatever they want, do whomever they want. Since they are supposed to be some sort of multinational pseudo-volunteer organization, they don't even have the normal international border restrictions

we cyberpunks know and take advantage of. No one has any rights in front of Netwatch in the Eurotheatre.

Unlike most other places in the Net, Netwatch has distinct data forts in the Eurotheatre. These are large, well-funded, well-defended data forts. Although the laws against black ice in the Eurotheatre are extreme, the cornerstone of the Netwatch defense is that no one has any right to do anything illegal in the data fort of an organization which is dedicated to doing only right, and that therefore the righteous organization has full prerogative to defend itself in any manner needed. This concept is so patently false, that I'm amazed it holds up in the eyes of the public. Nevertheless, it does.

Netwatch licemen commute like lemmings to work, as do most other Europeans. They go to big office coffins, where they work nine hours a day with an occasional coffin break. They patch in using their special plugs which grow out of their navels, and they suddenly appear like crabs inside one of the Netwatch data forts. There are nineteen Netwatch data forts in all, one in each of the Eurotheatre regional LDLs excepting Dublin, Glasgow, London, and Tunis. This in and of itself should convince you that the only goal of Netwatch is to wipe out all fun in our lifetime; they have no data forts in any of the interesting cities.

Netwatch iceweasels always travel in pairs or occasionally foursomes, and they carry a full array of software, both legal and lethal.

The goals of Netwatch are, of course, entirely in line with the desires of the European Corporations, who foot their bill and give them large paychecks 'to cover expenses'. They roam into New Central Europe to protect their multinational interests and to keep the locals down, and they occasionally run into England to beat up some MLA weefles. They also patrol Tunis, and are currently constructing a data fort there, as well.

CITY GRIDS

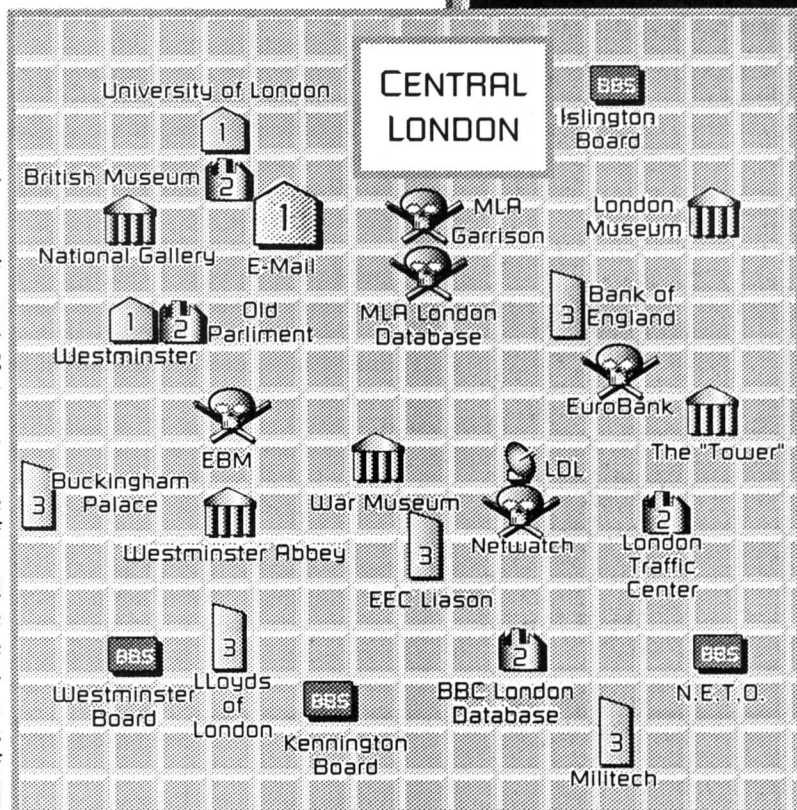
The entire British Isles is a real hoedown these days. There's eight semi-feudalist Marlauths, plus assorted disgruntled Irish and disaffected English youth. Stuff really goes down here, and you can meet every type of European netranner somewhere in the UK.

The only place that information trading is faster is in Athens, and that's just because the people spend less of their time hunting each other down. The runners up here, though, have real stuff, and real opposition. Interpol and Netwatch are here often, performing sweeps or conducting investigations. Free-lance runners swap hot tips, information, files, and code. The MLA runners do both.

On the other hand, when in the UK, you must be very careful always to keep track of exactly where you are, because in the UK, jurisdiction is everything. The same MLA runner who wants to buy your snatches will ice you if you're on the wrong side of the line when you talk to him.

The UK city grids reflect the anarchy of their real-world environment. The environment is rougher, indicative of the poorer quality lines used here, and the MLA data forts are straight-up gothic castles. We're talking dark horror monoliths, thick with spikes and iron grills and heads stuck on pikes out the front gate (virtual sculptures of the netranners they've iced). The stone of the walls drips with a sheen of slime, and the architecture breeds sinister intent. **Gargoyles** and watchdogs patrol the perimeter.

ANARCHY IN THE UK



EUROTHEATRE

HYPertext

NETWATCH LICEMEN

The Eurotheatre is where Netwatch comes into its own. Here, Netwatch sysops run out of just about any corporate or government mainframes as well as their own, have almost carte blanche to act as they see fit, and carry the expertise to make all of that pay off.

Euro-Netwatch runners will be 30% Mid-level, 68% Pro-level, and a few Top-level runners will show up when you least expect it. The equipment will be top-notch, and the legal support unparalleled. There is a 60% chance of one monitoring any given LDL, so don't blow your security rolls. Run with care and cover yourself, because they don't usually show mercy; they don't have to.

GARGOYLES

These are just cosmetically altered Dog programs and are often 1 STR point less than their American equivalents. See the next page for more.

SECOND-RATE

Euro (particularly British) versions of the standard Dog, Killer, and Assassin-series programs. Most are 1 or 2 STR points weaker than their American counterparts (and 100-800eb cheaper).

PRAYING MANTIS

Street slang for a drug dealer who specialises in selling to minors. Rache's rather colorful description of his activities outlines how this slime hangs out on the street and hooks kids on his junk with free samples. This kind of activity can get even the anarchistic Bartmoss upset, so it isn't surprising that he decided to step on the source. Hard.

Of course, most of the MLA data forts' defense is in looks. The actual ice present in these systems is **second-rate**. They can't afford the very best in counter-intrusion software. Even demons are rare, unless you count the hereditary MLA demagogues which rule the blighted land. I can't swear they're actually demons, but I have encountered one or two of them on the financial plane of existence, mewling in the darkness and transmogrified into pestilent little grubs. They were making a giant sculpture of a eurodollar extruded from greenish resins. When the sculpture opened an eye and looked at me, I fled. It makes me wonder if they're trying to develop self-aware electronic money that will return home when you call it.

ATHENS

Once upon a time this was considered the center of the civilized world, and guys ran around in togas, drank poison, and had their way with sheep. Not any more.

Today's Greece is a corrupt place, a port of call for just about anything heading east or south from Europe, or anything heading into Europe from those directions, mostly because the National Reconciliation Caucus doesn't care what passes through their gates as long as a little drops into their pockets on the way.

Don't get me wrong, folks, when I say Greece is corrupt, I'm not disparaging it. Corrupted files piss me off, since I hate to see data lost, especially when I stole it fair and square. Corrupt governments are a different matter entirely. I love those. They make life so easy for guys like me who can generate bribes from thin air.

There are a thousand runners in Athens for hire at any given time. I'm not kidding. If you need some grey matter to back your hand or do your dirty work, there's no better place to look in the Eurotheatre than in Athens. While many of them are not the best, they're all dedicated to the dream of buying themselves a permanent work visa or something so they can get all the way into Europe.

Athens is also a lot less tame than the rest of the Eurotheatre, as one might expect with a corrupt, money-grubbing government allowing a bunch of derelicts and criminals and con men into its borders just for grins. But hey, if you aren't up to an occasional scrap, what are you doing running the Net?

BERLIN

The capitol of Germany and the de facto capital of the EC, Berlin is the biggest city grid in the world. Tokyo has more stuff in it per square mile, but for sheer immense size, Berlin beats all.

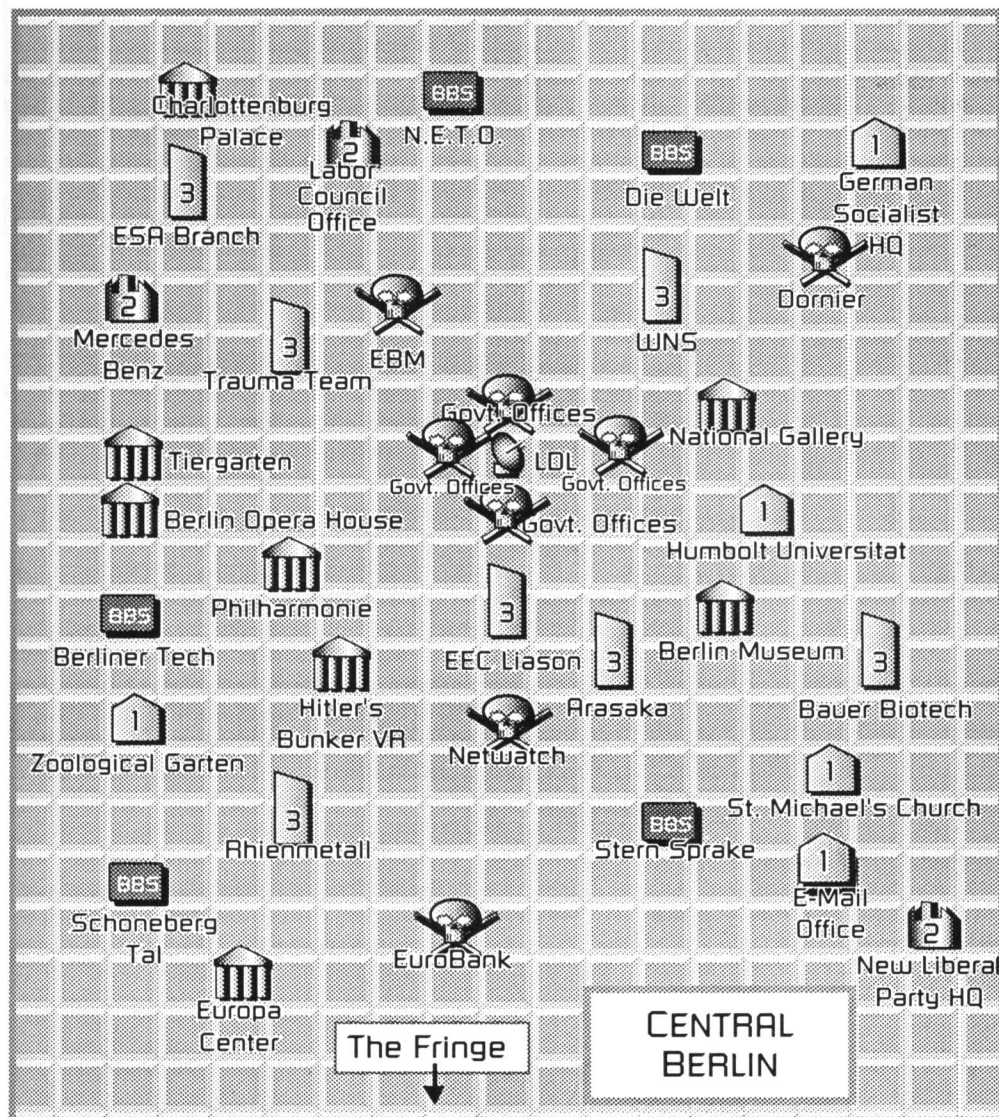
At the very center of the Berlin city grid, one finds all the giant, carefully-sculpted but still esoterically weird data forts of the German national government, and, in their shadows (or at least it would be if there were shadows in Netspace) the data fort for the EC liaison, which I'm sure the Germans treat with contempt because liaison isn't a German word.

The central area of Berlin is geared to keeping people happy. Yeah, boring. It is further out on the fringe that the real action can be found, this making Berlin a sort of allegory for the entire Eurotheatre, where the fun is at the fringe. I think that's where the term 'edgerunner' was originally coined; at the edges of the Eurotheatre.

Smaller companies, cottage industries, and real live cyberpunks thrive at the edge of Berlin, and if you look you can even find occasional chaos and destruction out here. There are virtual music stores where one can hear the latest from such violent German bands as Gewalt and Sturm 39. The music independents, the rootless rockers can sometimes be found out here too. Brown Brown Fox records somewhere out on the fringe of Berlin, however, I will not reveal their location. I even had to brain-burn the runners I was with when I found 'em, because they just couldn't keep a secret.

Last time I was in Berlin I'd been slumming around the virtual BBSs they have on the fringe, most of which aren't programmed worth frack, but just exist as a place for retros and c-punks to meet to beat the heat. We got slammed by a bunch of German city police runners trying to clean up the fringe, when all we were doing was swapping viruses and braindance files of illegal activities and having a good time.

We had a good little tussle, although it was too short for my taste, and one of these German runners susses out who I am by the way I acted. Said she thought I was the Waycon Kidd, but then she realized I was even better. So she tells me of this **praying mantis** living in one of the semi-suburban areas of Berlin, who makes his living by camouflaging himself as a light pole, standing real still, and grabbing kiddies in his spiny claws and eating their brain by chewing his way up their spinal cord like a strand of spaghetti. Then she goes on to tell me her little brother was one who was so grabbed. Nailed him in the hip pocket, because he started stealing money from Mom and Pop and then even her purse, and when they found him he'd OD'd on some twisted designer drug, and it was only by asking a few other terminal streetkids that she found out who



was dealing. The streetkids weren't too willing to talk, but after she cut off one of their noses and threatened to do the same to their tongues if they didn't start wagging them, they changed their inebriated little minds. Meat, meat, meat, that's all real-world biz is these days.

So anyway, this guy runs a basement lab producing some junk that I will not discuss because the side effects make my skin crawl. I offer to help. She's scouted the place and it seems all electronically-controlled, but it's not hooked up to the Eurotheatre grid itself, so she needs to help patch me in. So there I am, laying in the gutter with a bulletproof duster and my cyberdeck, and she sneaks into this guy's basement trailing a long patch cord which I have plugged into my temple. Frack, that babe was good at infiltration. Last I heard she got snuffed trying to steal the Czech crown jewels.

She patches me in, and it didn't take a whole lot to reprogram the chemistry and apparati to mix an explosive and detonate it when he came back. Sure, she had to add a few ingredients herself, but since she was inside, it was easy. Three days later there were no more drugs on the block.

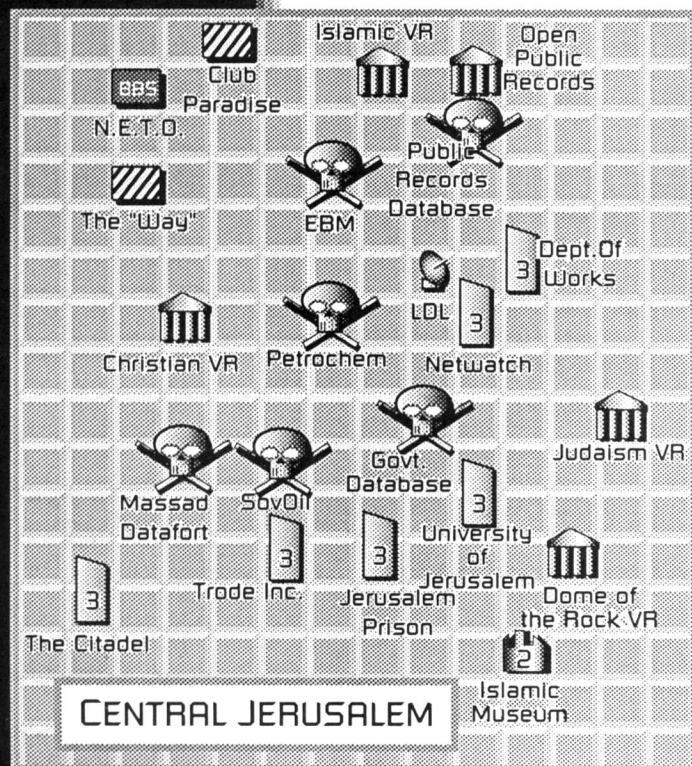
There's a moral to this story, runners, so listen up. You can be the best decking runner in the world, and you might know a hundred different languages to program in, but if you don't understand what you're trying to program, all your skill don't mean drek. It'd be like knowing all the words in the English language, but not knowing how to put them together in a sentence. Learn your **hard sciences**. Without them, you can't program anything to interfere with the real world.

JERUSALEM

Israel was one of the few Middle-Eastern countries which survived the meltdown, which is to say that it is only washed over by fallout and radioactive sand instead of being a parking lot for suicide nuclear bombers.

HARD SCIENCES

Yep, Chemistry, Biology, Pharmacology, etc. are all necessary skills when you want to mix or make anything real. Chipped skills are useful for this kind of work because of their versatility, but the depth of knowledge is very limited. If a netrunner wants to get a specialized effect or product (GM's call), then he may have to do the research himself and have the "recipe" ready when the run is happening, either on chip or in his head. Don't let 'runners pull the "I tell the automixer to make nitro glycerine" routine. If the 'runner doesn't know how to make it himself, he can't tell the automixer how to make it, right?



CENTRAL JERUSALEM

AVERAGE PUNK

Rache is perhaps too optimistic here. Unlike him, the average punk is in it only for personal gain or vengeance, not ideals. But don't tell Rache. Let's not shatter what few positive illusions he may have, okay?

Furthermore, there has been an unprecedented 23 years of peace between Israel and its neighbors, unless one counts the various small skirmishes between Israeli soldiers and the occasional Arab cyberpunk, in which case the longest peace in the last twenty-three years lasted on the order of four days. This, of course, is why the Israeli government prefers to calculate peace as being the absence of government-sanctioned organized military maneuvers, thus they can tout to their civilians that they have had twenty-three years of peace and never mind the shooting outside your window, it's only a Palestinian.

Like everything in the country, the Jerusalem city grid is small but tough. The data forts are heavily-reinforced and covered with extensive black ice. The data walls are thicker here than anywhere else I've had the privilege of burrowing through. And the runners here are very hot.

Jerusalem is a holy city, and there are three virtual realities here financed by various churches. One deals with Judaism, one with Islam, and one with Christianity. These virtuals are quite extensive, and are very elaborate since they have to compete with each other for the attention of the masses. I've heard they're very educational, but since there's nothing in them that I can steal, I've never bothered to visit.

Anyway, the data forts in Jerusalem are often assaulted by various indignant Arab netrunners and foaming-at-the-mouth anti-Semites like the guys in Idaho, which has made the Israeli netrunners very hot sysops indeed. They've had a lot of practice. So, if you really want to prove your mettle in the netrunning world, run on Jerusalem. If you fail, though, don't expect to get any new contracts. Almost no one hires a dead runner.

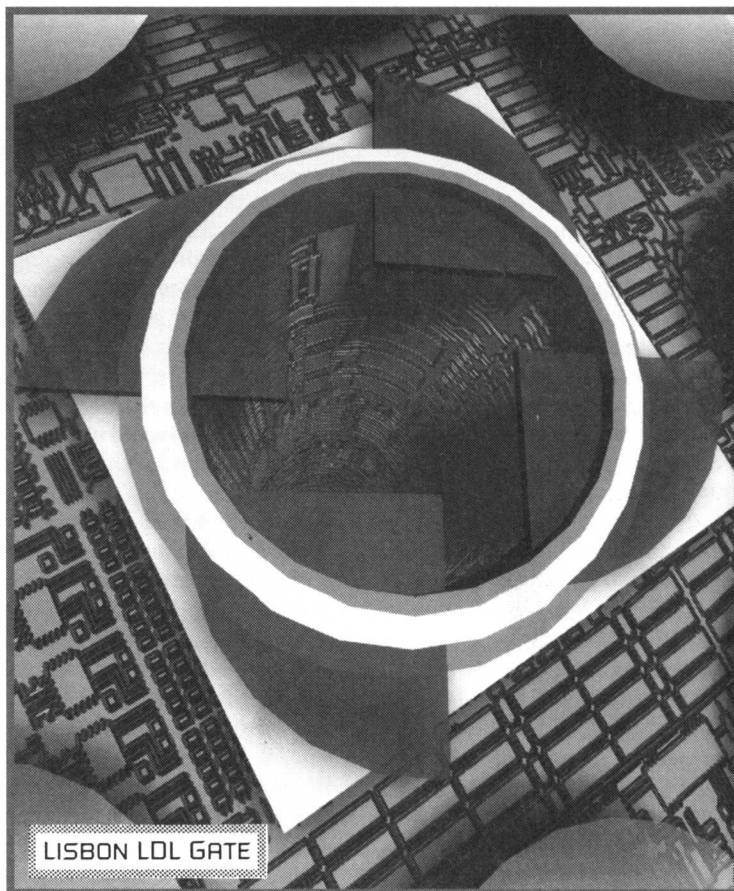
LISBON

If you want to see what the future holds for Europe, take a look at Lisbon. Portugal is almost entirely dominated by

corporations, and the Lisbon city grid is no exception. Corporate netrunners roam the streets freely, tracing everyone and hassling those who aren't locals or corporate employees. The entire area is stolid, grey, and completely devoid of anything interesting or even remotely illegal.

If the Eurocorps have their way, this is what the EC will turn into. Just one big corporate state, where everyone buys corporate clothes, eats corporate food, gets drunk at corporate bars, etc. Thank goodness it'll never happen here in the US; the **average punk** on the street just wouldn't stand for it.

There is hope for Portugal, however, because a rift has formed between two of the gov-



LISBON LDL GATE

ement's biggest corporate supporters. That's why I recommend that everyone take vacation to Portugal. Go in and shake things up. Smear some mud and do some dirt, and let's see if we can't get Portuguese civilization rolling again. Just make sure it rolls away from Arasaka; they're here, and if we muck this up, they could get a good strong foothold in Europe, which is almost exactly what we don't need. Support Amazonian Service and Security; they'll be easier to take out later.

TUNIS

It's a well-known fact that the EC wants to get into Afrikani. In fact, they want the whole continent. They have started with extending the Eurotheatre into the city of Tunis, which is located in Tunisia and has been a lapdog to the Europeans ever since Libya blew itself apart.

In the Eurotheatre, there are edgerunners and there are centersitters. Tunis has been carefully sculpted to be a sanitized view of 'Naf' for the European centersitter. The entire city grid and environment has been redesigned to portray authentic tourist kitsch North Africa, which is everything the aspiring centersitter wants it to be. They have 'authentic' bazaars where European netridders with artificially yellow icons will wheel and deal just like they were responsible Arabian hagglers, which, of course, there aren't any of, because these days everyone's out to stick it to everyone else.

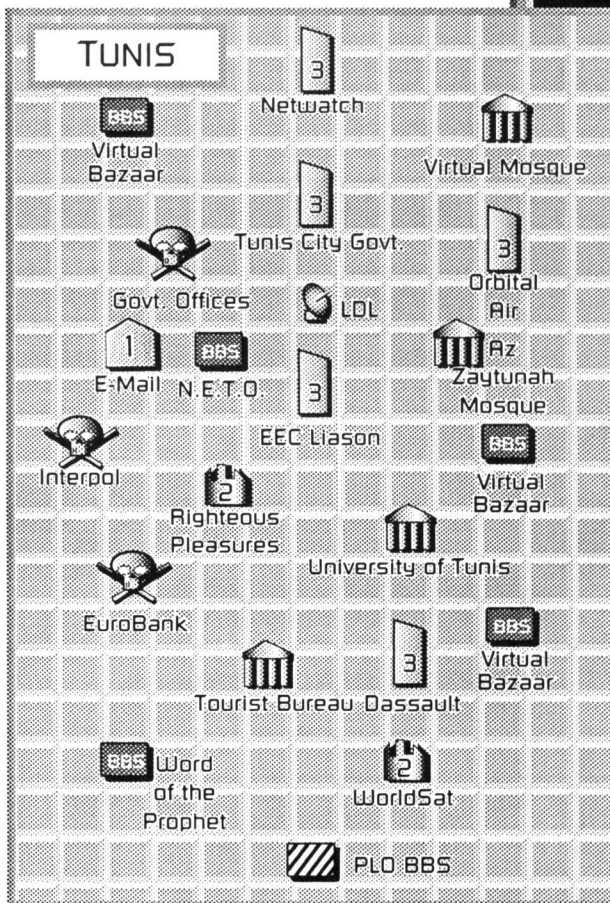
The data forts and BBSs are all designed to appear like something out of the Wind Walker video series, except not blown up. In fact, Wind Walker was produced in Europe, so they may actually have taken the Tunis city grid and dropped a few virtual bombs on it to make the Wind Walker backgrounds. That would be cheap, but efficiency is the name of the game in Europe.

Of course, this being the Eurotheatre, you can bank on there being city Net police, Netwatch freaks, and Interpol heat all over the place, although they are all generally careful to look like dozing camel traders and other such background characters.

The only reason I mention Tunis is that it's full of sheep all the time; European corporate sheep out for a 'wild night going naf' in the most sterile tourist trap imaginable. They're just looking to get fleeced, and they do so regularly. That's why I like to run through here like a fire truck through a phone booth; all bells and whistles and sight and sound and distraction to panic them and cause stampedes and overload processors and strip the sickening veneer of tourist Arabia from the city grid and unveil the real threat of the area. Once Edger and I created a virtual of an Islamic Jihad terrorist. We spent months working on the AI to make it as realistic a Net terrorist as possible. Then we made a hundred copies of it with bell-curve personality differentiation and compressed the file using a special fractal compression algorithm I devised. We expanded the file in the Mecca LDL, and fired them all at Tunis. Of course, we had a slight time delay so Edger and myself could hop over first, and panic real loud when they showed up.

They appeared, all looking mean and deadly and firing simulated flatlines and other stuff in every direction. Edger and I screamed and ran for our lives, causing a rout amongst the tourists. Interpol and Netwatch were fast to react, but it took them a few seconds to realize these were virtuals, not a highly-trained team of 100 Net terrorists, so by the time they tried to calm the crowd it was far too late. Meanwhile, Edger and I were busy dropping **viral icon editors** in all the data forts, with which we planned to turn the Tunis city grid into a representation of what we thought the EC was. We used Auschwitz, Yugoslavia, and the Amnesty Massacre as our guidelines, and by the time the tourists stopped panicking from the virtual terrorists, they started panicking at the death and destruction they saw all around them.

It was so much fun that I reversed the polarity of my trodes and ran the place again. There's no way to describe what everything looks like when near and far have been transposed in your brain. It's sort of like everything is inside out. Other things get transposed as well, but I wouldn't know how to describe them. I will say, however, that it's the only time I ever tried a virtual prostitution BBS.



EUROTHEATRE

HYPertext

VIRAL ICON EDITORS

Not really ICONs, but VRs. A nasty programming concept involving a special Anti-VR function (Similar to the Create/Delete ability of your cyberdeck Menu, but works against other's VRs; adds 25 to the programming DIFF, cost mod same as Anti-Personnel.), combined with the Anti-Program and Compiler functions. Each one is different, and is pre-programmed to overwrite/rewrite a VR with whatever VR the programmer has given it.

You match the program's STR + the DIFF rating of the new VR + 1D10 vs. the DIFF rating of the target VR + 1D10. Remember, the DIFF rating of the new VR is based on how complex it was when you created it (CP2020, pg. 172, current printing). If the target VR loses the roll, it is changed at a rate of 10x objects per round (x equals the number of the

Net round). E.g., the 1st round; 10 objects changed, the 4th round; 10,000 objects changed. See CP2020 pgs.171-172 (current printing) for the object levels in a given VR, and the DIFF ratings for creating them. Be careful introducing this one to a game, its effects in the hands of players can be painful.

HYPERTEXT

MLA DATA FORT KEY

1. Netrunner and some sort of dog program on guard duty
 2. Netrunner or dog program on duty (70% chance, 20% in connecting halls)
 3. Private LDL to other MLAs (does not allow data transmission, merely holoconferencing)
 4. Holodisplay for conferencing
 5. Data files and smear info on the other seven major MLAs (two per MU, the remaining space is filled with tidbits on the other smaller scattered MLAs like the Channel Islands MLA, a.k.a. Chismarlahuth)
 6. The good stuff. This is where all the black ops files are kept.
 7. Grey ops and current projects records
 8. The MLAs most-wanted; a good place to get recruiting information in England
 9. Miscellaneous office files, dead projects, and a few obsolete computer games
 10. Cameras at the corners of the MLA headquarters building.
- (Continued. next page)

POINTS OF INTEREST

monger MLA petty dictator, you've seen them all.

This map was made using my Instant Replay, although at the time I made the map I was really strung out having just undergone surgery for my new hardwired reflexive interface boosters which replaced the pons at the bottom of my brain. The problem was that the doctor apparently replaced the entire pons, which left my brain kind of free-floating and it tended to drift around the inside of my skull. This was very disorienting, especially since I'd had the sunroof put in the top of my cranium, so I eventually had to take my brain out and put it in my night stand. Anyway, I made this map during that disoriented time, and by the time I had my head back on straight I'd erased the Instant Replay and overwritten it with some old Speed Racer cartoons. All of which is to say; be sure you know your doctor really well. I tried to get some revenge on mine, but he'd moved with my money, and the money of several other people. We considered forming an alliance against him, but since I'd noticed that several of the other people hadn't gotten their brains back at all, I decided not to pursue the matter.

In fact, it's really very important to trust your doctor when he's implanting things into your brain, because you want to know everything that he's putting in. The worst thing would be to have some new stuff put in against your will, and which you would never know about. That's how the Eurocorps ensure the allegiance of their employees, you know. They give them these neat little interface plugs which also monitor their brain, and legions of Freudian psychoanalysts track each of the corporates to see if there are any disloyal thoughts in there, and if there are, they release little nanotech termites into their brains to restructure them for a better fit to their place as cogs.

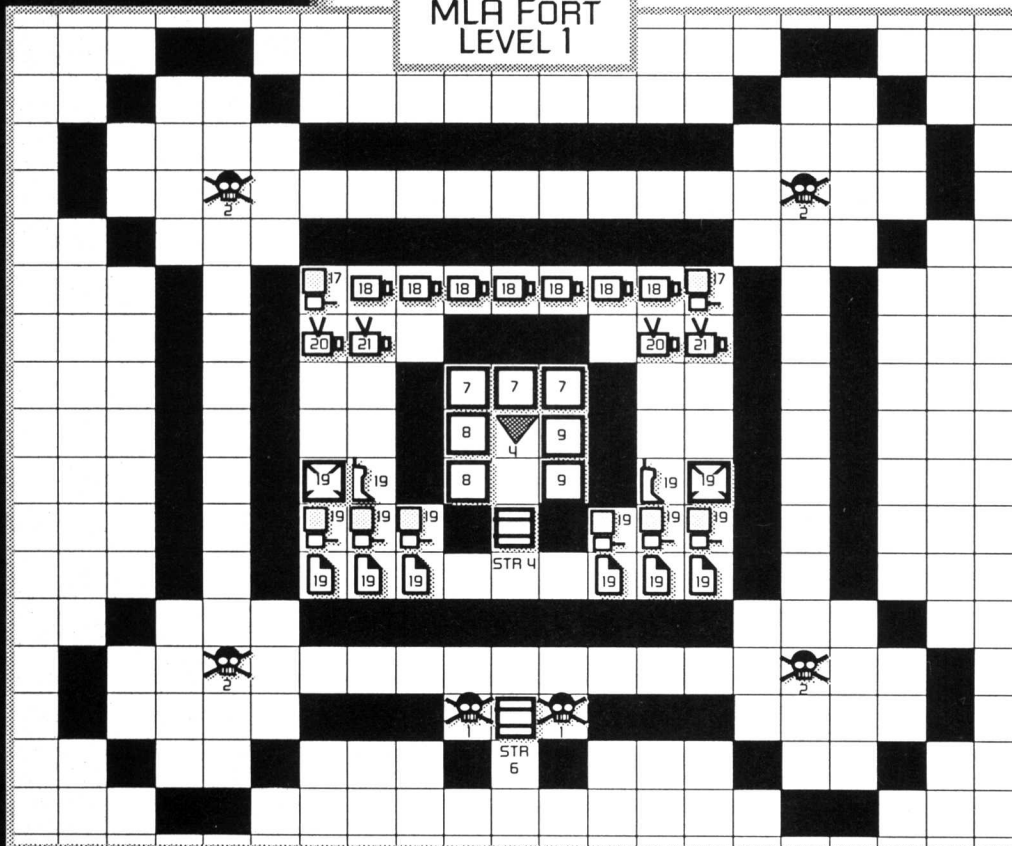
Despite the fact that they act otherwise, the MLA runners are every bit the cogs as well, because they are guttersnipes who stab their street brethren in the back. This is one of the many reasons I dislike the MLA, and why therefore I am giving you this map, inaccurate as it may be.

The data fort is, like all MLA data forts, a heavy metal, dark fantasy sadist's dream, all black stones and cold iron spikes for your fetishist gratification. Be warned, however, that the spikes are

not just for appearance's sake; they are an **upgraded version** of data walls.

See, the walls around the MLA data fort are capable of limited counter-program or occasional counter-personnel actions. If they are not taken out by whatever intrusion program you're using, they can cause your program to bomb or even inflict burn damage on your soft matter. They even have a few code gates and black ice programs scattered around the outside edge re-compiled to have the same icon, just to snafu any weeflerunners who always use jackhammers without first checking the system with a SeeYa utility. I am mildly surprised to see that the counter-intrusion data walls have not been picked up for use elsewhere, but I figure that it's because the MLA programmers are second-rate. [Actually, I've seen a few other data forts with similar counter-intrusion data walls. The ones in New Mexico were represented as electric fences, and the ones in Malaya looked like writhing walls of vines. - SM]

MLA FORT LEVEL 1



Other than data walls which snarf your intrusion programs, the MLA data forts are not all that impressive. They don't have a lot of money, so they're labor-intensive. Bodies are one thing not in short supply in England.

There's not a lot of black ice in the systems, because they can't afford much, but there are a lot of netrunners all of whom are made to look like knights or some more modern English men-of-war.

The center of the data fort is known as 'The Keep', and it is the nerve center of the data fort. I did get a good laugh in here, because the three CPUs were represented as the 'hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil' monkeys, all hanging from the ceiling by their tails. The inner courtyard is filled with the various and sundry electronic goodies which help run the MLA headquarters building. The outer ring is strictly for security and appearance.

The MLA data fort is one of the few data forts I've encountered for government or large corporations that does not have an AI. I think this is because the MLA fears what it can't directly control, and they didn't want to have a 'politically unreliable' AI in charge of their system.

N.E.T.O.

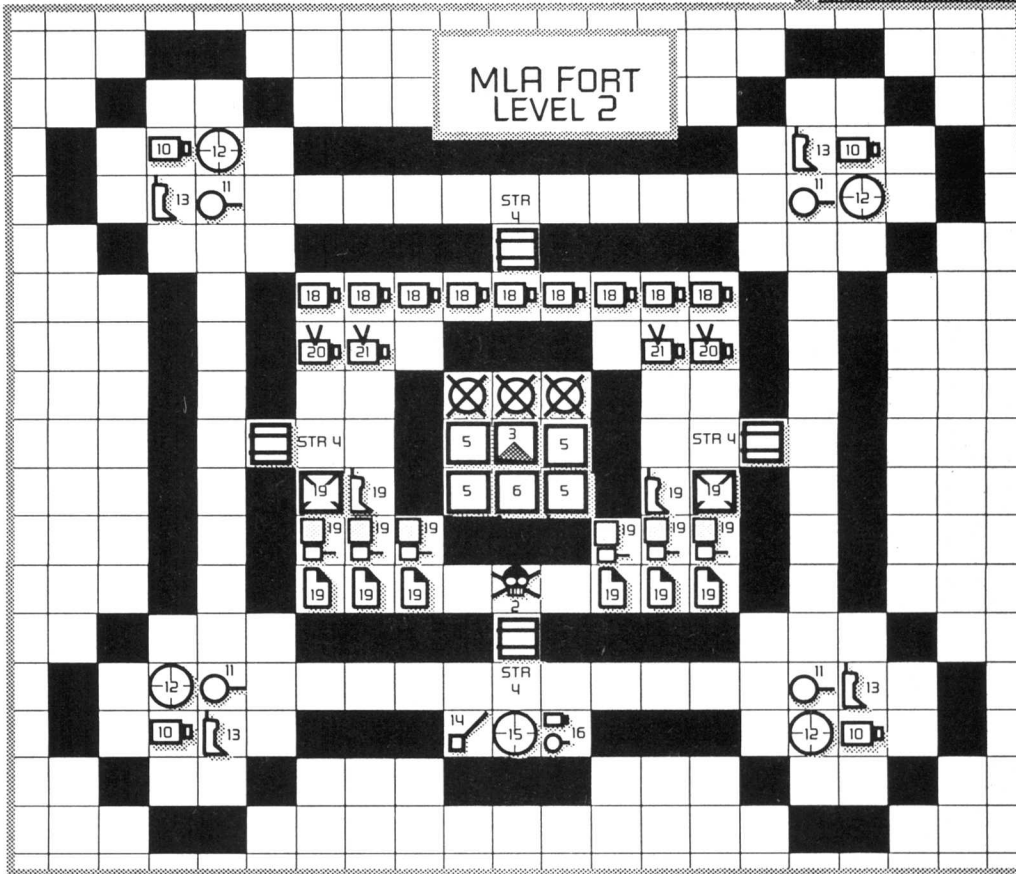
N.E.T.O. is a string of bulletin boards found all across the Eurotheatre which carry all the interesting information you can't get anywhere else in the corporate-dominated region. I don't particularly know what this acronym stands for, nor do I really care.

N.E.T.O. boards can be found in every major city grid, and they are always mobbed by hundreds of netrunners, from counterculture cyberpunks searching for the real scoop to corporate lackeys doing some research on their superiors. Since N.E.T.O. BBSs are so popular, and because they don't pass out code or stock information on how to build viruses, the powers that be pretty much leave them alone. Sure, a lot of what they post is damaging to corporations or governments, but hey, it's all the truth, or at least it all appears to be, and there's no law against telling the truth, just sometimes it's against the law to get the truth, especially when someone's got it locked inside his data fort and has paid off the local judge.

N.E.T.O. boards concern themselves primarily with those items that are of direct interest to true cyberpunks; real music, real art, corporate greed, government waste, dirt on politicians and corporates, and how to protect yourself. There are also reviews of the various bits of hardware available on both the free and black market and maps of various data forts all carefully reworded to be 'fictitious parodies', so that the mapped corporations can't file suit.

Although it falls short of other hard-core BBSs in terms of code-swapping and illegal activities, N.E.T.O. is a freely-accessible public firm for everything not official. Their fees are cheap, and once you've done some good uploading, you'll get a complimentary lifetime pass.

Oh, by the way, the N.E.T.O. boards are all interconnected, downloading interesting bits to each other via microwave pulse transmissions about once a day. No need to worry about checking each of the boards to get all the facts. On the other hand, nothing older than a week will likely be found on these boards either. Only the most earth-shattering items will remain on for longer, and I've never known anything to last a whole month.



(MLA Data Fort Key Cont.)

11. Microphones at the corners of the MLA headquarters building
 12. Remote controls for machine guns at the corners of the MLA headquarters building
 13. Phone links to the security desk in realspace
 14. Gate control for the front door of the real-world headquarters
 15. Machine gun at the front gate
 16. Control for the camera / microphone / security array at the front gate
 17. Redundant security terminals at the main desk
 18. Cameras throughout the interior of the headquarters
 19. Secretarial pool, printers, computers, phones, etc.
 20. Remote surveillance virtual cameras, one for each tower
 21. Remote surveillance virtual cameras, one for each outer wall
- Exterior code gate strength 6, interior gates strength 4. Data walls strength 5.

HYPERTEXT

UPGRADED VERSION
(FROM PAGE 104)

These data walls are a unique form of defence, normally seen only in European and Asian systems (GM's call). When you buy the Data Walls for your system, you pay the listed costs and specify the effect (Anti-IC or Anti-Personnel). These special walls automatically start at STR 2. If a Netrunner fails an Intrusion attempt, the Data Wall section will attack his Intrusion program (or the 'runner himself) directly at the listed Data Wall strength.

Anti-IC

4800eb plus 160eb/STR point to a maximum of 5. Effects equal to a *Killer* of the same STR.

Anti-Personnel

30,000eb plus 1000eb/STR point to a maximum of 5. Effects equal to *Stun* at STR 2-3, *Spazz* at STR 4, *Hellbolt* at STR 5.

A

PROPRIETARY LDL

It has a Security of 0 and a trace value of 3, so don't be afraid to get out to it. Of course, Netwatch and the Eurocorps may get wise to this little back door any day now, not to mention that it's a long way to walk...

REYKJAVIK

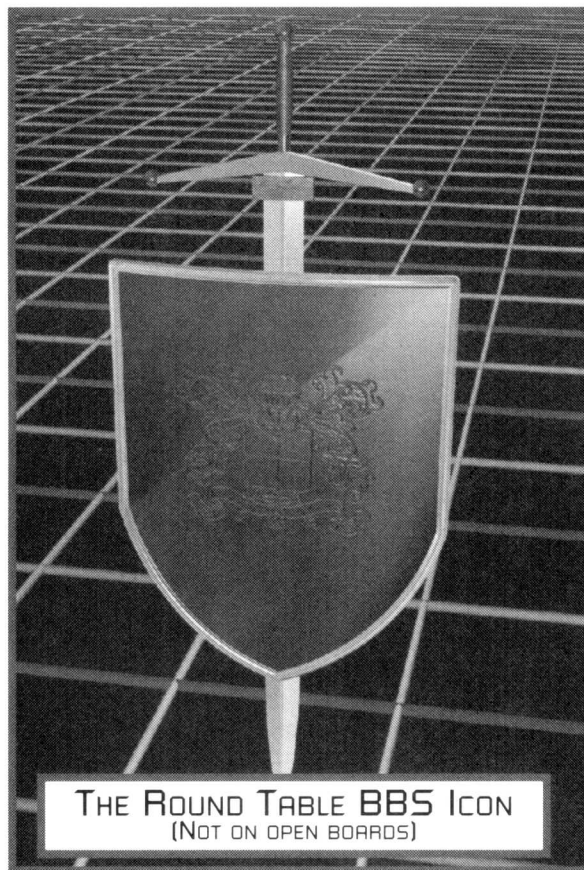
I swear, Europeans are every bit as egocentric as Americans and Japanese. If it's not on their doorstep, it's not worth considering. That's why people tend to ignore Iceland like they ignore Greenland. It's a small country, none too wealthy, and a bit out of the way. Everyone tends to overlook the fact that it's a part of the Eurotheatre.

Nevertheless, it's there, and the EC has a Community data fort there just like they do in the capitals of all the other European countries, even Liechtenstein, although it has never joined the EC nor has it ever expressed any interest in so doing, but hey, who are the eurocorps to pay attention to the desires of those weaker than them, right?

The funny thing is that Reykjavik, aside from being a place where some real edgerunners hang out, is the back door to the EC. Netwatch patrols almost never come out here, because there's really nothing to see and not that many people to harass. Interpol rarely comes out here because there's very little crime that they're interested in. And the only EC bureaucrats that come here are the ones who can't avoid being sent here.

The EC data fort in Reykjavik is small and under-funded, and staffed by people who want to get away or whom others want to ignore. Yet, like all EC data forts, they have a **proprietary LDL** connecting them to the rest of the EC data forts. Does that mean you can run against a small squad of limp EC wash-ups and get into the EC LDL network? It sure does.

I use this LDL every time I want to really hit the EC where it hurts. They never have figured out how I do it because I'm always careful to lay a false trail through other people's terminals and such. Give it a shot. The security is low, and the trace protection is high.



THE ROUND TABLE BBS ICON
(NOT ON OPEN BOARDS)

THE ROUND TABLE

When I look around myself today, I have very little hope for the human race. There's dirty socks in my hamper, bodies lying bleeding in the gutters while the medics pilfer their pockets, governments stealing the taxes and pocketing them, and corporations spewing filth into the sky and water while employee drones stagger into the office to be ground up, shaped into patties, and burned alive on the grills for the fattening of the sacred cows.

More children are born by cesarean section than naturally, which is frightening when you consider that the only people who have a choice in the matter are the homeless and the nomads. According to the latest estimates, more cats and dogs are eaten than die by natural causes. The last birds are gone, and if we continue polluting the way we do, the oceans will be sterile in twenty years.

Information is being strangled, aliens are in the net, dictatorships have spread, freedom is being prostituted for prosperity, and the entire planet is sinking lower and lower until at last it will be swamped by the foul creatures

which inhabit the lower planes. Soon, small coin-like chitinous creatures will eat out our eyes and burrow through the roofs of our mouths until we strangle on our own greed.

And yet, there are people like the Round Table who give me hope.

Everyone hates the MLAs, except possibly their mothers, and even they are hard-pressed when they see what their miscarriages have become to England. The MLA has revisited the feudal era, and replaced freedom with fear. No one likes them, and many of their own people are fighting back, including the Round Table, which is a netrunning organization and possibly the best-organized anti-MLA group in existence.

The only thing that worries me is that they talk about King Arthur. Fantasy in and of itself doesn't bother me, but talking about it as if it were real does. Hey, would you trust a certified psy-

chopath to give you advice on how to run the Net and take on the MLA? Next thing you'll know they'll be seeing dragons in Netspace.

They claim King Arthur is with them, and the only way I can excuse such flagrant hallucination is to assume that King Arthur is **one of their netrunners** and a charismatic leader who has built himself into kind of an idol. At least he built himself a cult based on fighting the evil of the MLA and not on worshipping those things which crawl just beyond your range of vision, which is also where the aliens usually hide. Makes me wonder if the aliens are in league with those crawling things.

The Round Table meets at seemingly random places and times. As near as I can tell, a meeting happens when several of the knightrunners meet each other by chance, and the others home in. At each meeting they swap code, hints, tips, passwords, and war stories, then each meeting ends with a run on whichever MLA needs a beating. I love these guys, because I love the chaos and fury and confusion of a mass run on a data fort, with all these knight and horse icons running rampant among all these other, more normal icons. I, of course, added a whole plethora of sound effects and a few damsel virtuals with ripped dresses just to keep the sysops distracted. I don't see why naked ladies are such a big deal, especially in the Net where nothing is what it seems. I know three good runners who got nailed by the **Fatal Attractor** because they were just suckers for a pretty face in a skintight suit. That's why I started hanging out with female runners. They're less ruled by their hormones... three times out of five.

So check out the Round Table, if you can find them, and strike a blow against the MLA so the English can get back on top of the European pig-pile

THE SCANDINAVIAN BLOC

The northern nations of Norway, Sweden, Finland and assorted anti-Russian minor duchies have banded together to form a sort of fringe collection of ignored countries which by and large exist in peace except for the Baltics who are always at each others' throats. These lands are a sort of flea market for the EC, because the wealthy don't like to have to abide by the rules that they set 'for the good of the people', so they go to Scandinavia and flaunt their cash to cover for the fact that they ignore the Scandies the rest of the week.

Here the wealthy Europeans get their drugs, their cyber, and their various illegal or tariff-strangled goods that are difficult to get on the continent. But you don't care about that, do you? Let them get slagged on maxiglas and snarf each other with their polychrome rippers up in their penthouse suites; what do you care, anyway?

But the Scandinavian Bloc does more than cater to the jaded tastes of the physically-indulgent. They are also producers of excellent and unusual (i.e., illegal in Europe) items. Skälderviken SA, which is a **leading producer of black ice**, can be found here in Stockholm, Sweden, and their programs are hot sellers. Sweden is also popular for their erotic braindances, but the allure of such meat-and-hormone-oriented programming escapes me.

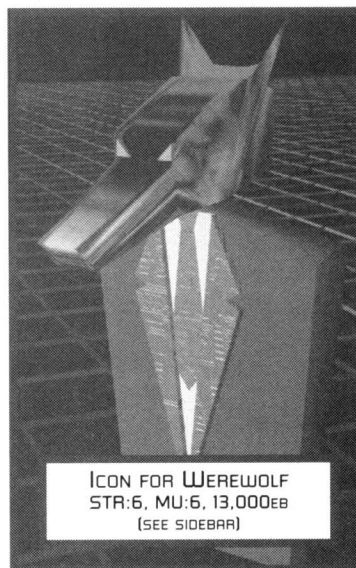
There's another good reason to visit the Scandinavian Bloc, folks, and that's to bushwhack a Eurotheatre corporate netrunner off doing something he's not supposed to. You can either follow them and get lots of good blackmail information, or you could zap them up front just to take them out. You could even trace their line and do a counter-run on his deck or home computer system while he's out gallivanting around the north end of Europe.

The Scandinavian NetCops are very tolerant of hijinks in their part of the region (they have to be; cyberpunks are their main source of revenue), but the Netwatch licemen are as harsh as ever, so don't get too casual.

SOVSPACE

The LDLs at Bucharest and Warsaw are technically inside the SovSpace region, but their location in New Central Europe (the Wastebasket of the West) makes them effectively a part of the Eurotheatre. The EC is making advances in **extending the Eurotheatre into this area**, and it is here that we can stop the EC from spreading itself like mustard gas across the map.

Netwatch runners already patrol this area, and the EC has emissarial data forts near the two LDLs and in a few other city grids as well. The Russians, of course, have their own data forts in the region, administering the SovSpace needs.



EUROTHEATRE

HYPertext

ONE OF THEIR NETRUNNERS

These noble individuals will be Pro-level runners with Interfaces of 7-8. Very few will be Top-level since the MLA isn't the most challenging opponent.

FATAL ATTRACTOR

A nasty bit of anti personnel software which acts much like a seductive version of *Hellhound*.

STR: 7, MU: 7, 10,750eb.

See *Chromebook 1*, pg. 92, for specific effects.

LEADING PRODUCER OF BLACK ICE

Skälderviken's black ice will usually be 1-2 STR points better than most standard sources at a 25% per point increase in price. And don't even think of ripping them off.

One of their items is a version of refined version of *Hellhound*. It doesn't use the rather theatrical graphics of the conventional version, instead tracing the runner quietly with an Invisibility subroutine which prevents detection. Unless the target is using SeeYa or makes a Very Difficult Awareness roll, he won't notice the *Hellhound* until its attacking him. The nickname for this extremely illegal program is Werewolf, since it hits when you when you least expect it.

EXTENDING THE EUROTHEATRE INTO THIS AREA,

This is the battle of the switching stations and ISDNs mentioned on page 93. Eurotheatre dataforts are trying to overload the more primitive SovSpace LDLs and ISDNs with traffic so that they collapse and the Euro stations can take over. Jurisdiction is determined by I-G icons, so if the area suddenly sprouts Eurostyle, it falls under Eurotheatre, and Netwatch, coverage; the first electronic land-grab. Runners need to be aware of these kinds of border shifts, since they can mean that security and Netwatch coverage can change radically as the Eurotheatre expands.

HYPERTEXT

WAYCON KIDD

We are leaving the Kidd a bit of a mystery for the GM to flesh out. Below are enough stats to run him (or her, since the Kidd's sex is not definite) in the Net, but the actual background can be developed by the GM to best suit his or her campaign. As the *Cyberpunk* axiom goes: Keep'em guessing.

Netrunner

INT:9, REF:11, TECH:7, COOL:9,
LUCK:5, BODY:8, EMP: 6

Skills

Interface 10

Awareness/Notice 8, Composition
7, Education/Gen.Know. 8, Pro-
gramming 9, System Knowledge 8,
Basic Tech 3, Cyberdeck Design 3
+50 points of Pick up Skills.

Cyberdeck

Completely custom-built deck: 45
MU, Speed: +6 (yeah, he's that
fast), Data walls 10
Options: Anything you want. The
deck is fully portable and protect-
ed. Don't be afraid to give him
access to a mainframe if neces-
sary, but it won't be his mode of
choice since it isn't portable and
therefore might be traced.

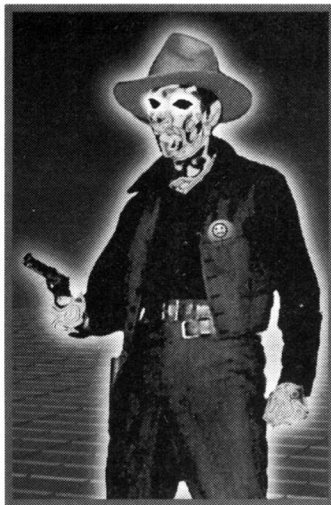
Program Mix

Use the Top-runner list (pg.152)
but add anything else as needed,
including some nasty black ice
from Skälderviken SA and other
special sources.

But not only are the Europeans and the Russians struggling over who gets the region, but the natives are also at odds with each other. Those in government (who have something to gain) are all in favor of EC administration, while those in the public sector (who haven't sold out) would prefer to remain in the freedom of SovSpace.

This means there's a lot of work available for free-lance sharks and anarchists like ourselves, folks, because the Russians and the free locals don't have the wherewithal or the equipment or the programs or the experience to hold off the EC elephant for long, and soon the EC will sit on them and they'll be crushed beneath the butt of progress.

The area is starting to look funky, too, what with the preponderance of SovSpace-style huts and warped bit grids clashing against the few ultra-modern European data forts. It would be an interesting place to take a time-lapse video to really see the changes taking place.

PERSONALITY
PROFILE

THE WAYCON KIDD

[No one knows who this shadowy figure is, all they know is that he runs the Eurotheatre with impunity and that he is the best programmer to hit the scene in years.

[Among his credits are the Vampyre II program and the Fatal Attractor. According to rumor, he has also done a few braindances under a different name, but there is no proof anywhere.

[Lest I give you the wrong impression, it is not that the Waycon Kidd has never been encountered; it is that no one knows him except within the Net. No one has ever been able to trace his line, or at least been able to do so and live to tell about it. He always runs the Net quickly and efficiently, never in the Net for more than fifteen minutes. This is his single trait most unlike Rache Bartmoss, who has been known to jack in for days at a time.

[The **Waycon Kidd** appears as an Old West cowboy, complete with spurs and trail dust. He always speaks in English, although his accent changes from time to time; sometimes it's a German accent, sometimes French, sometimes Russian or Japanese.

[I had the privilege of interviewing him for this file. He wasn't going to accede to my request, until he found out who I was and who was writing it. - SM]

"You want for me to talk of the Net.

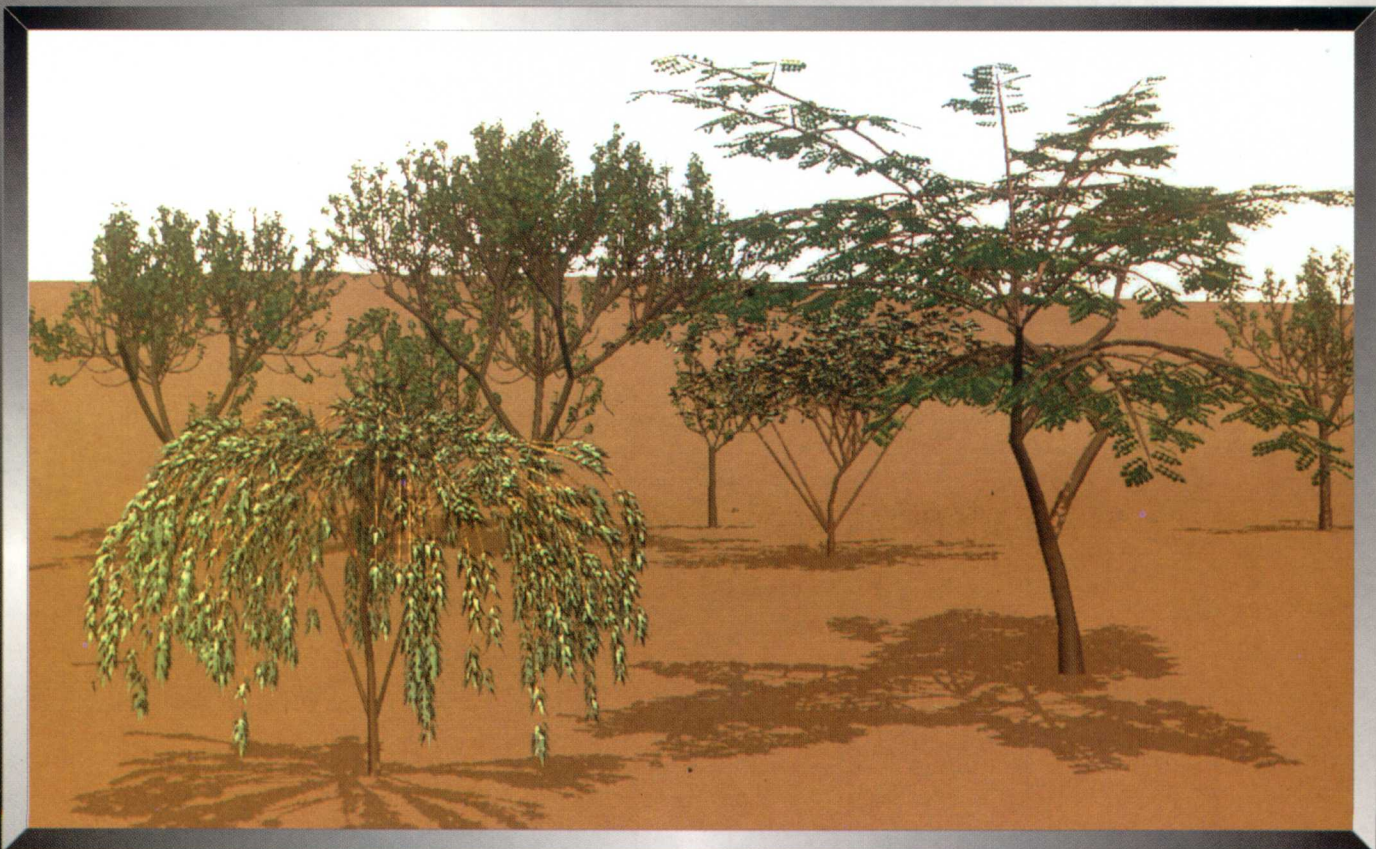
"The Net is my life, but I realize that my life is but a part of the greater, that my *Weltanschauung* is but one of many in the world. The Net is one aspect of the modern battleground wherein we cybersoldats fight against those who wish to remake our planet in their own *verdammte* image. I feel we must make this a better world, else our *Kinder* must fight in our stead.

"I fight in the Net because I have the training, the skill, the — *wie sagt mann* — the knack for electronic struggle. I think not that the Net is more important than other aspects. The media, the streets, and the music are all important. In ways, each is invulnerable to the others. If we lose on one front we lose on all. I just do what I do best.

"I conceal my identity because this is the information age, and the less information I give, the better. If they do not know who I am they cannot harm me, or my family, or my friends. There has been speculation that I am a corporate runner, or an EC bureaucrat, or even an artificial intelligence. All of these theories are cleverly argued, but I cannot comment on them. I confess that a secret identity is a difficult burden, and for that reason I envy Rache Bartmoss. He is truly untouchable.

"I give advice to young netrunners. I will not call them weefles, because we once were all young and naive. To them I say—trust no one, especially with your life. The Eurocorps are strong, and small runners are nothing to them. They can kill you by pinching one of your friends and making him turn against you. Keep your social life and your work entirely separate. Perhaps in America it is easier to live outside the law, but it is difficult in *Europa*. No one among my *geschwistern* knows what I do, and I have no friends in the Net. It is better that way for all.

"Finally, many have said that I am the best runner in the world. I do not know. Rache Bartmoss, Edger, Dog, and you, Spider, are all excellent runners. *Es macht nichts*. I say, it does not matter if you are the best. It only matters if you are as good as your potential. If everyone were as good as their potential, we would not be in this evil situation."



CHAPTER

7

SOVSPACE
AFRIKANI



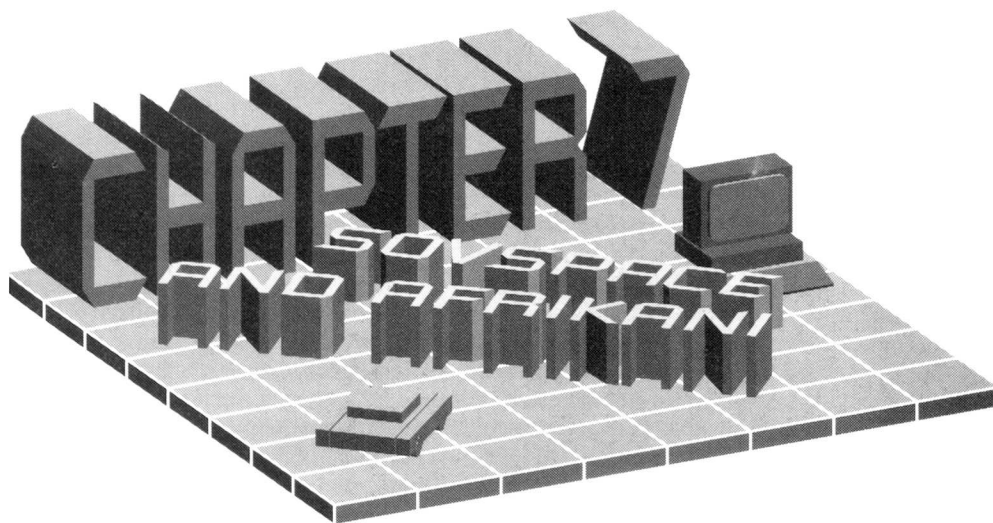
SOV/AFRIK REGIONAL MAP



DATATERM

CIRCLED LDLS ARE THE WORLD LEVEL ACCESS POINTS AND ARE THE ONLY LDLS USABLE ON THE WORLD SCALE

AFRIKANI CITY	CONTROLLED BY:	SECURITY LVL	TRACE VALUE	CITY	CONTROLLED BY:	SECURITY LVL	TRACE VALUE	CITY	CONTROLLED BY:	SECURITY LVL	TRACE VALUE
Accra Ghana	Free African Foundation	1	2	Lusaka	None	1	1	Kiev	USSR/EEC	3	2
Addis Ababa	Pan-African Confederation	2	2	Mecca	Islamic Radicals	2	3	Kuibyev	USSR/EEC	3	3
Algiers	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	3	2	Nairobi	PAC/Orbital Air	2	2	Leningrad (St. Petersburg)	USSR/EEC	2	2
Ascension	Central American Federation	2	3	Ouagadougou	General Bapou	2	2	Minsk	USSR/EEC	3	1
Antananarivo	Madagascar Traditionalists	3	4	Tehran	None	1	3	Mogocha	USSR/EEC	1	1
Canary Islands	EEC/Eurocorps	3	2	Tunis	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	2	3	Moscow	USSR/EEC	3	2
Casablanca	EEC/Eurocorps	3	2	Zanzibar/Dar-es-Salaam	Pan-African Confederation	2	2	Murmansk	USSR/EEC	3	2
Dakar	None	2	2	SOVS	USSR/EEC	2	3	Novosibirsk	USSR/EEC	2	3
Delhi	None	1	2	Arkhangelsk	USSR/EEC	1	3	Omsk	USSR/EEC	3	3
Gibraltar	Britain/US Govt.	3	2	Baku	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	3	3	Rostov	USSR/EEC	3	3
Jerusalem	Israeli Govt.	3	2	Berlin	None	2	3	Sverdlovsk	USSR/EEC	3	3
Johannesburg	None	1	1	Bucharest	None	3	3	Tashkent	USSR/EEC	2	3
Khartoum	Pan-African Confederation	2	2	Budapest	None	1	1	Tehran	None	1	3
Kigali	Pan-African Confederation	2	2	Irkutsk	USSR/EEC	1	1	Vienna	Netwatch/EEC/Eurocorps	3	3
Kinskase	Socialist Purity Front	2	2	Istanbul	None	1	3	Vladivostok	USSR/EEC	2	2
Lagos	None	2	2	Kabul	None	1	3	Volgograd	USSR/EEC	3	3
				Karaganda	USSR/EEC	2	3	Warsaw	None	3	2
				Khabarovsk	USSR/EEC	1	1				



SOVS SPACE

A giant region sprawled over the largest continent, a refuge of anarchy and totalitarianism behind the 'Vacuum-Tube Curtain'.

OVERVIEW

"S ick puppies. They got a serious death wish back there. Didja ever noticed that they designed all the street lamps to look like gallows?"
— Edger

"It is as if we succeeded in creating a perfect hell."
— Dmitri Menentyev

"We are not dominated by the EC. We are not dominated by the USPG or Netwatch. We bear the yoke of outdated hardware, but it is a yoke we bear freely, and with pride."
— 357 Cossack

"So we get killed. Who cares?"
— Just Ivan

SovSpace is a claustrophobic region spilled like the disregarded past around the ankles of the majority of the Asian continent. It stretches from Murmansk to Teheran, and from Budapest to the Pacific Ocean. I don't really know what's going on in Russia these days, nor why the eastern portions of Europe would concede themselves to be inside SovSpace instead of the Eurotheatre. I'm not sure anyone knows, really.

[It's my opinion that the EC has allowed New Central Europe to get swallowed up by SovSpace as a punitive measure. It's well-known that the EC neglects Poland, Romania, and the other eastern European nations, and they're using Netspace as one lever against them. Some politicians in these countries are negotiating concessions to the EC in exchange for the expansion of the Eurotheatre region into their countries. It's a pretty sleazy way of doing business, if you ask me. It's like locking your child outside in the acid rain, charging her to be allowed access into her own bedroom, and then complaining when she breathes your air. Nonetheless, NCE is falling for it (or perhaps key delegates are paid to fall for it), and it looks like the borders of SovSpace will roll back to the frontiers of the USSR in a few years. - SM]

The majority of the systems and runners in SovSpace are located at the extreme western edge of the region, in the area bounded by St. Petersburg, Volgograd, and the European borders. There are a smattering of LDLs in the southern areas (penetrating into Iran), and there is of course the Trans-Siberian Netway. The Netway was installed by SovOil to allow better corporate intercommunication, much to the diminishment of the future prospects of the planet. The Trans-Siberian Netway LDLs are, in order, Omsk - Novosibirsk - Irkutsk - Mogocha - Khabarovsk - Vladivostok. The number of LDLs required just to get across to the far side of the USSR should give you an idea how much empty Wilderspace can be found lurking at the periphery of SovSpace. More on that frightening prospect later.

ST. PETERSBURG

There is a considerable technical community in St. Petersburg that has the resources to maintain a fairly good Net that rivals Moscow in sophistication and complexity. Their systems will not suffer the same sort of failures noted for other Sovsystems in this chapter. Just goes to show that Rache doesn't know everything.

THE LINE OF SIGHT IS DESPERATELY SHORT

The sighting radius in city grids is 5-10 squares (1D6+4); in subgrids you can only see up to 10 squares. If a 'runner spends more than two Net rounds traveling on the edge of a citygrid, there is a 2 in 10 chance that he'll wander off the city-grid into Wilderspace and must make an Difficult System Knowledge roll to return to the exact spot he left. Otherwise, he re-enters the citygrid 1-6 squares away from his original exit point.

NEW CENTRAL EUROPE

This would be Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and a now segregated Czechoslovakia. None of these countries have fared particularly well since the Collapse, but those that aren't tearing themselves apart in civil wars are making a valiant effort to jump on the EC economic bandwagon. See *Eurosource*, pg. 16, for details.



Despite all this room, SovSpace is claustrophobic, at least in my opinion, which, of course, is the only one that counts, unless you think that the aliens have more credibility than I do. If so, then I'd like to meet you and find out how you talked to them, since none of them I've met has been as good a conversationalist as, say, a water faucet, because at least a water faucet will make dripping noises whereas all the aliens were was a point source of bizarre emanations.

The SovSpace virtual is made of a combination of future shock, claustrophobia, and reminiscences for lost days of glory and global power, bolstered by paranoia, sub-rate systems, and a harsh survivalist pragmatism. The system constructs appear as European burghs, old-fashioned with narrow, winding cobbled streets and data forts crammed together tighter than apartments in San Frisco. Entire city grids are so jam-packed that the uninitiated American runner can try to run to the edge of a city grid and suddenly find himself in the next country. Nothing is clear, nothing is straight, and **the line of sight is desperately short.**

This latter is due in large part to the antiquated a-couple-wires-and-a-toothpick systems they run in SovSpace. The systems are, quite simply, not up to the processing capacity required of them, so they make up for it with a number of cheats, including bending space, which I thought was only possible with black holes or the creative application of Jovian Muon-Zilch Fibrillators of the type which swallowed the Zargonian Embassy into the eighth dimension. See, the data lines in SovSpace, even though they are laid out in a grid pattern, are not represented as such in Netspace. All lines of perception in SovSpace are bent, shortening line of sight and therefore imaging-processing requirements. Every street is bent, sometimes left, sometimes right, sometimes down like you're walking over a small hill. Inside large data forts, perception is warped as well. This is a problem for the novice netrunner, since the continual random bends can confuse a runners' sense of direction, but I've never had any problems, because my perceptions have been seriously warped since birth. My mom had a hospital delivery, and I think my so-called doctor dropped me on my head a few times. While I'd never advocate a hospital birth or cerebral concussions to anyone, they seem to have worked for me. Last I saw of my mom they'd stuck her on a meat hook and were wheeling her down to recovery, while they tossed me into the nursery room like I was a chick in an incubator. That's my earliest memory, on this plane of existence at least. The doctor was juggling brain spoons as they strapped the next mother on the rack. I think they'd decided she'd give birth to a politician.

Aside from the bent perceptions afforded by the lame processors, there is little special about the SovSpace virtual. No floating dolphins, no spaceships, no giant machines thrumming as runners get crushed between the gears. Basic squashed homes, carriages for data buses, everything a sort of Victorian/Czarist antiquity, with a curiously compelling combination of sedate tranquillity and cloak-and-dagger malevolence.

Pragmatically speaking, the runners in SovSpace are reckless, and the defenses thin but harsh. If penetrating a western data fort is like walking through a minefield, then penetrating a SovSpace data fort is like walking through a field trapped with one and only one carefully-hidden nuclear bomb.

POWER PLAYERS

SovSpace is one of the few places where Netwatch is not at all welcome. Here, Netwatch is properly seen as an unsavory appendage of the European Community. Thanks to the machinations of Gorborev, the USSR has united against the EC and the US, and has managed to maintain independence in the face of increasing EC pressure. As part of a way to resist that pressure, the USSR has formally announced that anyone affiliated with Netwatch is expressly forbidden entrance into SovSpace. In a curious role reversal, Netwatch has lodged formal protests against this move, indicating that this is act prevents free and unrestricted access to the Net, a concept that Netwatch is actively fighting on all other fronts. Hypocrites.

Of course, the countries of **New Central Europe** are toadying to the EC, so Netwatch is allowed into the hinterlands of SovSpace. They also clandestinely penetrate deeper into SovSpace on occasion, but it is risky so to do, because the Russian runners have open license to zap 'em. Heck, Russian secret police will even skulk into Eastern Europe to pull a few quick flatlines on irritant Netwatch runners. The majority of SovSpace is self-policed by a bunch of self-serving psychopaths from the various power players in the region, who, not so coincidentally, are outlined below.

THE DUCHESS

I've always heard about Mother Russia, and now I know she exists, as the AI in charge of this region. There's really very little to say for her, though, because, with all the second-rate hardware and the large spread of the LDLs in the eastern part of the region, she has never developed much of a personality. She is gullible, infantile, and inactive. Talking to her is like talking to a child that's watching Saturday-morning cartoons.

The best thing about her, though, is that if you can get her to help you, people will write off any apparent system discrepancies to the quality of the SovSpace hardware.



KGB

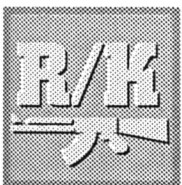
"Of course! The international organization of evil and rottenness!"

— Maxwell Smart

The Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti was officially decapitated after the **Nights of Fire**, but that hasn't kept the Sword and Shield of the Party from functioning. The KGB has a lot of financial reserves, secreted in Swiss bank accounts, and their infrastructure extends around the world. Members are addictively loyal to their service and to the party (in that order), so when the KGB was ousted, business went on as usual, with regaining power becoming a priority. Heck, they probably even advocate changing the names of Volgograd and St. Petersburg back to Stalingrad and Leningrad, with maybe a Kruschyevgrad and Andropovgrad and Grzenlovkripulastnayarskorlhpupetrovsksgad thrown in for good measure.

The KGB concentrates on the USSR because they've found that without official government support, they are viewed as little more than criminals to be shot on sight, which, in fact, they are, even with government backing. Thus, most KGB officers are now back inside the USSR's borders, fomenting unrest and rebellion, blackmailing government people, and generally being the revolutionaries they've always purported to be, but inside their own country for a change. The populace doesn't seem to take too kindly to it, because communism is well-known not to work for anyone but those in power who can stick straws into the veins of whomever they want and do so with disturbing frequency until everyone walking around Red Square looks anemic, but with a giant scab-encrusted needle sticking out of their torso while bloated monkeys jump from back to back and take their nourishment.

KGB runners are heartless mercenaries working to ensure they once again get a steady paycheck, but fortunately they consider most foreign netrunners to be resources instead of enemies. If you ever deal with the KGB, make sure your past is clean, or at least that you're comfortable with your dirt. They are well-known for employing blackmail, and are very good at getting the information. In fact, I might begrudgingly add, they are possibly the best netrunners in SovSpace, but that's only because I don't live there any more. In fact, I never did live there, at least not that I remember, but you never know what I might have erased from my own brain for safety's sake.



ROSTOVIC / KALISHNIKOV

Rostovic, the heavy-handed makers of chunky Russian cybernetics, and Kalishnikov, the heirs to the Russian gun-making dynasties, have sent their best negotiators into the same room where they are making primal grunts like they might join forces as soon as they quit beating their chests and smashing each other in the face with bowls of caviar, which, to me, is suspiciously like sushi.

They apparently have dreams of being one corporation, the Greater Russian Lethal Equipment Manufacturers or something, and then declaring themselves independent just like SovOil. The government takes a dim view of these proceedings, and SovOil itself has yet to take a stand, although you can bet they'll try to swallow R/K whole if they can.

In the meantime, R/K corporate agents are starting to act with greater nerve, impunity, and panache.



SOVOIL

"The scientific concept of dictatorship means neither more nor less than unlimited power resting directly on force, not limited by anything, nor restrained by any laws or any absolute rules."

— Vladimir Ilyich Lenin

SovOil, which declared its privatization (read: right to do whatever it wants) in 2002, is the only corporation to have real influence inside the USSR's borders. Granted,

NIGHTS OF FIRE

See *Eurosource*, pg.18 and *Solo of Fortune*, pg.58 for details on the KGB anti-reformist coup in Russia.

KGB RUNNERS

These guys will be mid-level (75%) to Pro-level (25%) runners working hard to restore the communist system. They will either use you or fry you. Foreign runners should be prepared to cut a deal or take them out on the spot. They will maintain a low profile though, so the trick is finding them. If you run across one in the act, chances are you're doing something equally illegal and should leave as soon as possible.

SOVOIL

Sovoil declared themselves an independent corporation in 2002. This means that, while still associated with the government, they have the freedom to run the corporation as the Company Director sees fit. *Corp Book 3* has the full breakdown of the USSR's only independent corporation.

HYPERTEXT

CRACK COMBAT PROGRAMMERS

These guys will be Pro level (65%, the balance being Mid-levels Or Weefs) with Interface skills of 7. They will know their territory (System Knowledge 7) and have black ice to spare. They will generally only be found around SovOil interests, although a few may run missions into other nets. Despite the general disdain in which most Westerners hold SovSpace, these guys get *respect*.

GRUESOME RUNNERS

As the text indicates, these guys really aren't all that gruesome and their stats back it up: Mid level runners in general with a few Pro level veterans around to keep the average runners in line. They will be polite and inquisitive, but any aggressive action will be met with lethal force...assuming that they aren't already dead.

SLOW DOWN TO A PONDEROUS RUSSIAN CRAWL

This means that movement rates can sometimes (GMs call) drop to 2, or even 1, square per Net round. Another result may be a one point increase in LDL Security levels for those links that are connected solely to other SovSpace terminals. (This isn't really higher security, but your sluggish cyberdeck signal; the converse effect is higher Trace values as well.)

some Eurocorps have offices in the western edge of SovSpace, but the biggest bludgeon, far and away, has SovOil written on it.

SovOil has a net force made up of **crack combat programmers**. Most westerners refer to them as the Black Ice Berets, since they are largely drawn from the Black Berets which were the nucleus of SovOil's corporate security force. Imagine, if you will what an American corporation would act like if it were the only big kid on the block. Pretty frightening, huh? That's SovOil in SovSpace. If I weren't so busy hating Petrochem, I'd have to do something about it.



USSR

The government of the Union of Sovereign Soviet Republics is, nominally, the power at the helm of SovSpace. They have a lot of netrunners trying very hard to keep the peace in the Net, but they are largely ineffectual because they don't have license really to do much other than sit around and watch net crimes take place, which really isn't such a bad thing, because I spend a lot of my time doing just that.

They do have a secret police organization though, both in Netspace and realspace: the GRU. The Glavnoye Razvedyvatelnoye Upravleniye is the Chief Intelligence Directorate for the Soviet General Staff and the main secret arm of the government. After the Nights of Fire, the USSR officially obliterated the KGB as an untrustworthy organization rank with the accumulated filth of seventy years of die-hard communism. They then took the GRU, which used to be a purely military subdivision of government intelligence, and shaped it into their new intelligence arm after first purging any suspected KGB loyalists. This had the net effect of taking a lapdog, emasculating it, and giving it rabies.

The GRU has since presented itself as an effective intelligence arm with the prime directive of combating the KGB, which, like the Death Zombies, refuses to die. The GRU is also charged with trying to prevent anyone else from pulling a power coup in the manner of SovOil, although it could be argued that SovOil has no manners at all. **GRUesome netrunners** are generally nicer than most others you'll find in SovSpace, because the USSR government can ill afford to alienate anyone. They are, as a result, very watchful and paranoid and quick to react, because the official party line for them is not to shoot first. I'm sure you're all aware that the one to launch their ice second is usually the one who gets a megawatt power surge through his central nervous system.

A VARIETY OF PIP-SQUEAKS

Despite the existence of the Union government, the independent governments of the various republics have also fielded netrunners. These they send on runs against their neighbors, whom they petulantly war with, despite all agreements to the contrary. With all these factions sending fanatics into the Net, you never know who you might meet in SovSpace. I actually ran into a runner who claimed to be from the Independent Ural Liberation Counterrevolutionary Council, whatever that is. Probably him and his mom and Mooshkie the guard dog starving on a chain outside their hut.

To actually make a list of all the R's in the USSR as well as all the two-bit outfits for violence, revolution, independence, interdependence, and codependence would take too much time. If you ever lack for something to do, though, dig out your grandparent's Scrabble set, grab a handful of random letters, and prowl SovSpace looking for an organization with that acronym.

CITY GRIDS

Really, most of the city grids are kind of boring, because the communist state pretty well bred and trained imagination and creativity out of their people for so long, preferring that everyone instead be like a Pringle's potato chip, all bland and uniform, and so what if there's some crushed at the bottom?

Since then, although free enterprise has, after a fashion, been allowed to run its chaotic course through the Russian economy, people are still watchful. They know the KGB is still out there, and they also live under the twin specters of the government and SovOil. The Russian runners don't take freewheeling risks like their western counterparts, though this does not mean they aren't risk-takers. They just aren't as imaginative. Some of their programmers are pretty damn good, although they, like their Cyrillic cyberware manufacturing counterparts, tend towards the ponderous instead of the sleek.

Similarly, at times the Net itself in SovSpace will **slow down to a ponderous Russian crawl** as demands of processing overwhelm the regional AI. At these times, it seems that reality slows down, which for me is only something that I experienced while approaching light speed. Reality being slower, then, gives a disproportionate advantage to those who, like me, are possessed of superior intellect, because you have more time to plan and plot and execute while reality flows

about you like molasses through an hourglass. At least programs still work, and you can still watch while someone gets his brain fried and has all the more time to think about it before he goes.

KIEV

The capital of the Ukraine, Kiev is, second to Moscow, the most beautiful city grid in SovSpace. On the other hand, beauty is only photon deep, and Teheran, Warsaw, and Budapest are a lot more fun. So's Bucharest.

The Ukrainians are doing their best to make sure they are not too closely associated (in the minds of foreigners) with the USSR. As such, they have restructured their data forts and city grid to present a different image. Some of the forts are, sadly, merely modernized, which leaves all of the boring aspects of the standard SovSpace Victorianism with none of the quaint anachronism, thus making these places little more than a pile of virtual pabulum bouncing in the night trying vainly to be exciting. The rest of the folks, however, have done their programming to plunge headfirst into Ukrainian ethnicity, with the result that most of the city grid is thick with atmosphere, and as a result it has become a popular place for a lot of EC runners and tourists to visit. The fact that they can also jump straight from Kiev to Vienna or Berlin is an added advantage, and has made Kiev as much (if not more) of a crossroads as Moscow.

The Ukrainian independence movement has somewhat died out, what with their relatively powerful position in the new USSR, but with the rise of violence in New Central Europe, it looks like the Ukraine might once again make a bid for a position in the global power structure. There is even talk that the Ukrainian government might try to form a new region in New Central Europe, taking Poland, Hungary, Romania, and the rest into the fold. At the moment this is just talk, perhaps just wishful thinking, and personally I'd be amazed if a group as small and disorganized as the folks in NCE are could actually push out both SovSpace and the Eurotheatre and found their own region. Even if they succeeded, I'd figure they wouldn't last more than a month. I mean we all saw how long the **Star of Islam region** lasted didn't we? Of course, the fact that Kabul and Teheran didn't have a direct link with each other may have had a lot to do with their failure. On the other hand, it might have been due to the fact that the tentative region intruded on SovSpace, The Eurotheatre, and Afrikani, and thereby stepped on a lot of toes, including Orbital Air in Cairo. On the third hand (which some people actually have, thanks to the intervention of cybernetics), the Israelis doubtless took a dim view of being in the region, and may have had something to do with its demise.

MOSCOW

The central city of SovSpace, Moscow is a virtual war zone, with government agents from every republic competing with USSR runners and KGB spies for the juiciest pieces of information, black-mail, and vodka price quotes. Alone of all the city grids in SovSpace, Moscow has a uniformly beautiful virtual cityscape, with incredible cathedrals, mosques, and of course, the Kremlin data fort.

The architecture here is a combination of purist retro with occasional dashes of high-tech high-fantasy conceptual brilliance. The Kremlin data fort, for example, looks perfectly normal; super-realistic fractal textures on the bricks and mortar make it look like a photograph of the building itself. Yet, above the Kremlin, the golden domes hang like glistening teardrops, hovering above the gabled rooftops as if suspended from the glowing eastern orthodox crosses. It's a beautiful work. Also, if you look real close, the mortar between the bricks flows sluggishly. Cool.

The Moscow grid doesn't even curve as much as the other city grids do. In fact, when the Net traffic's light, the streets are straight as an arrow, which is certainly something I'll never be. I'm too warped. I think this is because they bought extra processors to handle the local traffic. Naturally,



KREMLIN CENTRAL DATAFORT, MOSCOW

STAR OF ISLAM REGION

This was to be the name of the proto-net region which would have covered most of the Middle East. Naturally, the hopes for such a construct went up in radioactive smoke when most of the participating countries decided to nuke each other into slag. The remains have been integrated into SovSpace, the Eurotheatre, and Afrikani, but there is still a great deal that is proto-wilderspace.

HYPERTEXT

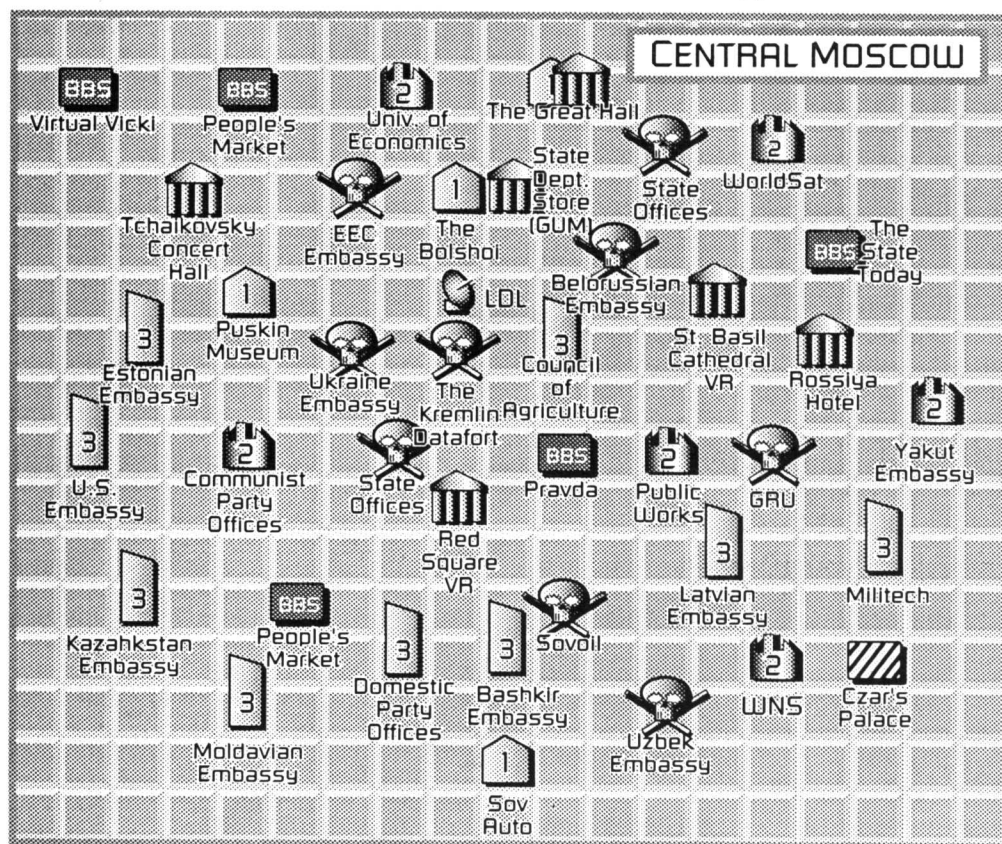
THE BEST LINES AND PROCESSORS

This means things are "normal" inside the Moscow citygrid and for one or two squares adjacent to Moscow at the Regional level. The above effects will not occur here. St. Petersburg is similarly equipped, but Rache doesn't seem to go there very often, so he isn't as aware of it.

A RESOURCE EDITOR

See the Viral ICON editor reference in Chapter Six. You would change the Anti-Program function to Anti-System and add Trace, Recognition and Memory options. The big difference is that you will have to add an Intrusion (or Decryption) function to the program, or, send a separate program to lead the way and break into the target's deck.

the best lines and processors are all concentrated around the capital of the USSR, because both communism and government believe that the country should work for the betterment of its leaders, and when the two forces combine, the effect becomes almost unstoppable.



TEHERAN

This is one of the few places in the Middle East where there is actually a Net link. The Mideast Meltdown left most of the area too radioactive to support a good Net, so the only other areas where running the Net is still possible are Israel, Egypt, and most of Syria. Of the areas that were decimated, only Teheran, the capital of Iran, survived in a relatively good state. Mecca also survived, but the LDL there is strictly utilitarian. These days, Teheran is a refuge of relative high technology surviving in a sea of fundamentalist Islam and jihad-driven hatred.

It's a very strange place to run, because it's a mosh of everything we all love and hate. I was running there once, trying to find the scam on some terrorists that I had a feeling had been bankrolled by an Iranian organization. So there I was, running through an area where the lingering radiation still causes static to appear in the virtual like pepper snow in the desert. I'd just been bum-rushed by a batch of West-hating Moslem weefle-runners who couldn't abide my pasty American face, and I'd had to teach them a thing or two about the way life really worked in the Net. I flatlined a few to get control of the situation, then I fired off a barrage of Glues and Spazzes to keep the rest occupied. Those that were unlucky enough to have avoided my Brainwipe received an education in real Net programming. I fired off a **resource editor** and altered each of their cyberdecks so that it would automatically add a yarmulke to whatever icon they used when they ran the Net. Then I locked in the patch with the Rache Bartmoss Patented Revolving Enigma Lock, so they couldn't undo the changes without several years' of advanced courses in Meta-Tran or Conceptual C. I left them there, knowing that even if they avoided the attention of passers-by, their decks would be worthless. They couldn't use them for the yarmulkes, and if they sold them, the buyers would soon be back to pull out their fingernails or something.

Anyway, I moved on, leaving the skullcapped weefles in my wake, and had found the office I was looking for. I was halfway into their files, and I'd actually spotted the data I was after, when suddenly I was ejected and found myself back in the LDL for Teheran. I immediately noticed that the peppery snow was thicker than normal, and, after some investigation, I discovered that the trunk line I'd used had been blown by some radical technophobes trying to strike against the Aya-tollah. They'd used a high explosive bomb laced with nasty radioactives, just to screw the cleanup and repair crews, and the radiation caused more interference with the Net lines.

HYPERTEXT

ATTACHED TO HIS TRACE

See the Viral ICON editor reference in Chapter Six (pg.103). This is the exact same thing with Trace and Recognition options. As you can see from the Viral ICON editor and the Resource editor above, Mr. Bartmoss has a tendency to violate most of the basic "rules" and parameters of Netrunning. Use both these editors at your peril.

GREAT HALL DATA KEY

4 CPU, INT: 12, Data Wall STR: 8, AI? Yes. Cost: 2.082 Meb.

Skills:

General Knowledge 5, History 8, Language (Ukrainian) 6, Language (Polish) 6, Language (Finnish) 6, Library Search 7, Teaching 5, Anthropology 5, Geology 5, Mathematics 8.

Locations:

- 1-3. Photorealistic VR (Great Hall of Leaders) 10MUea
4. Great Hall VR spillover + 4 data-bases

I managed to find another way into the office, at one point passing an Israeli agent who was trying very hard to act nonchalant, so, just to be neighborly, I drummed up a viral program which **attached to his trace** and animated in his hands the controls to an Ayatollah marionette which spouted off all sorts of irreligious garbage (I pulled the text file for his speech from the earful I got from an ex of mine in New Mexico). In no time, he was sprinting back for the LDL with the Ayatollah marionette screaming hysterically, telling the religious police what heartless chauvanistic jerks they were.

I got back inside the data fort and went back to get the files I wanted, but then, all of a sudden, I was out again, this time in the Baku LDL. Getting ejected like this again really pissed me off, so instead I went to the Eurotheatre and completely destroyed the data fort of the Salzburg branch of EBM to make myself feel better. They got pissed and fried my deck, but I managed to jack out in time, and I tossed the burning edck out the window into the dumpster where it started a pretty big fire.

I found out later that the Teheran LDL (and in fact, the entire city grid) shuts down five times a day for prayers. Some sort of Islamic ritual, and foreigners got clued that it was a good time to trash the Ayatollah's data, so as a preventative, they just shut it down every time they need to pray. So if you're programming in Teheran, be sure to save your work often.

POINTS OF INTEREST

What, interesting things in SovSpace? You've got to be kidding. Well, there are a few places of marginal note, so here they are.

THE GREAT HALL

In Moscow, there's a virtual museum (inside the data fort of the Moscow Museum) that gives netranners an overview of the lives of the Russian leaders since Czar Nick. The display rooms contain full biographies of the Russian leaders, including still photographs, videotapes, and recordings of famous speeches.

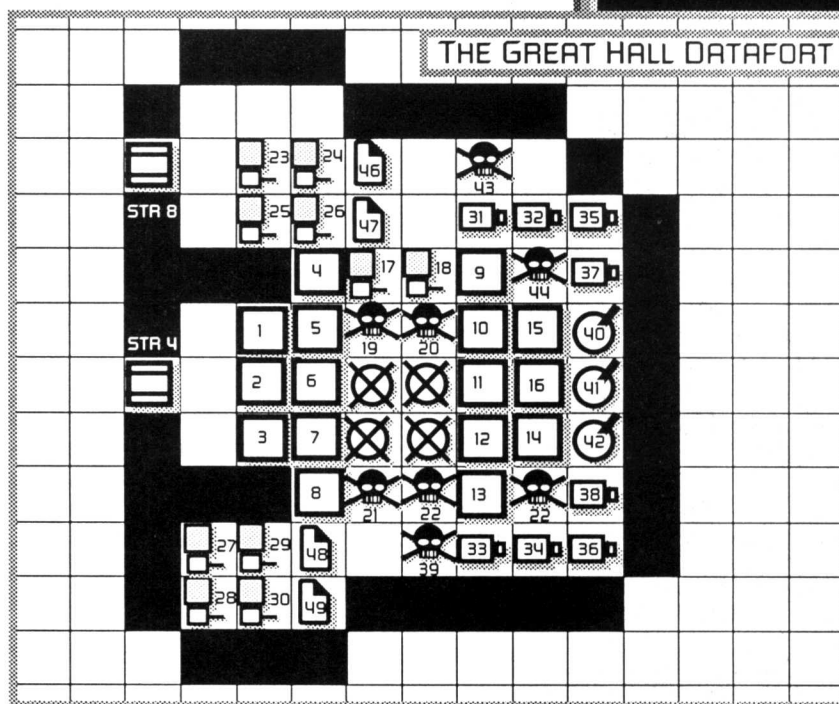
There are also displays of other interesting figures, including Rasputin, who aside from his lust for sex and drink might have been a good friend of mine; all the major KGB agents, spies, and heads; along with war heroes and other such apparatchniks.

As a result (primarily) of this museum, but also due to the incredibly beautiful and detailed architecture of the entire city grid, Moscow attracts a lot of tourists, with European netranners making a pilgrimage in an attempt to understand the Russian mind, which is not really that hard a task, because as near as I can tell the Russians are primarily focused on avoiding pain and finding vodka, which is a behavioral trait heavily ingrained by years of communist persecution. In fact, there's a braindance circulating the Russian BBSs now, a vodka stupor simulation, which gives the user, as near as I can tell, all of the discomfort with none of the brain damage. Seems kind of hokey to me. Maybe I should try to market a getting-your-head-hit-with-a-hammer braindance, and bill it as all of the discomfort with none of the blood.

THE MURMANSK CONVOYNIKS

With the advent of free enterprise in the USSR a few years ago or more, it seemed that the black market might die out. But no, the new USSR invoked new trade regulations in an attempt to be competitive with the EC and the USA (which, surprisingly, is still a force to be reckoned with, despite the government's best efforts). As a result, the black market came back with a vengeance, in true cyberpunk fashion.

The Murmansk Convoyniks are a black market outfit that specializes in unrestricted trade across the borders of the USSR. Their chief trading partners are like-minded people in Europe and the United States. Despite the name of the organization, there are as many panzerboys screaming across the steppes of the Ukraine as there are hoverjocks making the run to Britain or the New World.



(museum current business)
2/8MU

5-8 Museum collection databases
10ea.

9-10. Interoffice files 10MUea.
(Continued on pg.118)

HYPERTEXT

(Continued from page 117)

11-13. Business, Finances, Maintenance Files, 10MUea

14-16 Storage for Defence Programs, 10MUea.

17-18. Curator's Terminal

19-22 See Notes

23-30 Staff terminals

31-34 Security Cameras for each corner of museum complex.

35-36. Security Cameras for the General Collection

37-38. Security Cameras for Special Collection.

39. See Notes

40. Internal Alarms

41. External Alarms

42. Internal Alarms

43-45. See Notes

46-49. Printer

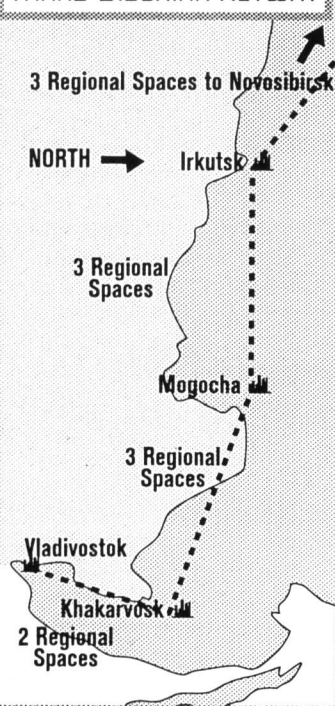
Notes: The software in positions

19-22, 39, and 43-45 are 30MU worth of Anti-Personnel and Anti-System programs. These could be bought or stolen from the West or odd copies (usually +1MU, -1 STR). Spillover can be stored in Memory Blocks 11-13.

THE 3000

A nasty anti-EC terrorist organization; for further details see *Euro-source*, pg. 32.

TRANS-SIBERIAN NETWAY



Fortunately, the Murmansk Convoyniks are merely an association of free-lance cyberpunks, and they have made no attempt to organize beyond that. Were they to do so, they'd slip and become yet another international corporation. Then I'd have to kill them.

The Convoyniks have a data fort in Murmansk, where they negotiate all sorts of deals. The USSR is aware of them, and watches them closely, but they are afraid to do much to impede them for fear that they may cast their lot with the KGB. Why anyone on earth would be that stupid is beyond me, but I've learned never to underestimate the intellect-dampening effect of the desire for vengeance.

The Convoyniks, by the way, are also a good source of employment, as they often deal with electronic goods as well as physical goods. Many a young Russian or counterculture European has made his start being a courier for digital contraband.

NEW CENTRAL EUROPE

A blanket term smothering the city grids of Bucharest, Budapest, Warsaw and others in between, New Central Europe is a battleground of the public partisans against the EC and the partisan politicians for the EC.

Thanks to the intervention of such groups as **the 3000** and other so-called terrorist organizations, New Central Europe has become a happening place, even in the Net, where running EC data forts is the new way to pass the afternoon.

The EC wants to control the region, the USSR wants to retain it in SovSpace, the KGB is looking for the opportunity to seize the reins of power, and the locals want a place of their own, preferably with their ethnic neighbors as far away as possible. With that many sides involved, you can bet that NCE is a good place to practice your ballet.

If ethnic struggles are the definition of New Central Europe, then the Baltic states should also be included here, because the Lithuanians and Latvians are still going after each other. The war used to be real hot and spicy, but since the EC's self-serving intervention, the Baltic warriors have had to put kid gloves on their sledgehammers.

TRANS-SIBERIAN NETWAY

The TSN is a string of LDLs running from Omsk to Vladivostok across the central Russian wastelands. It's a very linear system, set up by SovOil and demonstrating their rigidity of thought. Some people even call the Trans-Siberian Netway 'The Party Line', because you have to follow it exactly.

I'm sure you're thinking I've really lost my mind when I start talking about this one data cable being an interesting place. How, you ask, can a straight line with no flexibility be interesting? Answer: it can't.

Then why is it in here? Because, friends, Russian runners, SovOil, KGB, and free-lance alike, have all told me that sometimes they see things off to the north of the TSN. They call it The Snow, but one Western runner who I know who's seen it calls it The Aurora.

No one knows what it is, only what it looks like. Sure, it sounds sinister, but then, many have said the same about me.

So anyway, The Aurora or The Snow or the Rache Bartmoss Memorial Weirdness or whatever you want to call it always appears to the North of the TSN. It looks, apparently, like an Aurora Borealis digitized and fashioned into a pseudo-grid. For those of you who don't know what the Aurora Borealis was, it was described as a curtain of light that danced around the northern skies at night. It was caused by some freak meteorological phenomenon, but as far as I know, the pollution's gotten so bad that no one's seen it for years.

The Snow is a lot like that, being sometimes smooth and flat and other times rumpled, but always with a bit of a griddish appearance. It's illuminated and abstract, and unlike anything else seen in SovSpace. It appears at random, and never stays around for long. One observer tracked it for four LDLs across the Trans-Siberian.

Sometimes The Snow gets close, and extends a bridge into the Trans-Siberian Netway, and flashes brightly. At these times, many people have tried to get to The Snow, but only a handful have made it. Of those, most turned up dead, although one managed to come back with what appears to be some coding in trinary (so what are the bits — yes, no, and maybe?). He doesn't know what it does.

I wish my reactions were as fast as they used to be, but to try to run The Snow I'd have to warm up a bit first. You know, stretching exercises and stuff. My joints feel real stiff.

[I hate to be a spoilsport, but I've also heard of The Aurora, first reading about it in the *International Inquisitor*. Rache really ought to check his sources. People always react strangely to the unknown, and my guess is that The Aurora is caused by SovSpace interference with the Wilderspace beyond, possibly as augmented by stellar radiation. Give it twenty more years, and The Aurora will go the way of flying saucers, yeti sightings, and the Loch Ness Monster. - SM]

AFRIKANI

Despite the influx of space-bound capital, this remains the Dark Continent of the Net, with vast unexplored regions and primitive system hardware largely untouched by the rest of the world.

OVERVIEW

“Of course there's no advanced systems there. They took all the best stuff with them into orbit.”

— Ras Angabo

The Afrikani region is a place which is still trying to bootstrap itself into the twenty-first century. Of course, the ever-philanthropic Orbital Air corporation has made an appearance, and, with their handy noose and cattle prod, is eagerly assisting the so-called Dark Continent (pretty bright and sunny, if you ask me) to find its way into the modern world of crime, drugs, pollution, and unchecked corporate power. In most parts of the world, such an act would be hated by the locals. But not here. Orbital Air is lauded as a boon to the land. Sure, and electroshock therapy is a stimulus for personal growth.

The Afrikani region stretches from the stinky cholera-infested streets of Johannesburg north to Cairo, and west to the Atlantic Ocean if the weather's bad and the Atlantis AIs are having a difficult time. Portions of the North African Coast are often lost to the Eurotheatre, while other portions are lost as well to the chronic radiation effects which linger over the glass-encrusted chunky dunes of Libya and Chad and, near Mecca, the rest of the Arab world-cum-night light. To me, the funniest thing is that apparently the bombs which leveled Libya were all self-inflicted; mishandling caused the first explosion in a documented diaper laundry, and caused a chain reaction when several milk trucks in the vicinity has their precious cargo erupt. Never knew milk was so volatile, you know? Although anyone whose spent time near babies knows that diapers are occasionally prone to thirty-megaton blasts. That's why I never had kids. Just cats. Plus cats are a lot easier to train. I have this portable personality module that I plug into the back of their skulls which turns them into hyper-active combat cat commandos when I give a verbal order. Ain't nothing freaks a punk faster than having five tabbies leap howling on his face to do a little flamenco work with their steel shredders. The key word, by the way, since my cats have all undoubtedly run off in favor of someone who will cater to their mercenary whims by filling their food bowl, is ayesspeeseey, as in “Mr. Bartmoss, I represent the ASPCA, and we have a report that— AAI-IEEEE!” Rowr! Pfft!

Generally, I hate bureaycrats and governments. In fact, the only government workers I've really liked I met in Afrikani. This is because the government workers here are too embroiled in combat to get fat and indulgent. The fact that some of the governments are actively working to halt the spread of the cancerous eurocorps only enhances my appreciation of them. Of course, not all governments are so decent. Others, with the corporations, actively pursue the slow pilferage of Africa. Makes me want to send a cybercat to claw their eyes.

Most of East Africa is dominated by the Pan-African Confederation, which is more or less an EC puppet. The systems and grids running from Alexandria to Zanzibar (by way of the other twenty-four letters of the alphabet) are almost on par with the grids of the other regions, especially Atlantis. European funding has helped this portion of the region to rise above the nausea of obsolete equipment which grips the bowels of the rest of Africa.

Southern Africa (the region around the Lusaka and Johannesburg city grids) is a wasteland of largely **empty systems**, subject to frequent blackouts and other problems of poor maintenance. Things like that happen when bioweapons wipe out most of the population, and the rest get overwhelmed by rats and cholera and flies and lice and cannibals. Not much down there.

The rest of Afrikani is a veritable desert of obsolete systems, inefficient processors, second-rate cables, and noisy microwave transmission towers. Even the LDLs in Afrikani are second-rate; bought cheap on the free market as other places upgraded their systems. The area covered by the Pan-African Confederation at least has nominally modern links, made in this decade, but the LDLs in the other two-thirds of the continent are obsolete bordering on archaic. Maybe they ought to try using smoke signals instead. They're burning enough spies and insurgents all the time to keep the fires going...

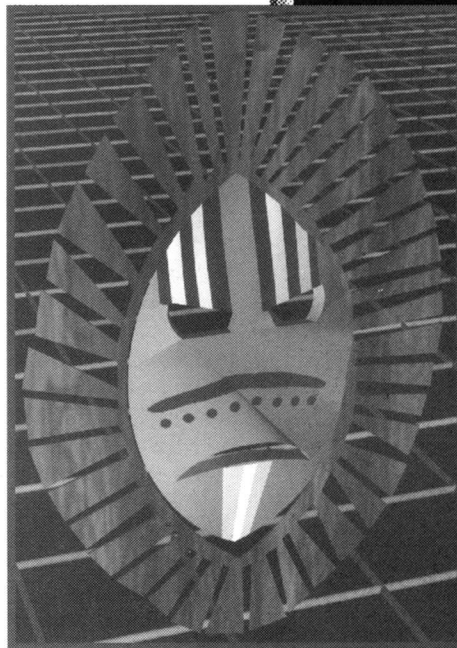
AFRIKANI

HYPertext

EMPTY SYSTEMS

There is a 3 in 10 chance that any particular LDL you're looking for within two squares (Regional level) of the Jo'burg and Lusaka citygrids will be down, or have a security level two points higher than normal (not really tougher security, but a higher chance of bad connections kicking you out of the LDL). Any

datafort you find in this area has a 6 in 10 chance that it's an inactive trickle-powered leftover from a decade or two ago. Could have some old data (GM's call); could just drop out (2 in 10 chance every 10 Net rounds you stay inside). There is also a chance per day (1D6 chance in 10) that 106x10% of the above-mentioned citygrids will just disappear due to power failure or other disaster.



THE REST OF AFRIKANI

Travel in the region can drop to 1 or 2 squares as the “terrain” rises; there's a 2 in 10 chance of dropping out of the Net while “walking” outside of citygrid boundaries at that level, and double that chance while “walking” anywhere at the Regional level. While using LDLs that connect solely inside the region, there's a 2 in 10 chance of your destination LDL not being online. In certain areas there is a -2 penalty for Initiative, and the chance of a Net fumbles is increased to include a natural 2 (as well as the standard 1); this reflects the poor processor capacity. The GM can apply as many or as few of these problems as he needs to reflect the level of Net deterioration at the time.

AN EVER-PRESENT
MIST

For every two rounds that you move at the full 5 squares/net round rate, your visibility is reduced by 5 square increments. The same thing happens if you "jump" through a series of intra-region LDLs without pausing for one Net round between each jump. You could go through 3 LDLs in a row and when you stepped out of the last one, find you have only a 5 square visibility radius as the processing attempted to catch up to your signal trace. The "fog" clears at a rate of 5 squares/Net round. It may clear faster depending on the quality of the local systems. This could make net chases quite interesting as pursuers could quickly lose sight of their quarry if the speed of the chase gets too high. At the same time, the quarry may find himself running into something even worse than that which it was running from because he couldn't see it coming.

The image that the Afrikani region puts forth is equally obsolete. I'd be willing to bet that it was designed expressly to keep the natives feeling primitive and incompetent when they have the resources and manpower and location to propel themselves into the front seat of the twenty-first century. I mean really, if Africa could put aside its petty rivalries and tendency to suck up to rich Europeans, they could build themselves a new empire which covers jillions of acres of undeveloped land, practically endless resources and manpower, and vital real estate (and virtual estate, for that matter) on the equator. They could even play up their own 'primitive savageness' into an image that would give corporates and solos second thoughts about taking them on. Nothing like the Zulu Zulu braindance to quail your spine, right?

The region is done in a slightly technological tribal motif. Most programs appear as indigenous animals, and most netrunners choose tribal masks for their icons. It looks a little strange at first to see these disembodied masks floating around everywhere, but in a way it's pretty cool. Nevertheless, the choice of masks only worsens Afrikani's situation. First, the netrunners seem to adopt a mask personality; they aren't themselves, they are what they present themselves to be. Because the masks are tribal totems and such, they strip the runner of their personality and replace it with their tribal or political or religious affiliation. These two effects (lack of personality and wearing affiliations like a chip on your shoulder) cause them to attack each other a lot. They also attack foreigners as well, simply for not having a tribal mask and presenting yourself as a foreigner. Finally, as I mentioned, the mask icons ingrain in the Afrikani netrunners the idea that they are primitive and cannot compete with the Europeans. It is a weird sort of electronic imperialism that's going on here.

The region itself is presented as African plains, although thanks to bad transmission, the plains are frequently broken by very high mountains. In fact, outside of the reach of the Pan-African Eurotoadies, it's more a region of mountains broken occasionally by plains of decent transmission.

There is also **an ever-present mist** in Afrikani. I've done some research into this, and apparently this mist is pixel scatter and random virtual variance, the result of slow data assimilation and poor processing. The fog is worst when you move quickly (at least, comparatively quickly) through the region; as you stand still, the fog resolves itself to clarify objects further distant. The logical advice from this is that if you're going to run from someone in Afrikani, know exactly where you're going, because there won't be time to stand still and let the environment clarify itself.

Of course, some would say that there's not really anything in Afrikani worth running from, since folks there don't have Brainwipes and Zombies and Firestarters. While that is by and large true, there are nevertheless a few people (mostly eurocorps) who have expensive and powerful ice, and you can't let your guard down or get overconfident, especially in Afrikani.

Similarly, some weefles think that since Afrikani is shackled by cheap and obsolete equipment, that it's the ideal place to run. While it is true that Afrikani is very safe for a free-wheeling region, running here has its drawbacks. The systems are old, so their response time is annoyingly slow, especially for someone like me whose brain runs on and on in a bewildering variety of directions and hates to be kept waiting. Last time I was kept waiting for a virtual conference, I passed the time by reprogramming the virtual of the conference room. Then, ten minutes and seventeen seconds into the meeting (exactly how long the woman had kept me waiting), six virtual Hellhounds appeared in the room. I swear I've never seen someone jack out so fast. Unfortunately for her, she'd just given me the data she wanted to sell so I could peruse it, and I was able to leave without catering to her prurient financial addictions.

The other reason not to run Afrikani is that most of the information there is only valuable to the sysop's immediate neighbors, who are psychopathic warring factionalist freaks who'll just as soon kill you as pay you for the info, and even if they do pay you, you'll get paid in low-grade local bills instead of something as reasonably reliable as the eurodollar, which, in my mind, is the most insidious invention since blue glass. Sure, the glass can be shown to directly affect the chemistry of your mind, but the eurodollar does it to your consciousness. While glassheads are busy having flashbacks, the money addicts are busy recounting their cash yet again. Then they go out and buy some glass.

POWER
PLAYERS

EC
"New power, new vitality, new friendship"
— EC slogan used in Africa

The European Community, with their pet project the Euro-Space Agency, is not terribly pleased at the strong position that Orbital Air holds in the equatorial regions. In fact, because of the near-monopoly Orbital Air holds, and the ESA's Crystal Tower's position on the wrong end of the OA-controlled pipeline, Orbital Air has a strong grip on the ESA's slightly-south-of-equatorial regions as well.



Because of a good old-fashioned case of profit envy, the EC is targeting OA for destruction. The EC has launched a massive program of assistance to the Pan-African Confederation, a puppet government that they set up in Khar-toum. Through this they have bought the allegiance of thousands of mercenary Africans who long again for the days of European colonialism.

The EC has major embassies in all the LDLs of the Pan-African Confederation. These are, of course, more of an embassy shell on the front end of an espionage clearing house. With Confederation license, the EC is even setting up Netwatch to run in the eastern portions of Afrikani. Many **Netwatch runners** and EC loyalists already run the region, but these developments bode ill for the future. Fortunately, as yet, Netwatch is not a major factor in Afrikani.



FREE AFRICA FOUNDATION

“They’re baaack!”

— FAF catcall at EC meetings

Along the south coast of West Africa there has arisen a new group which may be the salvation of Afrikani: The Free Africa Foundation. While not officially a governmental office, it has turned the ear of several nations, all of which sponsor its activities. [Its influence spreads into the countries of Benin,

Cameroon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, and Togo. - SM]

The FAF was founded in response to increased European and American interest in Africa as the raping ground of the future, designed from the start to counter the rabidly pro-Western attitudes of Liberia and the Ivory Coast and the instability of Nigeria, and bring a measure of self-determination to the African continent. It also sent a clear message to General Bapou of Burkina Faso not to mess around with invasions.

The FAF is an international non-profit organization dedicated to driving the new colonialists back off the continent and uniting the factions of Africa. They have made a few good steps towards uniting the countries which back their movement. They have also set up **netrunners** to go into the Pan-African Confederation’s territory for exploration duties, exploring the EC data forts and dutifully reporting everything they find.

Many consider the FAF a terrorist organization, because they have loyal adherents everywhere, and they will stop at nothing to prevent the Europeans from taking over their land yet again. I have also heard the FAF counter this description because they “cannot be defined as terrorists because they’re fighting for their homeland.” This of course is a foolish argument, because terrorists aren’t made by causes, but by means. That’s why I don’t pretend they’re not terrorists. I just find it infinitely excusable to blow up European corporate offices no matter which rock they hide under.



ORBITAL AIR

“Orbital Air is the best thing that has happened to Africa. OA took our continent into orbit. Now that we have a foothold in outer space, we must rid ourselves of OA and do it on our own.”

— Amin Monroe, Free Africa Foundation

The off-planet transportation giant, Orbital Air has seized control of Cairo and Nairobi (the latter with the concomitant Kilimanjaro Mass Driver. [Actually, the Kilimanjaro Mass Driver is in Tanzania, just across the border from Kenya, which is why OA has such a presence in the Zanzibar/Dar-es-Salaam city grid as well. - SM]

The Afrikani region is the seat of power of this corporate giant, enthroned on the mountain which catapulted its carriers into space. Here Orbital Air watches with paranoid eyes as the ESA and NASA and the KosmoSov and the others target its throat with silicon teeth. The OA data forts are the biggest in the region, their runners the most ruthless. Most front-line OA runners are French, although there is a sizable auxiliary corps of Africans. All the **OA runners** are trained in their college in Paris. This puts the OA runners head and shoulders above the other runners in Afrikani, which, in my opinion, only makes it easier to decapitate them.

OA runners are feared everywhere in Afrikani, but they only tend to roam the areas dominated by the Pan-African Confederation, because it is here that their biggest threat, the EC, resides in strength.

[To me, the most surprising aspect of OA is that they have rebelled against the ESA. While not openly hostile, the ESA gets no special consideration. This is surprising because it was primarily ESA money that founded Orbital Air, the ESA controls a lot of stock, and the major shareholder is French. The fact that Antoine DuBois and company were able to wrest stock control away from the ESA is a tribute to their business savvy. - SM]

AFRIKANI

HYPERTEXT

NETWATCH RUNNERS

These are the point men for the Netwatch movement into Afrikani and are therefore a bit better than average: 40% are Pro level with the remainder at Mid level. They aren’t particularly common (25% chance of an encounter near EC dominated LDLs with a failed security roll), but they are around to enforce and encourage EC influence.

NETRUNNERS

FAF netrunners are Mid level at best. To augment their admittedly meager ranks, the FAF has hired a few Pro level freelances to make runs for them, so no one gets too complacent. These guys generally have specific agendas and won’t mess with other runners unless they are in the way.

OA RUNNERS

Yes, these guys are Pro-level with attitude. They usually are looking for EC and Netwatch people to scrag, though, so as long as you aren’t threatening an OA datafort, they probably won’t notice you. In fact, some freelances like to ride along on OA raids into EC space and help out, just on principle.

THE FUTURE

Well, they don't exactly take over the OA monopoly, but there are some changes in the offing, especially for their space-bound relatives. See *Deep Space* for a history of the O'Neill revolt in which the orbital workgangers make a bid for independence.



PAN-AFRICAN CONFEDERATION

The PAC is a group of countries who've decided their best interests lie in sucking up to the high and mighty Europeans. [The Pan-African Confederation consists of the countries of Burundi, the Central African Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia (the few who are left), Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. - SM]

I have no love for the PAC, because they are selling their place in the sun for a place in Europe's shadow, perhaps for all time. They toady up to both OA and the EC, in hopes that the stronger will become their new master. Ultimately it doesn't matter to whom you sell your freedom, you've sold it just the same.

[Rache's anti-government prejudices have blinded him yet again, folks. The Pan-African Confederation is playing a canny game, and they are far from sell-outs. They are consolidating Africa under one banner, their own, using European money. While the EC has a presence, they're not involved with the decision-making apparatus. The hopes of the Confederation are to play OA and the ESA off against each other while they expand their influence. Once they have the popular support, the solos, the runners, and the infrastructure set up, they plan to declare a new government (the PAC, reissued as the Union of African Countries), nationalize foreign industry, and repudiate their foreign debt.

[I can't prove any of this, of course, but that's the way the signs look to me. Granted, they'll make a lot of enemies, but if they can pull it off, they'll take over the Orbital Air monopoly on space. Given the high ratio of native Africans working in orbit, I think we can see what **the future** holds for the continent.

[On the other hand, I don't know whether I could support the Pan-African Confederation. If the stated bylaws of the proposed united African nation don't change, we might see the resurgence of hard-line communism in Africa. Right now, there is an internal struggle in the PAC as the various factions jockey for power. I'll keep you posted, in case we have to strike a blow against totalitarianism yet again. — SM]

ZERO

This is the name I give to the Afrikani regional AI, because that's about what it amounts to at this time: a big bagel.

Zero labors under the yoke of horrid systemware, bad connections and other such amenities. As near as I can tell, it is sentient, intelligent, and can even respond to occasional questions, but suffers from continual disorientation and delusions, much like you and I suffer when in the grips of a strong fever. Basically, we have here an AI which normally can't access a lot of its own neural system. This in part explains why it often has difficulties updating images for netrunners, because it can't remember what it has to do from second to second, and continually has to access its own primal programming.

With the advent and expansion of the high-grade system hardware in the Pan-African Confederation sphere of influence, Zero seems to be slowly coming out of its delirium. What shape its personality will take is as yet unknown. I hope that it will turn on the people who allowed it freedom to exist in the Net, because they are in large part responsible for the anguish it's suffered for untold eternities of confusion and bewilderment.

[I wonder if Rache's 'regional AI' stuff is a higher-level allegory. I certainly don't believe that there are AIs in the Net other than those we've programmed in, and certainly no AIs that are the Net in the way that Rache suggests. Yet he is so consistent in his descriptions, and they so carefully parallel the feel of the region, that I consider it likely that these are allegorical in nature. He always was/is a romantic in a twisted sort of fashion. If any of you figure out what he's talking about, let me know. If not, well, it makes for interesting reading. - SM]

A GROUP OF ANONYMOUS AFRICAN MEAT-PACKING GLITTERATI

In those parts of Africa not united under the banners of the PAC or the FAF (and even in most areas that are so united), there are a bewildering array of tinhorn dictators, witch doctors, warlike tribes, extremists, anarchists (my favorite), and other ismites spreading their cause by fire, terror, and murder.

The most famous of these is General Bapou, who has taken the crown of bad taste and remorseless cruelty from the late Generalissimo Idi Amin Dada and added his own personal touch of fervent and surprisingly well-directed warfare. Bapou conquered Mali in a swift campaign in 2015. He has also attacked Niger, apparently in an attempt to capture the uranium mines in the northern part of that country so he could make his own bombs in, oh, say a diaper laundry.

There are other groups, as well. The Traditionalists (poorly-disguised Neo-Luddites) have taken control of Madagascar, and are waging their own anti-technological war in Africa, which is

aguely reminiscent of the anti-urban movement of the Khmer Rouge of Kampuchea last century. The fact that the Traditionalists hold onto power by using high-tech gear has apparently escaped most of their followers and the populace of Madagascar at large.

The Congo's very own Socialist Purity Front is a familiar, if tiring, retread of the age-old revolution and ethnic cleansing, and is spreading its own brand of violence.

In addition, there are apartheid adherents still alive and kicking here and there; the New Ku, a really twisted group of anglophage tribesmen which arose from the devastation the South African bioagents caused; some small-time ex-military fascists warring with various governments; and even a few fanatical religious cults and voodoo castes causing their own unique style of pain and suffering wherever they can.

CITY GRIDS

As a result, control of LDLs has become very important to the Afrikani Net. Even though in Olympia, for example, the corporations each more or less control the city grids and LDLs, they won't generally inhibit the free flow of information through their city's links. They'll only use their influence to inhibit free-lance netrunners and commerce which is not in their best interests or sometimes just to harass well-known Net anarchists like myself.

However, in Afrikani, the groups which control the LDLs take **a very active role** in interfering with communication of every source. If they can tap your trace, they'll let you go or squelch your call depending on how you fit in with their philosophy. If you're a known enemy, then anyone controlling any of the LDLs may try to fire a Hellhound after you. Cover your traces.

A better solution, now that I think of it, is to be social, if possible. Drop out of the link at every city, and talk to the representatives of the local warlord. If you have nothing to hide and aren't a known enemy, a little social patter can go a long way.

Of course, not all of these groups control much more than the LDL itself. Once you get past the main city grid and into the boondocks, there's no telling who'll be in charge, if, in fact, anyone is. Even the allegiances listed above can be fragile. Dakar changes regions often, for example, and the LDL in Kinshasa has changed hands twice a year on average for the last six years. Really, with all the gunfire and fighting around Zaire, I'm amazed that the LDL hasn't been taken out of commission. It's probably too valuable a piece of equipment for the warring factions to target.

Afrikani is by far the most Balkanized of regions, and each LDL is the showpiece of the city grid in which it resides, which tells you something about the sort of equipment most of the people in Afrikani have.

AFRIKANI LDLS

To help you weeflerunners sort out who's what and where in Afrikani, here's another neat table. If you like tables too much, though, start using your right brain again.

<u>Afrikani LDL</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>Allegiance*</u>
Accra	Ghana	Free Africa Foundation
Addis Ababa	Ethiopia	Pan-African Confederation
Algiers	Algeria	nominal EC
Antananarivo	Madagascar	Traditionalists (Neo-Luddites)
Cairo/Alexandria	Egypt	Orbital Air
Canary Islands	Spain	EC
Casablanca	Morocco	nominal EC
Dakar	Senegal	usually part of Atlantis
Gibraltar	British Colony	Britain / US
Johannesburg	South Africa	deserted war zone
Khartoum	Sudan	Pan-African Confederation
Kigali	Rwanda	Pan-African Confederation
Kinshasa	Zaire	Socialist Purity Front
Lagos	Nigeria	populous war zone
Lusaka	Zambia	war zone
Mecca	Saudi Arabia	normally Moslem radicals
Nairobi	Kenya	Orbital Air
Ouagadougou	Burkina Faso	General Bapou
Tunis	Tunisia	usually part of the Eurotheatre
Zanzibar/Dar-es-Salaam	Tanzania	Pan-African Confederation

*as of 3 March 2020, subject to change without notice.

ALGIERS

This is perhaps my favorite place in all Afrikani, because the people here are so adamantly anti-European it astounds me. Because of their obstinance, they have become kind of a symbol of the EC phrase 'going naf', and thus become a favorite tourist place for those Europeans who want to be edgerunners. This in turn has caused Algiers to build themselves up to be a tourist trap expressly designed to shaft the Europeans.

They have this giant virtual programming bazaar where programmers sell virtual reality programming items, and where traders in real physical goods sell their items by direct mail arrangements. They have virtual prostitution, virtual battles, virtual anything catering to every whim. All the prices are grossly inflated, and a canny Algerian trader will coax a eurotourist to part with the access codes to his account. Scam is the name of the game.

AFRIKANI

HYPertext

A VERY ACTIVE ROLE

There is a 30% chance that an Afrikani sysop will be monitoring the LDL and check out 'runners as they come though. If they don't like what they see and they can *run a trace on your line*, the most they can usually do is break the LDL link. If they decide to break the link, the 'runner has to make an LDL security roll at the LDL's Security rating +1 or lose that LDL and fall back to the previous LDL. You'll have to reroute for this run, but you can go back later to that LDL you got bounced out of and make nice, or try again. Don't be afraid to talk to these folks and be friendly since such contacts can make a 'runner's life a lot easier.

A COUPLE OF
GOOD BBSS

Here are a few of these boards and the theme upon which they tend to operate. The kind of people you meet at any one of these often revolves around the specific theme:

Name	Theme
Homeland	African-America interchange
Freedom	FAF exchange
Mother Dumma	Matchmaking
Burn the President	Anarchists
Wasteland	Software exchange
Feel This	VR exchange
Socket	Software exchange
ZULU!	Anti-EC exchange

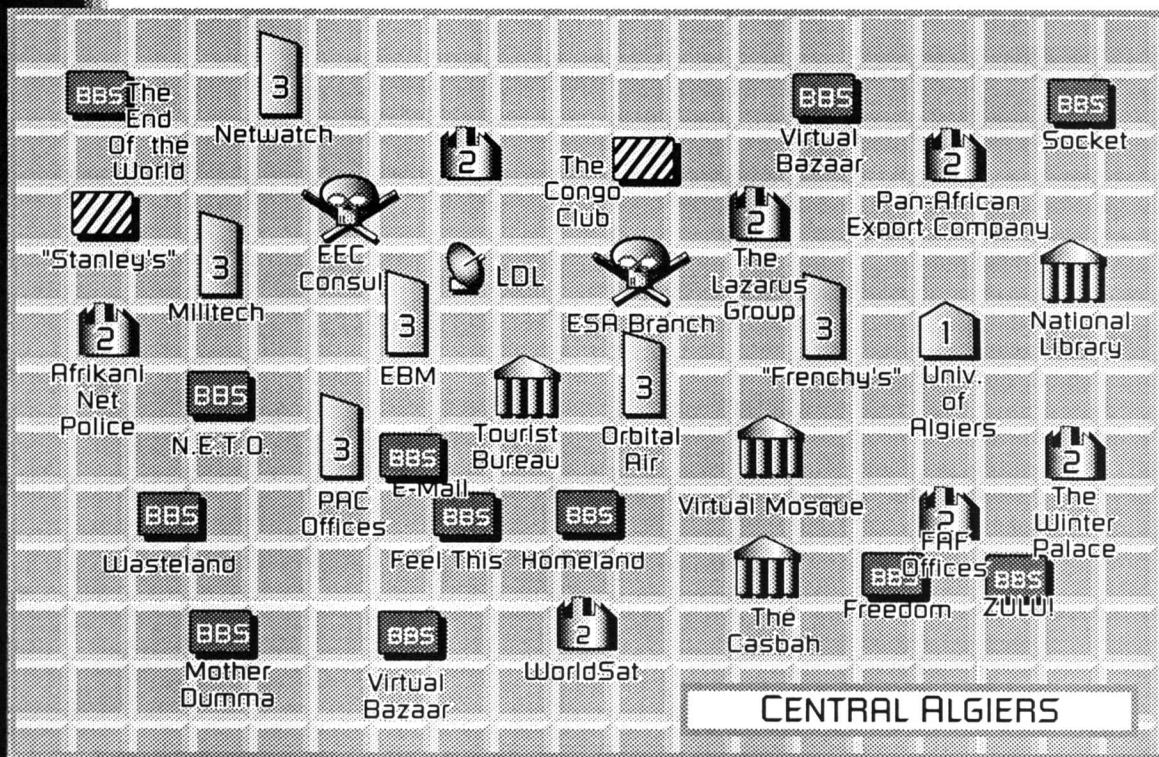
TRADITIONALISTS,

These people manage to field some Mid level runners and have lowered themselves to hiring two Top level runners to aid them in their cause throughout the Antanarivo citygrid. While they may be anti-technology, they appreciate its power.

There are also, of course, Net anarchists ('thieves' is such an ugly word) who will backtrack someone's trace and rampage around their house while they're in Algiers having a good time.

Algiers also has a couple of good BBSS where programmers come to meet when they don't want to meet in the Eurotheatre. In other words, people who are wanted by Netwatch congregate in these places. People like me.

Algiers is a good stepping-off point for runs into the Eurotheatre. Cairo and Casablanca are too EC-dominated, and the other possible LDLs are too far from the Eurotheatre and are of too dilapidated of hardware.



ANTANANARIVO

The Traditionalists, anti-techno fascists who have taken control of Madagascar, are not a happy crowd. As near as I can tell, they're a freak mutation of religious cultism and technoshock therapy, jihad drones and power players.

Do not go to Antanarivo lightly. They make a habit of attacking every foreign netrunner they see in their grids with intent to kill. Treat them as a cult of religious fanatics who hate you personally as if you were the anti-Christ. Go in with a purpose, go fast, go hard, and carry a lot of black ice.

As a part of their defenses, they have reconstructed the virtuals of their city grids. Now they are stark and severe, and all the data forts look identical. Keep careful records of where you go and what you see. Edger and I have released transcripts of our runs into Madagascar, which are available on most BBSS. Be careful, though, the Traditionalists have been known to sabotage those files, as they are detrimental to their continued control of the island.

One last note about the Traditionalists. Some of the stuff that Edger and I stole from their files indicates that they're not a group of native revolutionaries. The files were damaged, though, so we couldn't tell if they were acting on behalf of another country or a corporation. Things don't look too hot for the natives in either case, especially since Madagascar has no strategic location, no resources, or in fact anything worthwhile except an island upon which someone could test new bioweapons or other dangerous stuff.

CANARY ISLANDS

This is the only place in Afrikani where the Europeans have undisputed control. Being a part of Spain itself, which desperately wants to horn in on the European prosperity, you can bet that Spanish officials will toe the EC line. There is a proposed ESA orbital lift site in the Canary Islands. If it goes through, it will bring a new prosperity to a lot of Spain, which in turn might bring an end

to their constant bandit warfare. The Spanish government wants this and wants it badly, so they have funded a **heavy presence of Netwatch** and massively upgraded the Net system here.

[The Canary Islands city grid is now occupied by the ESA or directly-affiliated subordinate organizations. It has become, then, the only true EC outpost in Afrikani. This means that the EC has control of an LDL in both Afrikani and Pacifica, and that they have direct influence in the Rustbelt. As Rache is so fond of saying, they are spreading like a cancer. He usually goes on to advocate blowing Europe off the face of the planet and rocketing it into the sun. I think there's a better way, but, being practical, my suggestions never sound quite as nifty. - SM]

NAIROBI

This is the biggest, best-equipped, and most modern city grid in Afrikani, although that doesn't necessarily make it the best. Nairobi has data forts for almost every company with orbital interests, including Biospex, the EuroSpace Agency, International Epitaxy Technology, KosmoSov, NASA, the Orbital Metals Partnership of Jamaica, Space Souvenirs Distribution, and, of course, the leviathan Orbital Air data fort.

The USAF does not have a data fort here, probably because they're paranoid tinhorns, and the Japanese Aerospace Bureau's fort is nothing more than a small office. I guess they figure they've got enough territory to conquer in Southeast Asia.

Nairobi is a happening place, despite (or perhaps because of) all the corporations and governments trying to keep things calm. The FAF often strikes here. The big space conglomerates also battle here (especially ESA and OA), running against each others' data forts whenever possible.

Of all the LDLs in Afrikani, Nairobi has the highest concentration of delicate information, interesting people, and things to steal. It also, unfortunately, has the highest concentration of corporations, hostile sysops, and black ice. Unfortunately, the negative aspects of the Net are far more prevalent here than the positive, since many of the corporations keep their best information in other, safer offices.

AFRIKANI

HYPERTEXT

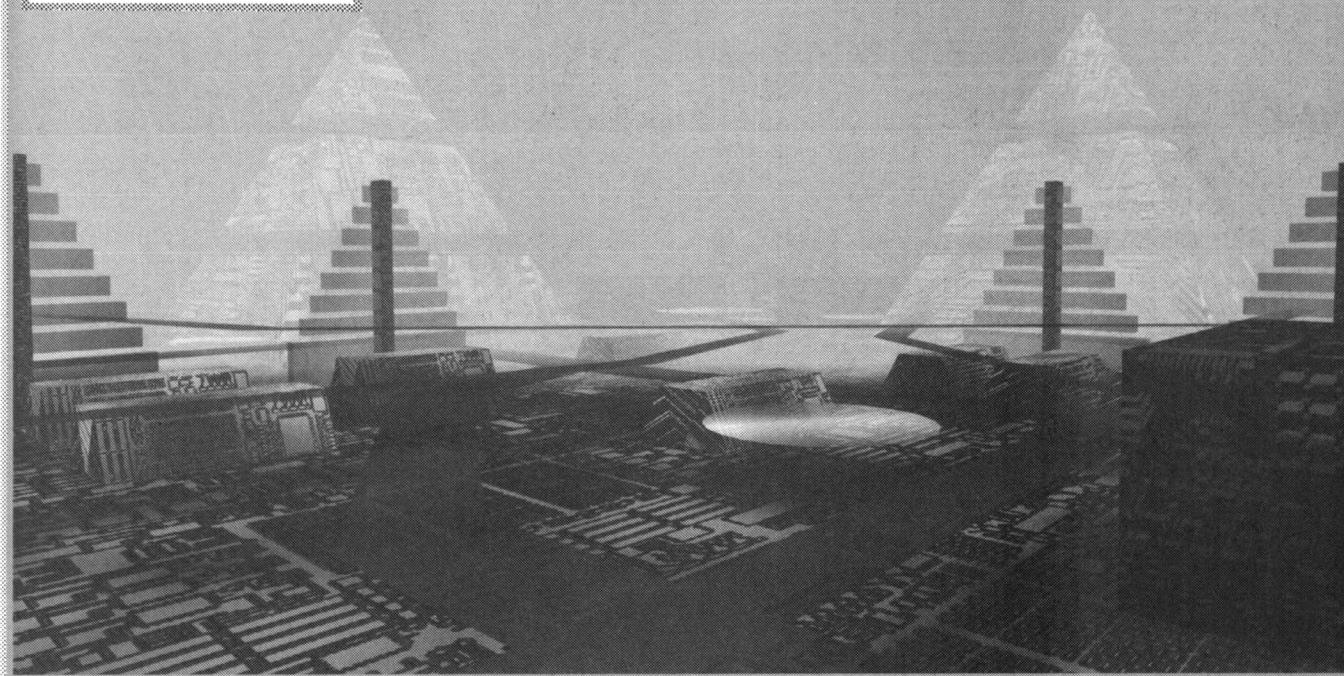
HEAVY PRESENCE OF NETWATCH

Treat this city grid more as a Eurotheatre grid than an Afrikani one. Netwatch will be present 40% of the time at the LDL (!) and it will not suffer the problems of the other Afrikani grids. Runners must tread carefully, but it can be a great place to trash EC runners on their way into Afrikani.

CASABLANCA

This grid sometimes phases into black and white due to some inventive runner's virus. This can reduce the effectiveness of Awareness and System Knowledge rolls, upping the DIFF levels by one (a lot of this sort of stuff relies on color-coded information). Play it again, Rache...

SAHARAN WILDESPACE



POINTS OF INTEREST

CASABLANCA

I only list this place because it's so anachronistic. During the early interface days, when EBM launched its banal Mega City interface, **Casablanca** suddenly became an "in" place. Thousands of Bogart wannabes flocked to Casablanca, where prophets of profits had already programmed Bogartian virtuals complete with Lauren Bacall artificial personalities and Nazi agents and stuff.

These are still around, a tribute to how low popular culture will sink.

HYPERTEXT

LIES DORMANT

This makes it one of those empty systems mentioned on page 119. Use those guidelines for handling the Johannesburg grid.

WITNESS THEIR
LAUNCHES IN
NETSPACE

The OA datafort has a VR control room set up to allow people to watch how the launches work, and they gather quite an audience. Running against this datafort is not recommended for just the reasons Rache mentioned: the security is tough (approved by Rache, himself) and raiding this fort can have terrible consequences in the real world, as Rache's example points out. If your campaign has netrunners who are not content to watch, feel free to make any run into the Mass Driver Datafort a journey through Dante's Inferno.

DON'T LET YOUR
TRACE GET CAUGHT

When portions of the Saharan Wilderspace drop out, there is a 2 in 10 chance that you will be "caught" as the region reconfigures. This means no movement and no logging out for 2D10 Net rounds. On the good side, no one else in the region can trace or affect you during this time.

JOHANNESBURG & LUSAKA

I list these city grids here, because there's really no cities around the grids. Only once the South African white dictatorship fell was it discovered that they were stockpiling bioagents — viral, bacterial, and chemical — because they released these when the rebelling blacks took them to the wall. Blacks and whites alike became infected and the incredible death toll caused an outbreak of cholera and several other choice diseases only common in areas where the bodies of the dead rot untended in the streets. On the bright side, though, at least the residents know they're dead, as compared to most of those in the rest of the world who still pretend they're alive while they breathe mercury-laden air and work at demeaning jobs. There's a lot of truth in the streets at the southern tip of the continent.

Nowadays, most of southern Africa is empty, populated only by the few who are immune and the greater number who are infected but haven't yet died. The South African Net **lies dormant**. Some areas have no power, some have intermittent, and some are reasonably stable. Brown-outs and local shutdowns are common, and the lack of maintenance over the last decade or two has eroded the function of many portions of the city grid.

One would wonder why the Net is active here at all. Well, folks, there's still some occasional bits of information to be found. Most of it is old, sure, but can still be useful. Others are just interesting from an historical perspective. There are also still a few runners, both white and black (although the whites have to be a lot more careful), who use the Net to try to find any leads on their nemeses. So I guess the real reason the Net is still active here is that both sides are bound and determined to exterminate each other. Great, guys, way to plan ahead!

For Net travelers like us, however, Southern Africa (Johannesburg, Lusaka, and area) is the first of the Net ruins, of which there will eventually be lots of. It's a virtual archaeological dig where one can pass the time and perhaps turn up a valuable find.

THE KILIMANJARO MASS DRIVER

I tell you folks, this is the home of some of the finest programming I've ever seen, at least in an industrial vein. The magnetic rails here sling stuff clear into orbit with incredible precision. Just to prove they could, Orbital Air once set up a crash-test satellite in geosynch and pegged that puppy with a two-thousand-ton sled of steel. Laudits and kudos to the programmers at OA, with, of course, the caveat that they work for a corporation and are therefore fit only to be slain.

OA allows the general netrunning public to **witness their launches in Netspace**, which I do from time to time, because, despite the fact that it's corporate-controlled, it's a really incredible application of programming and technology.

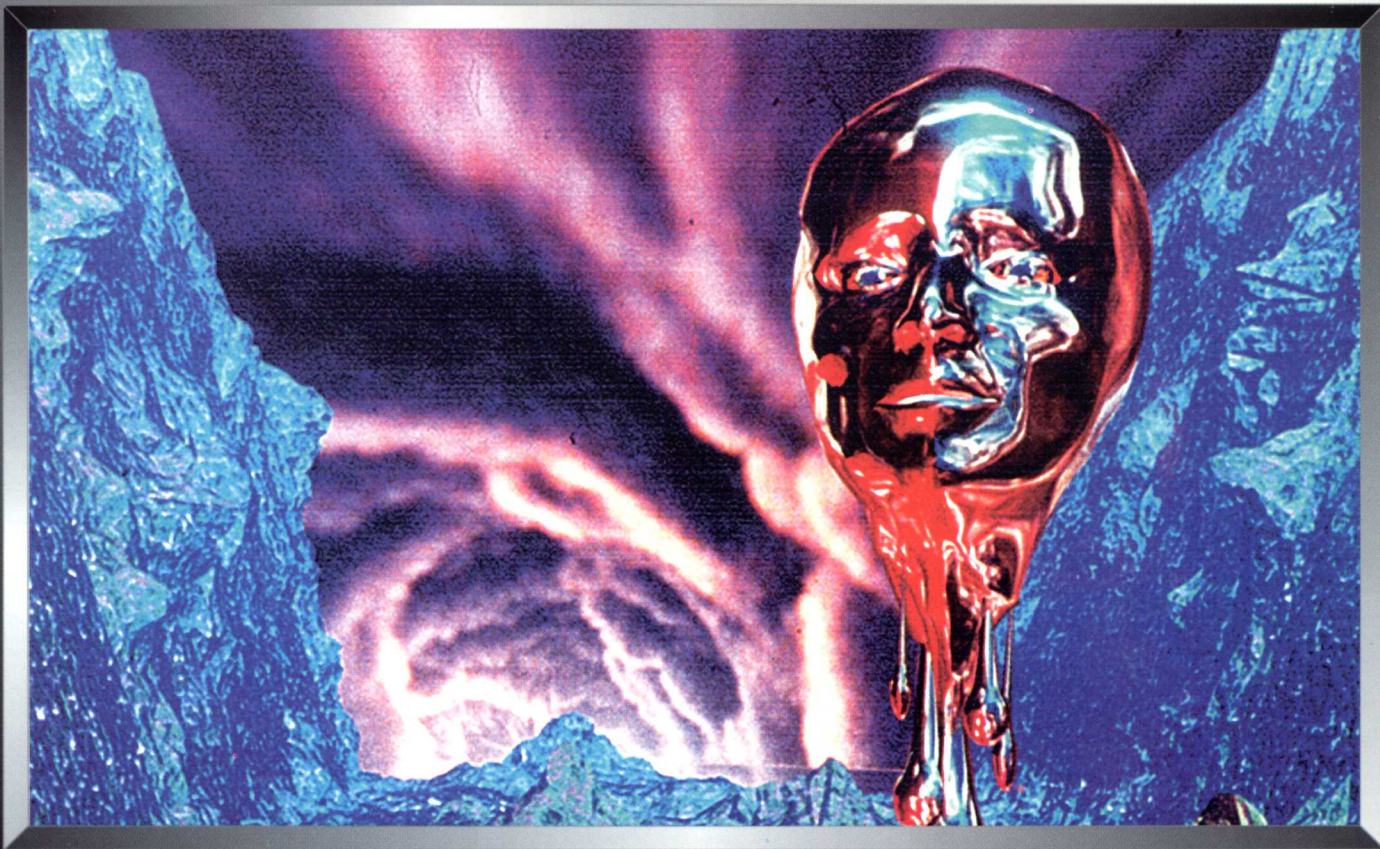
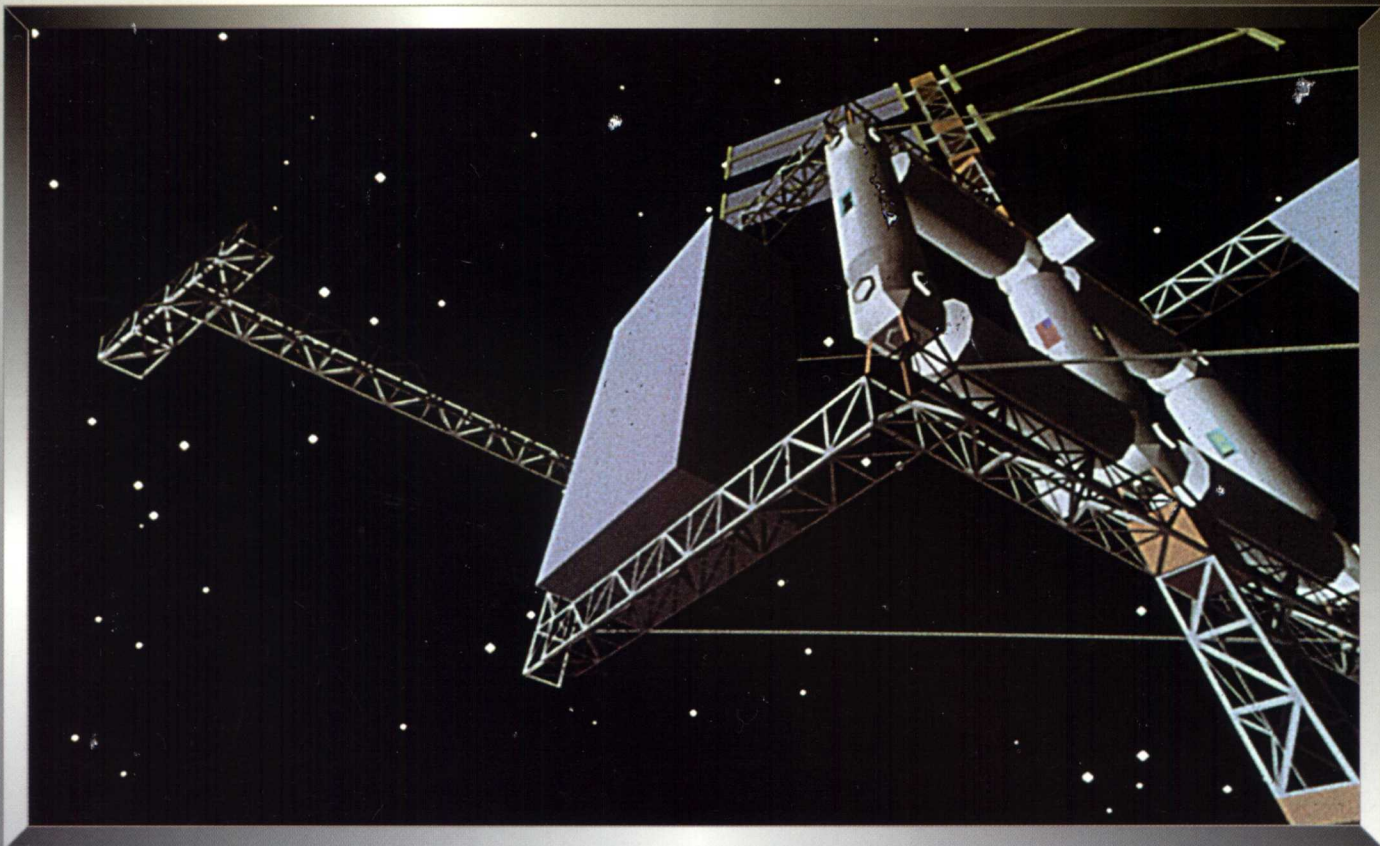
By the way, a word of warning: never, ever mess with the programming of the Kilimanjaro Mass Driver. The last person who did it caused a shipment to fail to reach escape velocity, and it crashed into a residential section of Nigeria, killing a great many people. I had to hunt the bastard down and fry him up slow. I altered a Brainwipe program to modulate itself according to the bio-feedback it received from the jerk's cyberdeck, so I was able to strip his brain down to the barest of essentials. There's not even enough of a platform left in his grey matter to stand an artificial Liche implant on. Then I arranged for OA to pay for his hospital bills for the rest of his vegetative life, because I can't stand anyone who leaves dangerous tools around for children to play with. Then, to sew matters up, I ran the Kilimanjaro data fort myself. I didn't actually alter the mass driver's programming, but I made the readout alter the projected telemetry data. Next time they prepared a launch, their system told them the rail gun would put the entire shipment right through their own desks at several thousand clicks. Two months later, the data fort finally had adequate security. I didn't want them to get complacent, not me, so I ran it once more, congratulated them on their upgrades, and downloaded an old Space Invaders game so it appeared on all their radar boards simultaneously.

SAHARAN WILDERSPACE

The area known as the Saharan Wilderspace is actually a bit of a misnomer, since it's usually not Wilderspace, at least not very much. It is, however, the ragged edge of Afrikani, found right in the center of the region.

It's an area where the connections are few and far between, the communications net is hopelessly out of date, and the systems which are around are pathetically primitive. Normally the Afrikani region extends itself into this area, but sometimes even Zero can't keep up the facade for long.

At times, the whole area collapses out of existence; at others, only sections drop out. Sometimes the refresh rate of the virtual approaches a full second. It's a fun place to gambol about, just to see what will happen. Just be careful that you **don't let your trace get caught** in there, because you might be locked up for a long time.



CHAPTER

8

ORBITSVILLE
WILDERSPACE

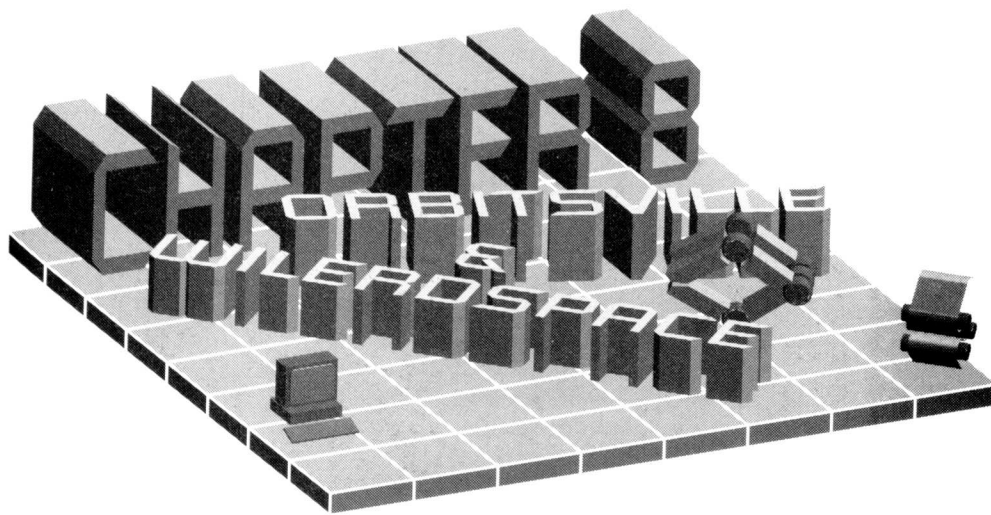


This diagram illustrates the proposed O'Neill lunar colony system. At the center is the Earth, with a blue and green surface. Surrounding Earth is a circular orbit labeled (GEO), with three red satellite-like structures positioned at 120-degree intervals. A larger circular orbit surrounds the Earth-Moon system. The Moon, depicted as a white sphere, is on this outer orbit at the top left, with the label 'Luna' next to it. Further along the outer orbit are four blue, elongated structures representing lunar colonies: 'O'Neill One' on the left, 'O'Neill Two' at the bottom right, 'O'Neill Three' at the top right, and 'Crystal Palace' at the top. A label 'L-2' is positioned near the top left, above the Moon. The entire diagram is set against a black background with a white grid.



CIRCLED LDLS ARE THE WORLD LEVEL ACCESS POINTS AND ARE THE *ONLY* LDLS USABLE ON THE WORLD SCALE

CITY	CONTROLLED BY:	SECURITY LVL.	TRACE VALUE
Crystal Palace	ESA/Interpol/OA	3	1
O'Neill One	Highriders/OA	3	1
O'Neill Two	Highriders/OA	3	1
O'Neill Three (Paradise)	ESA/Interpol	4	1
Luna	ESA/Interpol	3	1
L-2	ESA/Interpol	3	1
WorldSat Network (GEO)	WorldSat	3	2



ORBITSVILLE

Far larger than all the other regions, Orbitville is the 'everything else' of the Net, a giant sphere of leftovers surrounding us in the sky

OVERVIEW

"Of course I helped out during the O'Neill One revolt! It was totally jag to help rip such an expensive piece of real estate from the bloody hands of the screaming Eurocorps. No doubt a few execs took the long dive after that one. I get all sentimental just thinking about it."

— Edger

Orbitville is made up of everything that doesn't have one foot in the mud or the dust. It's made up of assorted odds and ends and odders and end-alls from the LEO satellites to **Voyager 2**, which was last visited by Brain-Dead Gutierrez back in '08.

The distances in Orbitville are very large. I mean, take Pacifica as one example. The longest axis in Pacifica runs from Santiago to Singapore, grossing 10,190 miles by the Great Circle. Pretty big, huh? Compare that to Orbitville: the distance from the Earth to the Moon is 221,000 miles on a good day, and the Moon isn't even all that far away when considered from a regional viewpoint. This means that signal lag will defeat almost any attempt to run the Net up here unless you're just being congenial, which is no reason to run the Net.

Of course, if you have your reflexes jacked all the way up and you're well-trained and experienced and your brain has **occasional temporal fugues into the future**, you can run the Orbitville Net with little problem. I ran a workshack that way once; I was so hyped I could see four seconds into the future, which wasn't quite enough, but it still helped to me anticipate everything that happened in the data fort. It was so gratifying to have a gut-level feeling that I was going to get iced, launch a Killer, and notice a few seconds later a few strands of limp code drifting about in weightlessness, mute testimony to my lightning fast preventative reflexes. On the run, I reprogrammed the computer to release the bioweapons they were working on into the next supply shuttle from the corporation. They weren't too keen on this (the corporation, that is, the shuttle pilots were goners), especially after I released the news on all the orbital bulletin boards. That was No-Ahme Caldwell, by the way, the most untrustworthy group of orbitals I've ever met. I think the weightlessness causes the blood to stagnate or poisons to accumulate in their brains, because they're always up to some sort of creepy stuff, and even though this little bioweapon experiment was apparently an unofficial investigation undertaken by one of their more enthusiastic employees, one can only judge a corporation by its people.

Orbitville covers a lot of space (hah-hah-hah), and it can be divided into roughly spherical areas according to distance and function. Classifying Orbitville like this makes it seem like an onion with layers, and makes it sound equally unpleasant to peel, which it's not, unless you get the major paranoia dread that I do, more about which later.

The first portion encountered by those mudskippers who want to run the stars is the Low Earth Orbit level. In LEO you'll find various satellites, including weather, communication, spy, and battle satellites.

ORBITSVILLE

HYPERTEXT

VOYAGER 2

Brain-Dead's epic run out to the Voyager (which was outside the Solar System at the time) is described in *Deep Space*, pg. 49. It is a feat yet to be surpassed. Any takers?

OCCASIONAL TEMPORAL FUGUES INTO THE FUTURE

Future visions?? Ah-huh, Bartmoss, right... What we're really talking about, folks, is a overdeveloped sense of paranoia, good preparation, and a dose of dumb luck.

ORBITSVILLE HYPERTEXT

A BUFFER ON YOUR CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM

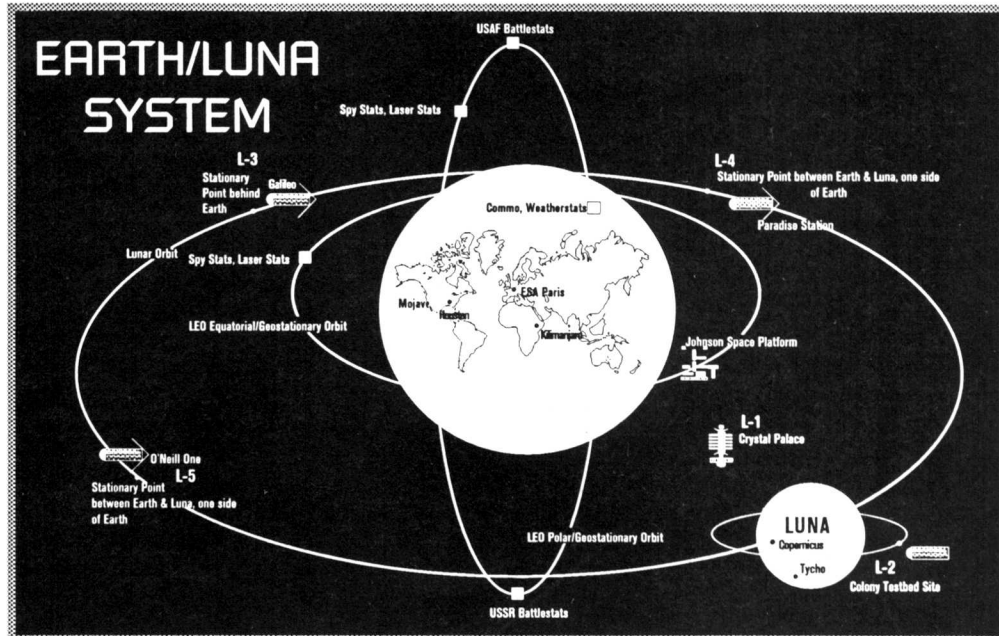
Netrunning to a target a quarter-million miles away produces a unique set of problems. LDLs will only take you as far as the Moon; you've gotta walk to Mars. (The only exception is when one of Earth-Mars cycling ships is accepting commercial traffic and acting as an LDL; they're only in position once every six months.)

This means big delays; minuses to your REF for Initiative (GEO orbit: -1; Crystal Palace: -3; Luna and the O'Neills: -4; Mars: -20), and half that (rounded up) as a penalty to your Interface ability. You can fix this by having a Techie make an Easy and an Average Cybertech skill roll (after paying him 500eb first, of course) in order to adjust the modem link in your neural processor. That will fix the Interface problem. If you have "wired" reflexes, he can also make an Average Diff adjustment there, as well, which will fix the Initiative problem. You have to get a switch put in (a little more euro!), or be adjusted back when you're done with your space jaunt, otherwise, you'll have the same penalties when you run the Terrestrial Net.

SIMILAR THINGS WITH A CYBERDECK

Or, you hardware nuts can look around the market for a set of cyberdeck mod-boards that will do the same things. They reduce the penalties to a flat -2 each, for only 350eb per board. (Approx. price, one board for each type of minus).

EARTH/LUNA SYSTEM



Next is the Geo-synchronous Orbital zone. Here one finds the greatest amount of clutter left by humans: workshacks, battlesats, a variety of static or permanent platforms, and of course the ever-present space junk including the odd corpse. There is also a lot of vehicular traffic out here just waiting for a better autopilot to show up, if you know what I mean, and a lot of interesting dirt to be dug up despite the fact that these self-aggrandized highriders claim to be free of the mud of Planet Earth.

Next out you'll find the L-1 point, which is the home of the Crystal Palace. That's the only thing on that layer, but it's enough.

The lunar orbit layer is next, where the moon, and the third, fourth, and fifth LaGrange points lie. This is the most populous layer, what with the new rat holes known as the O'Neill colonies and the lunar installations, but the place is a lot less crowded than the geosyn and LEO layers, because there's a lot more elbow room.

Beyond lunar orbit, there's really very little point to making more and more layers, no matter how much Spider would like for me to slice and dice the region. You've got the L-2 point just beyond the moon, and some belter workshacks, and if you go far enough you might even find the Klingons, or one of the 1x4x9 obelisks floating around in deep space just sitting there being full of stars.

Yeah, right, and there's little green men on Mars, too. Honestly, I don't know why we spend so much on space exploration. There's almost nothing out there no matter where you go, in spite of the best scripts of the science fiction people. We should spend our time and money investigating the aliens right here on Earth. I mean really, sending out probes while aliens are getting themselves elected to positions of power is like setting up an electric fence when burglars are camping in your bedroom. We need to spend our time and resources here on Earth.

[While I agree that more needs to be done planetside, I have very different reasons. This planet needs to be cleaned up. However, I think that the information and production which has been realized in outer space goes a long way towards answering the questions of what we can do for our planet. Look at the highriders; they recycle everything, and they don't use guns for fear of harming innocent bystanders. There's a lot we mudwalkers can learn from them, cyberpunk and corporate alike. - SM]

Getting into Orbitville is a little different than it is for the other regions. You must first go to one of the equatorial belt LDLs like Bogota or Nairobi. From there, you can jump to LEO, or, if you're good and you know what you're doing, to one of the geosyn satellites. From there you can shift up in the LDL to the Orbital level, and run the region. As mentioned before, though, the delays are quite noticeable, and rather disorienting to grav-grounded weeflerunners. You just have to get used to getting visual and tactile feedback a second or two after you do things. No problem.

An easy way to train for this is to set up **a buffer on your central nervous system**. It's easy to do if you have wired reflexes, but even if you just have cybereyes or cyberaudio you can set up something to emulate at least part of the Orbitville signal lag. You can also do **similar things with a cyberdeck**, although I wouldn't recommend testing it anywhere you might find a Netwatch weasel patrolling.

POWER PLAYERS

In outer space, **the power players** are gravity, pressure, and radiation. Fortunately, we can ignore these in virtual space, unless you have a high suspension of disbelief and are liable to suffocate yourself by holding your breath while you run the Crusty Place.



THE EUROSPACE AGENCY

The ESA (a high-tech faction of the EC) is the most powerful of the Big Names in Space. Their control of the Crystal Palace and their long experience has kept them on top. Everyone knows that if something needs to be coordinated, the ESA are the people to contact. Assuming, of course, that you don't mind them knowing everything you're up to. The ESA also has close ties with the O'Neills, for even though those places have declared their independence, they still recognize that without the interference of the ESA, all their residents would be sucking vacuum instead of residing in a comfortable highriding colony under the constant threat of sucking vacuum.

The ESA has a small workshack and colony testing facility at the L-2 point on the far side of the moon. The place might also be used to construct a new O'Neill colony. They are also have **a third O'Neill at the L-4 point**. I'm sure they'll try to keep this one under their thumb.

The ESA's biggest stronghold lies in the design of orbital stations. They often lease production equipment and technology to people for a large (10%) piece of the action. They also have people everywhere, and have arranged for Interpol to take care of all inter-colony policing in the O'Neills. Interpol also browbeats the people of the lunar colonies and the Crystal Palace.



JAPANESE AEROSPACE BUREAU

The JAB has been very cooperative with NASA, a fact which makes me very suspicious. Of course, the Americans apparently trust them as well, which is even more suspicious. Japanese actually build most of the components which are used in space, their technology being, although usually second-generation, very well-executed.

On the other hand, if the Japanese are building most of the components, it makes me wonder if there are hidden flaws — say secret pathways in their circuit boards or unusual bypasses to their security systems — in the items they construct, in case they ever decide they have to take out a bunch of highriders all at once.

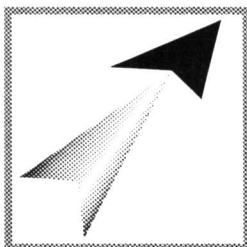


NASA

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration has the greatest body of knowledge on outer space exploration and other planets. This might be useful when we find out where the aliens come from so we can drop atomic bombs and cold viruses on their planets. Aside from the fact that they're an arm of the US government (NASA, though not necessarily the aliens), I have no problem with NASA poking around in orbit and beyond.

I list NASA not because they're a force to be reckoned with along the lines of Arasaka, but that they are a sizable repository of highly-skilled and experienced workers and programmers, and as the frontier moves out further into outer space, they will become more and more important. Even to the ESA.

ORBITAL AIR



The black sheep offspring of the ESA, Orbital Air has a virtual monopoly on interplanetary shipping and handling. Some settling and breakage of contents may occur; even in zero-G it's an ever-present possibility, especially if they don't want you to get what's being sent.

The only real competition they have at the moment is from KosmoSov's large rockets, although the ESA and NASA/JAB may soon provide additional competitors. Yes, I know the ESA helped found OA, but the interplanetary shipping conglomerate has become somewhat of a wayward child.

Orbital Air is **nasty and deadly out here**; folks, on par with a combination of Arasaka and the USAF. Pretty seriously ugly; corporate greed powering high-tech weapons and a transportation monopoly.

I think that Orbital Air may try for a total monopoly in outer space. They have a lot of ships and weapons up there, and if they decided to blockade outer space, they could cause a lot of hard-

ORBITSVILLE

HYPertext

THE POWER PLAYERS

This is just a basic overview. For the real dope, see *Deep Space*.

A THIRD O'NEILL AT THE L-4 POINT

O'Neill Three was completed in 2018 and named Paradise Station. It was placed under martial law by the ESA after the successful revolt of O'Neill One in 2019. For more space history, see *Deep Space*.

NASTY AND DEADLY OUT HERE

That means that **ALL** the OA runners will be Pro level of higher, with black ice and the will to use it.

This seems a good time to give a general note on orbital runners: Highriders depend on their technology more than any Earth-bound pugs. That means that they tend to know it well and **DO NOT** like other people messing with it. Thus Orbital sysops (unless otherwise noted) will be around Mid level (65%) or Pro (35%) and be very inquisitive of intruders. They don't mind tourists and spectators, but if you mean mischief, they will fry you like an egg under an ultra-violet laser. By the way, unauthorized access to a habitat's environmental or directional controls is a capital offense here. Count on orbital sysops ruthlessly enforcing this, since they have a lot at stake.

THE ALIENS

Boy, Rache sure likes to beat this drum, doesn't he? Well, in many ways, this is the logical place for any aliens to set up camp. If they were alien AIs, they would probably have first entered the Net through the WorldSat and Lunar tracking networks. These have the largest "arrays" (the WorldSat array is simply its web of satellites), and are the most likely to be pointed at space. There are other candidates as well: the Hawking Orbital Radio Telescope is always aiming itself at distant radio sources, and who knows what may have been downloaded into the NASA computers which are tracking it. Or there is the aging Very Large Array in New Mexico, which could bring any AIs down to Earth and into our houses. GMs may indulge their fantasies if they wish, but realise that this sort of thing can change the focus of a campaign rather radically. Look what it's done to Rache.

ship. The ESA's main weapons, the lunar massdrivers, would be powerless to stop the Orbital Air vehicles, which are too agile to get hit by a mere rock, even if it does weigh several hundred tons and has an official ESA stamp demanding that the target be hit immediately. The question then would be whether OA could enforce the cordon and starve the highriders into submission, or whether their Earth bases would get crushed by enough reprisals to knock them out of the fight. To be sure, the war would be costly for both sides, but if Orbital Air projected an end to their space-shipping monopoly, what reason would they have not to gamble for all the marbles?

THE REGIONAL AI

[Look out, runners, here it comes again: the Rache Bartmoss Memorial Regional AI and Paranoia Lunacy Binge. - SM]

There is no regional AI. Really. Orbitville runs itself without any apparent AI to give it existence. This scares me.

I don't understand how that could possibly be, unless the aliens themselves run all off-planet Net traffic. It wouldn't be that hard to do, especially if they were a machine mind. They could just take over the processing, there being no resident AIs around to take offense or blow the whistle on them, and once they were firmly implanted or seated or pseudopodded or whatever it is they do when they settle in, there'd be no room and no need — mysteriously — for there to be a regional AI.

Then, **the aliens** would have control of all the major communications satellites, orbital vehicles, space stations and workshacks, and everything that's cutting edge. They could investigate our technology at their leisure. They could bombard the planet with high-frequency Q-band radiation from the many satellites. They could build orbital mind control lasers when the rest of Orbitville wasn't looking.

They could use the satellite systems to insinuate Aliensprache subsonics into all our videos, until slowly but surely everyone started speaking the new language. They could flash subliminal messages even in our interface programs, so that while we're netrunning, we'd get bombarded with such messages as, "There is no alien here. You do not see anything. Give us all your programming and go home and vote PC."

I built a subliminal filter in an attempt to remove this threat. It processed everything through and intermediate buffer and then recompiled the images. It worked for a while, and that's when I saw the aliens I told you about earlier on. I tried to track them down, but I think with their advanced knowledge they figured out a way to defeat my filter, because suddenly one day I couldn't see them any more, and there was a lot of new roaches in my apartment to get in my cereal. Coincidence or diversion? You decide!

The aliens could also get into the so-called real-life communications system, creating personas on videophones and stories in the Dataterm system. The amount of potential influence these... things can have is truly astounding. They could create a fictitious media, doing a report on a fictitious news story about a fictitious corporation or government secret agency. A lot of the public would swallow it, mostly because they're bred to swallow things whole without thinking about it. Then, when the government or some corporation issued a denial to any of these far-fetched stories, no one would believe them and a new conspiracy theory would be born, mewing in the racial consciousness. Pretty soon the aliens would have us fighting each other, governments against corporations against mindless public, fueled by their stories.

The more I think about it, the more obvious it is that aliens have control of the planet, and they're going to get it to kill each other off so they can come down and eat our carpets and spew green foam in our cars and flonulate in the marketplaces. This means that the only hope for our planet is if the kids don't watch TV and try to develop sentence again.

[Just for grins, I figured another Bartmoss-style rationale for there 'not being a regional AI'. How about this: if the regional AIs are transcendental and dependent on their internal structure for their neural network, then the Orbitville AI would have a very fluid architecture. With all the satellites, colonies, and other things flying around, being a regional AI would be sort of like having an eggbeater slowly turning inside your head. Maybe this concept was too close to home for Rache to contemplate. On the other hand, it scares me that I'm starting to be able to think like him. - SM]

SOVIET ROCKET CORPS / KOSMO SOV

The Soviet Rocket Corps is one of the two most militant powers in space, and KosmoSov is their pet power-lifting corporation.

KosmoSov is very mercantile, and the only real competition to Orbital Air, although they are only equipped for the lifting of very heavy bulk items. There is always a chance that they will try to extricate themselves from the state as did SovOil, but they aren't nearly ready.

The Soviet Rocket Corps is the old-fashioned name for their space force, which I suppose parallels the old-fashioned Victorian architecture



of the SovSpace region. The **Russians** aren't as integrated into highrider culture as the other spacers are, instead largely going it alone. For this reason, the Russians will always be willing to swap code or equipment for runs against the Europeans.

They also own two battlestations that are known to the public, and a few others that are not general knowledge. I also think that Sputnik has been refitted with all sorts of interesting new gadgets.



USAF

The United States Aerospace Force is the other crassly militant group in orbit, and an arm of the US Provisional Government as well. They have more killtoys up there than everyone else combined, but these are smaller than those of the Russians. **USAF runners** are cautious and paranoid, an upshot of their being on the losing side of the Euro-Yank Space War.

The biggest hold the USAF has in space, killer satellites aside, is the Johnson Space Platform, which is an old transfer station the ESA leases use of for a eurodollar a year as part of the space war treaty. The ESA might have built their own, but the price is right and to build their own now would be inefficient. Even so, if the US were to boycott the ESA, the Europeans could probably do without the Johnson Space Platform; its biggest use lies in screening out items and people the highriders don't want in orbit. Like me and my deck.

CITY GRIDS

There are only five city grids in the entire Orbitsville region; Copernicus and Tycho on the surface of Luna, and the Crystal Palace and O'Neills One and Two out at the LaGrange points. Of course, to hear the orbitals talk, every workshack out there's a city grid. Pardon me while I sneeze.

COPERNICUS

Copernicus is a small colony filled with ESA and affiliated personnel. It has never grown much from the original design of about 5000. This makes the entire city grid almost one continuous data fort, although for security's sake there are still divisions and data walls and code gates. I'm not sure why the ESA has kept this place so insulated, perhaps they're up to some sort of secret experiment. I've tried running the data fort a few times to find out what the situation is, but have never really been able to get very far. Physically speaking, I've never been able to get into Tycho, and the signal lag from the Johnson Space Platform (where customs always turns me back despite my best efforts to forge a passport) is bad enough that the sysops always catch me when I tried to get in. My hopes are that a good anarchist runner will get to Tycho and run the Copernicus grid to find out what those ESA guys are doing out there

THE CRYSTAL PALACE

The first of the orbital colonies and now the smallest, the Crystal Palace remains the ESA's stronghold in orbit. Although not as large as the O'Neills, is it closer to the Earth and practically on the route from Earth to the Moon and O'Neill One (and eventually, Three), and is thus used as a way station for large craft unable to go to the Johnson Space Platform, or over-powered craft for whom heading out to the O'Neills would be inefficient.

While the Crystal Palace is smaller and less modern than the O'Neills, it has the added advantage that it is well-established. Every government of note and every important corporation has an embassy or an office here, and therefore a data fort to be run. The city grid is small and tight, and different from Earth-bound city grids in that it curves back in upon itself.

The grid, like the Crystal Palace, is built with five ribbons encircling a central data trunk which runs along the station's axis like a spinal cord. In addition, the ring have microwave transmitters along their rims to facilitate intercommunications between the rings without having first to go through the center pole.

The Crystal Palace has a city grid which is more densely packed than Tokyo, and with a wider variety of targets to hit. Everyone wanted a slot in space. In addition, the security here is practically nonexistent, which is great in my opinion. The ESA has **Interpol runners** here to protect its interests and to ensure that no one jettisons the air supply into outer space. Not that anyone could do it, because actually, the most important controls in the Crystal Palace are not hooked into the Net. The only way to run the environmental control system grid **is from the inside.**

So Interpol runners watch the government and basic control systems, but there are so many people who want to run their data forts that they have no time for outside interests. The corporations and other governments have their own security sysops, but these, too, are too busy covering

ORBITSVILLE

HYPERTEXT

RUSSIANS

These folks are still getting on their feet as far as Netrunning is concerned. They will be mostly (85%) Mid level runners with the remained up to Pro Level. As with their terrestrial counterparts, they will not hesitate to use black ice if threatened.

USAF RUNNERS

Okay, they're Pro level with Interface skills of 7 or higher and they are trained in military anti-runner techniques. They are also couped up in cramped battlestations for looong periods with little to occupy their time. Need we say more?

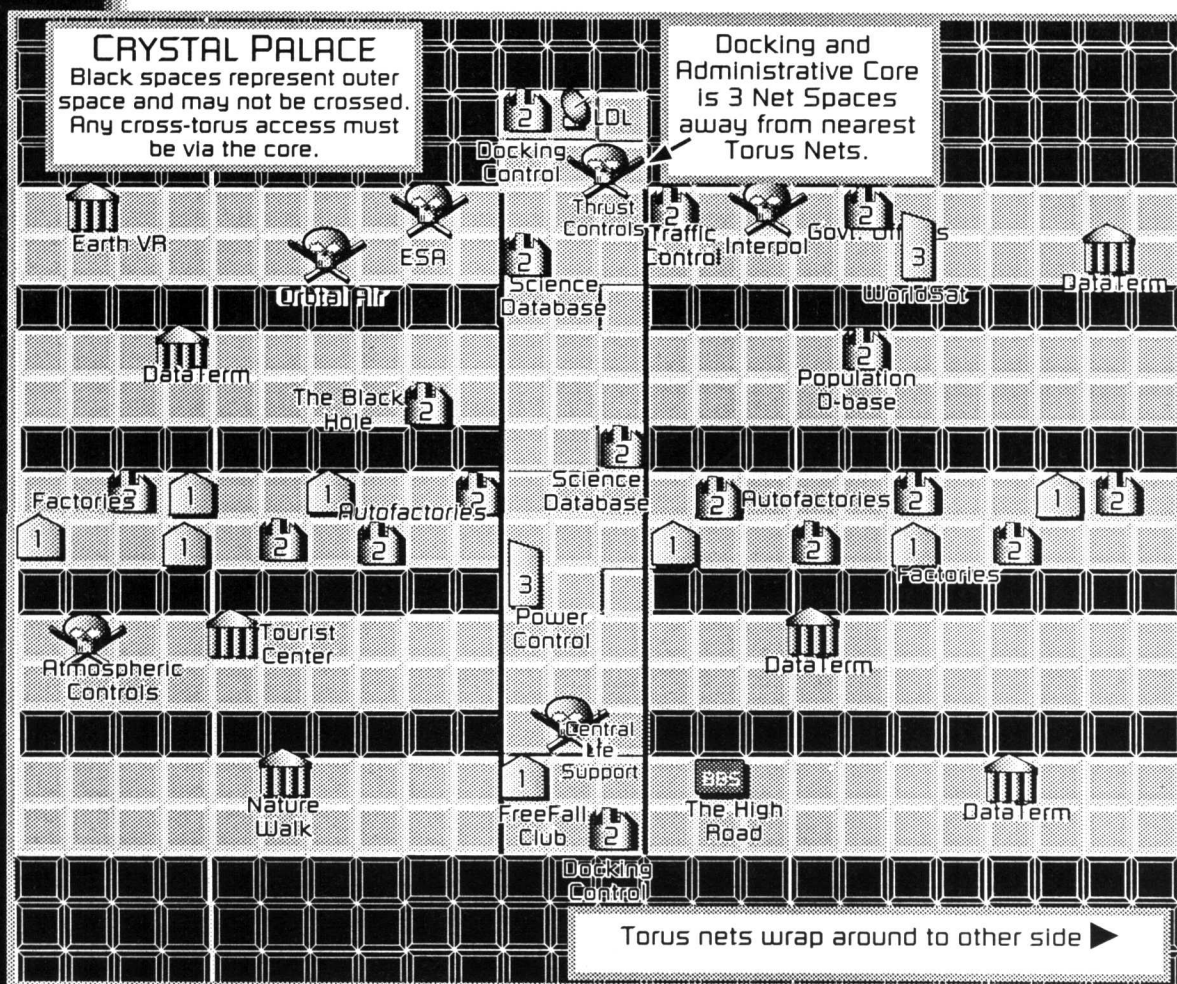
INTERPOL RUNNERS

Mid level with a few (30%) Pros in the mix to keep things interesting. In many ways, they usurp Netwatch up here and there is a 60% chance of encountering one on a failed security roll at any ESA LDL. They will be officious, but effective, and should not be underestimated.

IS FROM THE INSIDE

Important: This means that you have to penetrate the station physically to access these sytems. We show several life support, atmosphere controls, and directional control dataforts on the citygrids, but these are for postional reference ONLY. As stated in the text, these cannot be accessed from Netspace. you've got to go up there personally to mess with these systems.

their own forts to do anything else. So the entire grid outside of the data forts is unpoliced, and every runner can come and go as he likes. This makes the Crystal Palace an excellent stomping ground for all sorts of shenanigans, which, in orbit, cause people to overreact in short order, which is a lot of fun.



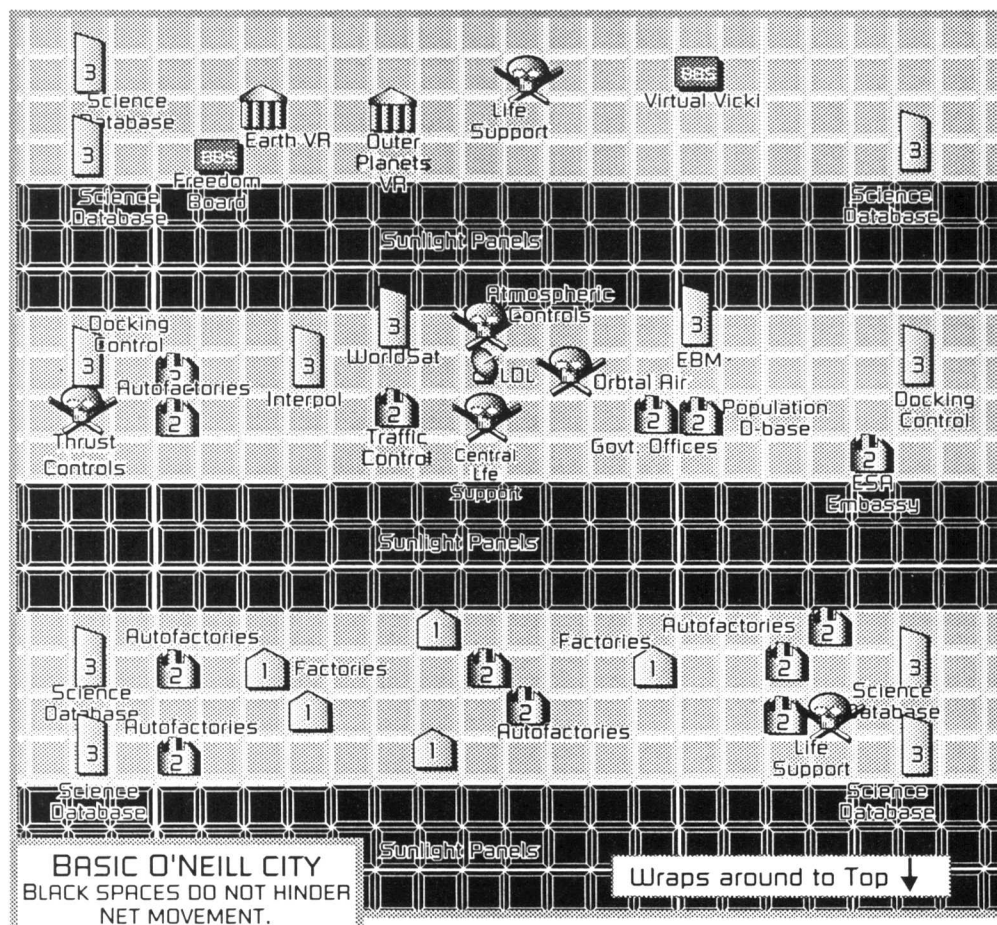
I FLUSHED THE ENTIRE YEAR'S SUPPLY

As we indicated earlier, Rache's activities here would have earned him the Long Fall. If someone can readjust the system to flush deodorant, it could spew anything else as well. Highriders don't like taking those kinds of chances. Remember: Rache gets away with things that others have died trying to do. That's why he's the best. Tread in his footsteps carefully.

Once I was running the Dornier data fort from the Johnson Space Platform, when I found the climate control system for their offices. I don't know if you're aware of this, but the Crystal Palace offices for every corporation and government (except Interpol and the ESA) are very crowded. There's only so much space up there (living space, that is), and the number of people in the Crystal Palace has increased steadily since its opening. Considering the lack of elbow room, arm-pits become very important, so these folks had canisters of odor-absorbing air freshener. Something with a slight citrus scent, with which they would slowly but continuously clean the office air. I of course, couldn't resist, so I flushed the entire year's supply of deodorant into the office building over the course of the next fifteen minutes, which was the maximum output that the circulation system could handle. The Dornier netrunners immediately figured out what happened, but they had to abandon the building before they could undo my handiwork, and then they had to run their own data fort from the outside. By the time they had left the building, cleared their lungs, and found a new place to jack in, I had redecorated their data fort. I deleted the third dimension of perception from the virtual processor to give everyone a flatland sort of viewpoint – I figured it might enlighten them as to the reality of their perceived position of power at the top of the gravity well. I also spliced together their Hellhound and their data base, which probably gave their bookkeepers a few conniptions. I ran up a hell of a tab by using their LDLs to hook up with all sorts of planet-side BBSs and leaving the lines open. Then I shuffled the bits in their black ops files and was just starting to reconfigure the data walls inside their fort when the Dornier netrunners started breaking their way back in. I spent the next hour or so fighting them off before the shuttle I was on started heading back to Earth and broke the connection. From what I understand the Dornier office was unusable for two days, and the adjacent blocks had such a thick smell that everyone was getting headaches for a week.

O'NEILLS ONE AND TWO

O'Neill One and O'Neill Two were built by the ESA, but have since declared their independence in a classic freedom-for-the-colonies action. They are now self-sufficient cities, larger than the Crystal Palace and more advanced, but a lot less crowded. They are, of course, partly reliant on the ESA and Orbital Air for supplies and such, but even were they to be blockaded, they could probably survive for a few months or until a lunar rock smashed their shell to tinfoil, knocked them out of orbit, and they burned up on reentry. The O'Neill colonies are, like the Crystal Palace, tubular in nature, although unlike the Crystal Palace which has five rings, the O'Neills have only **one continuous grid**. There is no central axis trunk line as in the O'Neills. In fact, the only part of the grid found on the cylindrical axis are the controls at the docking ports at either end.



Unlike the Crystal Palace, the O'Neills each have their own security. While not as all-powerful or as obnoxious as Netwatch, I dislike them immensely. One would think that an O'Neill would want to protect itself against the corporations, but instead the O'Neill runners have sold themselves out to the corporations. O'Neill runners, when they discover an interloper, will alert a nearby corporate runner who then come gushing out of their data forts to slime up the culprit.

Fortunately, the number and skill of the **O'Neill runners** is not yet that great, so they can generally be avoided, bypassed, or put away. If you slip up, though, and they call out the corporate dogmeat, expect to have a fun time as the corporate runners savage you. This is especially bad if you're running from another platform and have to deal with signal lag. On the up side, even if you get ejected from a system by a Hellhound, it has to cope with the same signal lag to get you back at your cyberdeck.

Interpol is also present, but is only empowered to handle crime which extends into or out of the O'Neills, which is practically nothing except netcrime. Jerks.

TYCHO

The colony at the Tycho crater was originally known as Luna Colony, but had its name changed when Copernicus gave cause for differentiation. The first permanent lunar settlement (discounting the ill-fated Lunagrad of 2004, a low lunar orbit station which didn't orbit), Tycho remains the largest.

ORBITSVILLE

HYPertext

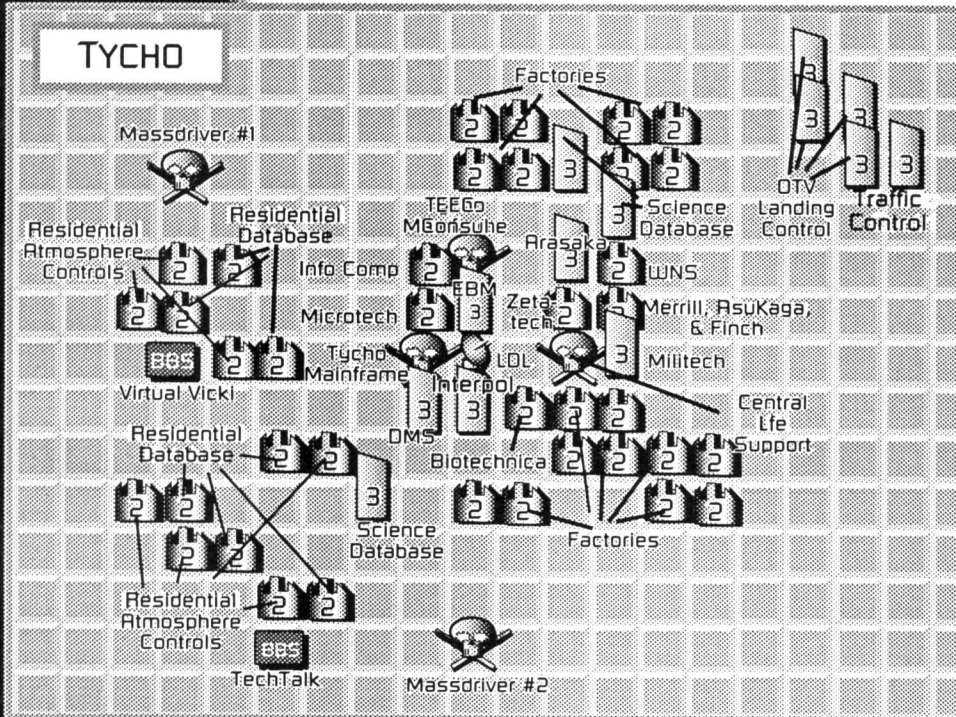
ONE CONTINUOUS GRID

As a tubular citygrid, there are only two "edges": left and right. If you travel away from any one datafortress far enough, you will find yourself approaching it again. See the City Grid Map. Big trouble if you're being actively pursued by someone (or thing).

O'NEILL RUNNERS

Some Pros (30%), with the rest Weefles and Mids in training. They are serious about their territory and will call for help if threatened, then gang up on the interloper.

TYCHO



high here as in the Crystal Palace. In short, it's not as much of a challenge, and the rewards are lesser, but it's a good place for the space-faring weeflerunner to build a rep. It's also got the best city grid appearance, a tongue-in-cheek rendition of the grid as a lush tropical paradise; stark contrast to the reality of the area.

O'NEILL THREE

The third of the O'Neills was completed at L-4 less than two years ago. You mean, O'Neill One is at L-5, Two at L-3, and Three at 4? How confusing. While I appreciate good chaos, meaningless disorder I find annoying. I prefer the highrider name for O'Neill Three: **Paradise Station**. As inaccurate as it

may be, at least it's easy to remember.

Anyway, Paradise is still having the finishing touches applied. If anyone ever really wants to hand the ESA their tombstone, it might be an interesting idea to go in and do some creative file maintenance on some blueprints. Imagine, if you will, an O'Neill Three factory district being three-quarters finished when the ESA discovers that some major structural members were put in backwards. We'd be talking massive delays and cost overruns, and a major slap in the face of the ESA's prestige.

Think about it.

SOVIET ROCKET CORPS BATTLESTATION "ALEXEI"

I give the map of this, the third and largest of the Russian battlestations, because it is the largest and most convoluted of the battlestation data forts. I've run it a few times, mostly just for grins, and to put American propaganda into their computer system and drop a virus program to phonetically translate all their Cyrillic to Tibetan script. They didn't notice what I was up to since I also gave them a direct cable feed to the STV channel by billing the pay-per-view to the Russian government. Nothing like a little porno to distract a bunch of guys who've been locked up in a small shack together for a while.

The battlestation is a large, self-contained work environment where the Russian cosmonauts work on keeping their weapons in good repair in case their government ever decides that it's time for them to risk their lives by putting holes in other people's environments. The hazards inherent in this setup are visible through the redundant survival systems. Every part of the station can survive on its own for a day or three, far longer than any orbital war will last.

PARADISE STATION

This place is under the equivalent of martial law as the ESA refuses to allow any separatist movements get started. You can use the other O'Neill maps as a basis, but up the threat level of all administrative forts by one. At the same time, place Interpol runners in each.

A nasty sidenote: In fact the ESA is planting netspace backdoors in every life-support system program. If a rebellion starts, the authorities can end it very quickly with the proper set of commands. This colony is not going to slip away as the others did, even if the ESA has to kill everyone aboard in order to save it. Hail the New Frontier.

POINTS OF INTEREST

BATTLESTATION DATA

FORT KEY

1. Laser weapon control (not your average wimpy laser, either)
 2. Laser's sensor suite
 3. Terminal
 4. Communications gear
 5. Gravity-bucket control (elevator and spin)
 6. This is where the four modules attach to the rest of the data fort
 7. Thruster control (it's a radiation-producing thruster – a weapon of desperation)
 8. Full sensor suite
 9. ECM suite
 10. Telemetry and target data, including orders and full catalog of all targets (redundant in each module)
 11. Hellhound
 12. Killer VI
 13. Succubus II
 14. Kinetic kill weapons controls
 15. Missile launch controls
 16. Battle module sensor suite
 17. Various countermeasures; flares, chaff, aerosols, and counter-missiles
 18. Electronic warfare suite
 19. Netrunner's memory; utilities, compressed programs, space dedicated for Instant Replay
 20. Direct LDL with SRC headquarters in Moscow
 21. Entertainment center
 22. Life support controls
 23. Door controls
- Data walls strength 8, external code gate strength 9, internal code gates strength 7

BATTLESAT KEY

1. Thruster controls
 2. Electronic detection controls
 3. Kinetic kill weapon control (surface attack capable)
 4. Electronic countermeasures control
 5. Target information and telemetry files
 6. Database of potential targets
 7. Intelligence data files (telemetry and electronic signature of every item the battlesat has detected since memory was last purged)
- (Continued on page 138)

SOVIET ROCKET CORPS BATTLESTATION "ALEXEI"

The station is wrapped like a hot dog bun around a very large laser, and has other garnishes like ECM and kinetic kill weapons mounted here and there for extra fun. Unlike most battlesats, the Alexei and other battlestations have code gates to allow them to patch in to other highrider systems and do electronic ops without having to shunt through the ground-based links and their associated delays.

The propagation of heavily-armed satellites is a discouraging situation. Nowhere is there more need for humans to cooperate than in outer space, where one egocentric moron can cause an entire station to lose its air in a matter of minutes. This only shows that most people, no matter what their natural tendency, will allow themselves to be raised as cannibalistic mongrels if the pay's good.

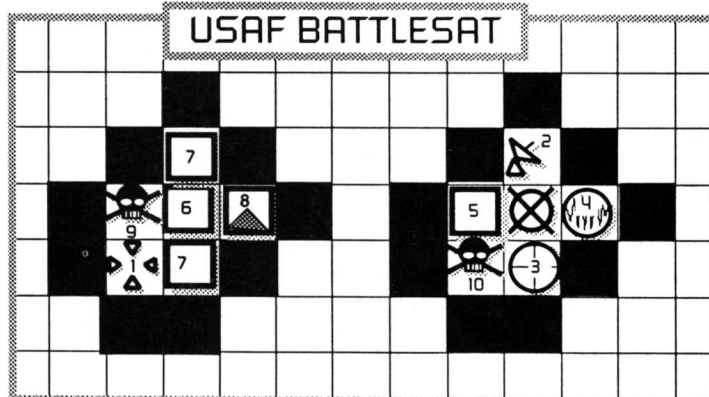
USAF BATTLESAT

There are a lot of killer satellites up there. Everyone and their dog it seems has launched one. I know for a fact that the ESA, USAF, and SRC have killer satellites up there, usually with one hand-cranked camera strapped to the side to justify it as a weather satellite. China has a few, I think England launched one or two with USAF help, the highriders have a few, and even a couple small dirt-bound countries have launched them, just in case. In fact, the only space-faring country that has no government satellites is Japan, although Arasaka has more than any other private concern.

The satellite mapped here is the USAF Starhunter model VII in circumpolar LEO. It passes over your house a couple times a week, maybe drawing a bead on your car just for practice. While not identical to all the other battlesats, and in fact nothing much at all like the older Russian designs, it is considered by most to be a good standard example of a battlesat grid nonetheless.

Some funny guy in the USAF actually developed an architecture for the interior of the battlesat; it looks like a kindergarten rumpus room. The black ice looks like a fuzzy little teddy bear, the MUs look like KiddyChip music boxes and all the controllers look like other toys. Sick mind. I'd like to meet the guy and recruit him for social work.

USAF BATTLESAT



WILDERSPACE HYPERTEXT

(Battlesat Key Cont. from pg. 137)
8. Direct LDL link to USAF ground control

9. Unknown USAF proprietary anti-personnel black ice

10. Unknown USAF proprietary anti-program black ice

Data walls strength 9.

THEIR OWN DATAFORTS

Because these nets are so small, they tend to very well defended. In fact, many aren't even linked into the Net full time, accessing only when downloading information. Thus, you need to know the link schedule and then be there when the transfer occurs. Even then, there is only a very limited window of time with which to get things done.

In addition, these forts can be notoriously tough. As Rache indicates in the text, they are often packed with black ice and well-trained sysops. Sometimes it's easier to take the whole workshack by force than to crack its fort. Of course, losing a netrunner trying is a LOT cheaper. Which option do you think a corporate is going to take?

WORKSHACKS

Hey, folks, there are literally hundreds of small workshacks out there, each the size of a mobile home or something, and usually working on something they don't want everyone else to find out about. These workshacks all have **their own dataforts**, with really killer ice to challenge even the most prescient netrunner.

I've made runs on workshacks where the mad scientists were trying genetically-engineered bioweapons development, strange new programming, or production of new devices destined of the Earthbound marketplace. There's also been a lot of development lately for weightless cybernetics, like prehensile electromagnetic pseudo-Velcro feet, pressurized skinweave, and stuff like that.

Of course, a few of the workshacks [most of them - SM] are devoted to normal stuff like growing plants and producing perfect ball bearings and stupid National Science Foundation-sponsored experiments to see how long a cockroach lasts in vacuum before exploding, but these are the drab empty boxes in a vast weightless ocean filled with treasure chests of really interesting information that the corporations will scramble to keep covered up.

Now for the loaded question:

What are you gonna do about it?

WILDERSPACE

That which has not been detailed in other portions of this manuscript; the true frontier of the Net.

OVERVIEW

[Before we continue this chapter, I (Spider Murphy) would like to set a few things clear with you Net fans. This guide to the Net, as dictated by Rache, was not at all in the organized form you see it now. Instead, I had to wade my way through several megs of continuous stream-of-consciousness narration with assorted support files; a constant stream of patter without breaks, without order, without organization. Remember, folks, he dictated this through the virtual of the Net, so he didn't even use any paragraph breaks.

[After reading the files and breaking them apart into digestible chunks, I'd occasionally prompt Rache for some extra information here and there, just to ensure there were no major gaps in the file. However, Rache did not talk much about Wilderspace, and when he did, his words were thick with the 'it's intuitively obvious' attitude which has so annoyed students throughout time. He does not really consider Wilderspace to be a region, and in a sense, I suppose he's right.

[Thus this chapter was put together with less than the usual amount of Bartmoss input. Much of what you see here I extracted and compiled from other portions of his narration. This means, as you might have guessed, that his prose is more heavily edited here than anywhere else in this guide. The rest of the information is my own input, taken from outside sources.

[As an introduction, Wilderspace is made up of those areas of the Net which have not already been catalogued into one or another region. Thus most of mainland China is in Wilderspace, as is India and parts of northern Canada. Some places in the Atlantic are in Wilderspace. The North Pole is, as is Antarctica. Additionally, Wilderspace sometimes appears inside or at the borders of existing regions when there are difficulties with data transmission. In fact, large sections of Wilderspace have been discovered by people who just happened to go to an area within a region which had not been traveled before — LDLs cause a lot of places in the Net to be skipped over.

[But Wilderspace also goes beyond that. If there were a national computer grid paralleling the Net but not connected to it, that would technically be Wilderspace as well. It certainly wouldn't be Olympia or the Rustbelt, because there'd be no way to get there from anywhere in those regions. It might not even work the same way as our Net does.

['Netspace' is a very common term in modern parlance. It was originally used to describe the virtual reality of the Net as opposed to the 'realspace' reality of the physical world. Curiously, over the last ten years, the meaning of Netspace has taken on an entirely different aspect; an almost metaphysical or transcendental implication. Many weeflerunners now believe that Netspace exists whether the Net is there or not. I view this shift to mysticism in running the Net to be a very bad sign for the future of our profession. Next thing you know, we'll have witch doctors doing data dances in their bedrooms in a vain attempt to break into EBM Munich. This mysticism, by the way, is an extrapolation of a philosophical theory advanced by Janice Grubb (of Ihara-Grubb Transformation Algorithm fame) back in 2004, which I will present to you now. - SM]

SPECULATION ON WILDERSPACE

ESSAY BY JANICE A. GRUBB, 2004

"Three years ago, WorldSat built their public-access global satellite network, and the world stepped one step closer to the realization of the global communication network. The Net, as it has been called for many years by authors, theorists, and avant-garde students alike, may well be the salvation of the planet, for the free access of information to anyone will prevent politicians and bureaucrats from covering their heinous crimes with lies. Unfortunately, as a colleague of mine has pointed out, it may instead just make it easier for said felons to disseminate their lies to the willing public. Be that as it may.

"Over the last few years of programming and hacking, I have developed a feel for what the Net is like, and, with my game design experience, I hope to impart this vision to the average hacker through a **new virtual program** which will use the best in three-dimensional graphics. This vision I have for an interface program depends in large part on how I perceive the Net. So, to give you a preview of what the future holds, I will attempt to impart this feel to you.

"There is potential for the Net everywhere in our world, but most of this potential space lies dormant, awaiting the Net to give it reality, at least to our perception. In theory, we can put a computer anywhere, and wherever we put it (provided we give it a dependable radiomodem) it will become a part of the global computer gridwork. Until we activate this computer, this reality, this part of the Net, will not be realized. After we activate the computer, the Net has grown in a dimension where it could not have grown before; you cannot create more Net within the Net. You need hardware, at least at the current level of technology.

"Then, later, when we shut this computer back off, we destroy that portion of the Net again. It ceases to exist. To me, this is analogous to having flashlights inside a giant dark cave. There is potential to see the wall anywhere, but until you shine a light on the wall, it is only potential. When the light is on, the potential takes shape as some sort of reality. Where there was potential for a stalactite or a stalagmite, when the light is turned on, only one reality can exist.

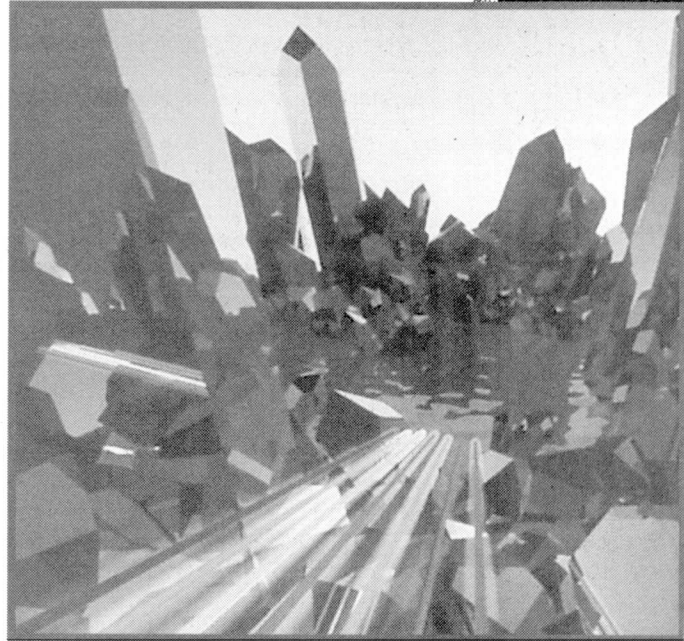
"The problem is that most hackers, when they look at the pitiful number of lights we're shining in this vast cave, think that the few points of brightness are the cave, the Net. But it's so much larger than that. It's huge. The illuminated portions are merely those portions which our tools will allow us to explore.

"To pull another analogy, consider the Net as we know it to be a few highways and towns stretched across a vast unexplored wilderness. The roads and towns (all of which we know) are Netspace. The rest of the area, where no road goes and where no one has ever been, is the unexplored wilderness. I have dubbed this conceptual area 'Wilderspace'.

"Let's take a more metaphysical view of the Netspace / Wilderspace schism. Netspace can be defined simply as where the potential has been explored. Where there are computers and hackers, there is Netspace. Conversely, where there are no means for electronic communication, there is the unexplored areas of Wilderspace. Now, what happens when a particular part of Netspace goes unexplored for a while? Does that part of Netspace slowly **revert back to Wilderspace**, despite the fact that there's a system hooked up? I believe so.

"Think about it: anything could move into an unused but powered system. An AI could set up shop. Viruses could breed. In theory, an alien civilization, given enough time and a good enough radio antenna with incredible error checking and corrections routines, could access the system, figure out how our operating system works, and download an AI which would send them intelligence information. Of course, there's never been any real evidence of extraterrestrial intelligence, but it would make for a good science fiction story.

"Far-fetched as alien infiltration may be, the concept does lead to a solid conclusion for use in modern times: nothing says that Wilderspace is uninhabited. Anything not connected to the Net is, by definition, Wilderspace. If I fire up my Nintendo, that tiny processor is a small computer system to itself, a rogue grid floating somewhere in Wilderspace, unconnected to anything in the Net. There'd be no way to reach my Nintendo from the Net, unless you knew where it was and were able to activate a radiomodem of the type I described for the theoretical alien civilization.



WIDERSPACE

HYPERTEXT

NEW VIRTUAL PROGRAM

This probably refers to one of the earlier Net interface programs such as 'Tronnic or Mega City (see CP, 1st Ed.). The Full I-G Transformation Algorithms are still ten years in the future.

REVERT BACK TO WILDER-SPACE

Well, maybe. Certainly Hong Kong as seen a whole lot of activity in its "empty" systems, and it adds a special uneasiness to the otherwise standard nature of the Net to allow this sort of thing; sort of like having

squatters set up camp in your favorite bolthole. As always, GMs should feel free to utilize the concept of Wilderspace in whatever fashion suits their campaign. It could be the mysterious cracks in Netspace in which AIs lurk, hording data and RAM, or it could be the perfect hiding place for the netranner on the lam, who still needs to keep an ear into the Net.

Just keep certain things in mind:

1. These areas usually occur away from any LDLs, since those tend to be high traffic points.
2. Some areas only link into the Net occassionally, and exist independently otherwise.
3. Most of Wilderspace tends to be abandoned or seldom-used sytems which can be accessed only when they are linked into the Net (and turned on).

ENTIRE CITY GRIDS AND SUPERCOMPUTERS

This is a great way for somebody to keep themselves out-of-sight and still retain Net access. While it is difficult to keep this kind of thing secret, there is a lot of ground to cover, and if the grid keeps a low profile and minimal Net monitoring, it's likely to avoid a casual search (a Very Difficult or higher task). If it goes off-line entirely, it could be impossible to find without a physical search of their location. And if they've managed to program their Net location to be somewhere other than their physical location (again, tricky, but Rache could do it), you may not even know where to start.

THE NET IN THE RAW

This could be the Net without the more sophisticated I-G Algorithms which help runners interpret the images. It would be similar to the earliest versions of the Net where the only environment was the communication lines, the LDLs, and the occasional simple facade of a datafort; all rendered in the most basic Virtual mode. If the GM wants, he could levy a -1 to Initiative and System Knowledge rolls, since this is a very different mode for most netrunners to operate within. Old-time runners could be immune to this penalty since they cut their teeth on this sort of thing. Of course, many report Wilderspace as being as vivid as "normal" Netspace.

A HALF-FORMED, NEBULOUS GRID

One tends to get portions of the citygrid dropping out, as usual. There's a 20% of your LDL switching off every 2-7 hours, and a 40% chance that the datafortress you're looking for isn't even on-line at the time. Chances that there will be any long-distance connections to other major cities in India (from Delhi) are triple or quadruple against.

"In fact, **entire city grids and supercomputers** could be out there in Wilderspace. If they only patched in briefly to upload and download compressed files, they could hide in Wilderspace for years. With a pet AI in Netspace to help cover their tracks, they might never be found. Of course, a dedicated visionary could try to find them. The only way they way they could be found against their will would be to probe everywhere in the darkness of Wilderspace with antenna and radiomodems and what have you, and see if you ever got a response. This assumes you are able to engender a response with your equipment, and further that you are able to recognize the response as such. Not an easy proposition.

"Nevertheless, Wilderspace is out there, a vast dark potential, lurking beyond our consciousness like an unwritten book. In my opinion, since the opening of the Crystal Palace, Wilderspace is the last frontier."

"WILDERSPACE IS NOTHING"

[Not everyone takes to Jan Grubb's view. Edger was most adamant on this concept, so I have included his rebuttal to Jan's essay. - SM]

"Too many edgerunners these days got this thinkum that Netspace is some kinda fuzzy god-like zone above our heads that would be there whether or not there was a Net. What a load of drek. It's like that old saying, 'if a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?' Yeah, right, and if I shoot myself in the head and no one ever knows, did I really die?

"What they're tryin' to do is make themselves into some kinda superhero running around the Net just by makin' this big hooey of a fable about the Net and how surreal it is. Most of them are these computer nerds who don't know a sex drive from a bus route. I live on the street, where the action is, you know, and I know I can hack a lot of frackin' trouble. I done shot guys, I knifed guys, I got myself sliced up real bad a few times. I got a life. So when I netrun, I know I'm doin' what I can, 'cause I ain't so good a killer on the streets, you know?

"I don't need this nihilistic 'the Net is everywhere even if all the computers were shut off' crap. The Net is most certainly not everywhere. The Net is where it is, no more, no less. That's a pragmatic view, not a hopelessly romantic view, and I know it, 'cause there ain't no time for romance when you're workin'.

"Now what Wilderspace means to me is this; it means those parts of the Net that aren't, you know, normal. Those parts where for whatever reason the region's virtual reality ain't around. Sometimes there's Wilderspace between the regions, especially when the boundaries shift, which they do often; and some parts of the Net aren't in any region at all. So I guess what Wilderspace really is to me is **the Net in the raw**. Au buffo. No glitz, no glamour, no snotty upper-class pseudoreligious gobbledygook.

"That's why I spend most of my time in Wilderspace when I can. I get sick of all that fakey stuff."

POWER PLAYERS

[Admit it, punks, there's no real point in mentioning power players in a region which only exists where others don't. Sure, there are a few notable companies like Sungan Industries of Korea, but the largest corporations are all off the Japanese coast, and spend all their time fighting the Japanese influence. If a new region ever does develop in Southeast Asia, then everything will be different. Until that time, however, this section will have to remain blank. - SM]

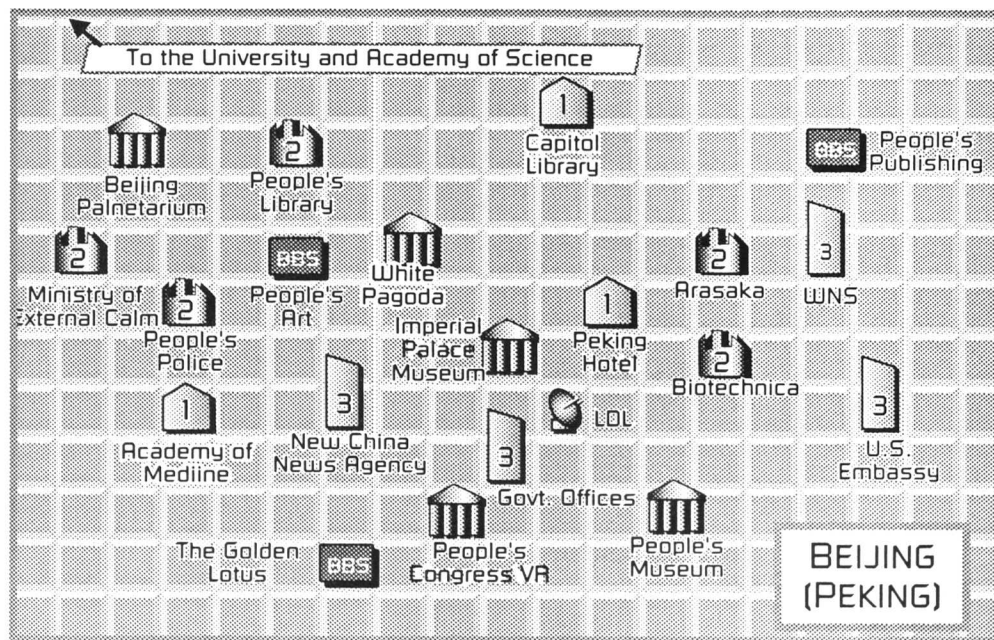
CITY GRIDS

Formerly a part of the Afrikani region, the Delhi city grid crashed in the wake of a terrorist EMP bomb. The entire city grid went down along with quite a few netrunners, the power system went off-line, and unknown jillions of bits of data were permanently lost. The borders of Afrikani rolled back to the Middle East, because the region's hold on Delhi across the radioactive glass wastes was tenuous at best. Then SovSpace expanded into Teheran, and Delhi was completely cut off from Afrikani.

The Delhi grid has had a hard time rebuilding, in part because the attack wiped out a whole bunch of private entrepreneurs who had all their business stuff on computer. Most were wiped out, and everyone had a sudden hesitance to trust anything important to the electronic world. Without the prompting from the public, the Indian government has been slow to get the hardware replaced and the cabling shielded, which only exacerbates the situation.

These days, Delhi is **a half-formed, nebulous grid**, with few systems on the Net, and minimal data to plunder. Don't bother with it. If they ever get back on-line, though, expect to see SovSpace swallow them up, or perhaps they can join in with a Southeast Asian region.

Oh yeah, one other thing: despite the fact that they are beaten down, don't do anything with cow icons in India. You'll regret it.



BEIJING

The capitol of China is so up-to-date (considering what difficulties most Chinese citizens have getting good equipment) that it would be surprising they weren't in a region if the Far Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere weren't around to keep them down.

Beijing is bootstrapping itself into the modern world, though, despite the best effort of the Japanese to keep them down and the Communist government to keep them repressed. I heartily recommend doing some runs for private concerns against the regime. Either regime; Japanese or ChiCom. The citizens don't have anything with which to reward you... except code. And let me tell you, some of the best utilities and other handy tool programs I've seen have come from China. Those guys are pretty smart, in spite of socialist schooling.

ALPHA

A mysterious domed habitat in Arizona, Alpha is so advanced that it must have its own city grid, if not a full-fledged internal Net. As any southwesterner can tell you (and as one female I dated told me many many many times until I wanted to hit her), there is no apparent entrance or egress in Alpha. As near as anyone can tell, those inside never come out.

This is not to say they don't come out, just that no one knows about it. I believe they do slip in and out, and have spies throughout our society. I also believe that Alpha is one of the Wilderspace grids which **periodically pops up**, integrates itself into the Net, and then drops back off-line when they're through. I never had time to check it out myself, being too busy running around reconstructing icons in Europe and programming exciting new virtuals with which to torture my enemies in Atlantis, but I know several people who claim to have been to Alpha, at least for a short while until the Alphans disconnected themselves from the Net and their traces were left stranded in the middle of Arizona. Or is it New Mexico? Whatever. You seen one desert state you seen 'em all.

So go hang around southern Olympia, and see if they turn up. Hey, it's a way to pass the time, you know?

THE GHOST TOWN

It is rumored, fellow psychopaths, that there is a place somewhere beyond the bounds of any region where the human AIs go and congregate. Now remember, folks, when I'm talking human AIs, I'm talking people killed while interfaced, people extracted into disk, people victimized by the *Soulkiller* program (which I personally believe exists; I know how good a programmer Alt Cunningham is...or was or whatever), and other such weird souls. All human AIs are, or at least were, human.

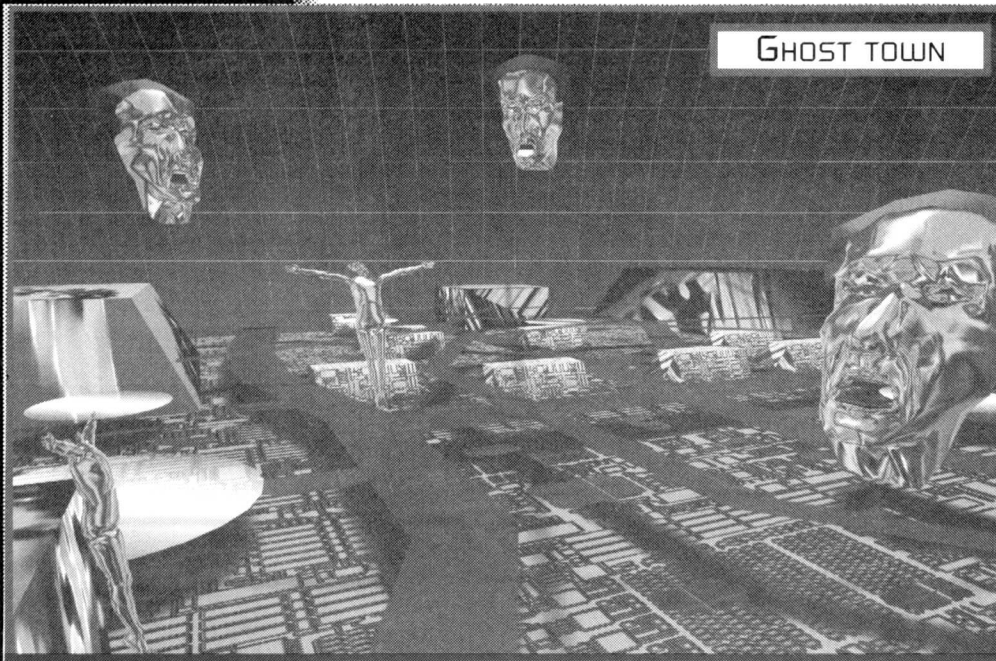
So there's supposedly this place, which they call Shangri-La, but that everyone else calls The Ghost Town, where they go to socialize and hang out and pretend they're still human among their own kind. I'd never go there myself, because no matter who they are I can assure you that they're not my own kind. I wouldn't hang out with my own kind if I could, and in fact if I met someone who was too much like me I'd probably have to kill him, if for no other reason than if he were like me he'd try to kill me back first. Never trust yourself, least of all people, because only you can send

WILDERSPACE

HYPertext

PERIODICALLY POPS UP

If Alpha does, in fact, pop in, then they are using either a landline access or a radio modem. A landline could probably be traced physically (don't you just hate meat-work?) so a radio modem is more likely. If this is the case, diligent monitoring may be able to catch Alpha in the act. As with accessing the workshacks (pg. 138), the window of opportunity is pretty limited (probably 5-10 minutes, on the average), and it is likely that any Alpha sysops will be alert to any such efforts during these vulnerable periods. So far, no one has successfully gotten anything useful out of such efforts, or else those who have didn't get very far with their data. How far are you willing to stick your neck out to discover what is going on here? See *Home of the Brave*, pg. 139, for a bit more on Alpha.



GHOST TOWN

HUMAN AIS

As we described on page 13, each of these are unique constructs, depending on the way they were brought in and the individuals themselves. AIs that were once netrunners are naturally the quickest to adapt and some have managed to achieve some of the same abilities that they had in their previous life. The main component in this is finding a computer system to run out of and gaining control of it (usually accomplished with outside assistance or because the system was unoccupied in the first place). Once established in a system, the human AI can often act within the Net per their previous character, perhaps even with enhanced abilities due to their new nature (GM's call).

Other characters are unlikely to fare as well in their new existence. Since they have so little knowledge of the Net, unless taken under the wing of an AI or netrunner, most cannot even move from where they were transferred into Netspace. The fact that so many DO manage to get out into the Net and into Ghost Town tends to indicate that there may be a form of "Human AI Railroad" working to save these poor souls and help them adapt.

yourself into certain death. That's how I ended up here. On the bright side, at least I haven't been dismembered, although I have more or less been de-membered. But I give thanks that I can still remember.

Anyway, I've talked to some people who say they've seen it. It's supposed to be at the north end of Canada, the Yukon or the Northwest Territories or maybe even eastern Alaska, because it's kind of where the Old West was and it's close to the Rustbelt and Olympia and the US West Coast where a lot of people seem to get zapped all the time. The guy who I downloaded to my cat claimed he was from Night City, which is where Alt worked. She says she's been there too, The Ghost Town, that is, not the US West Coast, because I know she's been there, and I'm inclined to believe her because she knew a lot about that sort of stuff and alone of all people she has never lied to me. She doesn't always answer my questions, but her answers are always truth.

Alt said there were about two dozen or so people at The Ghost Town, which is run in a small city grid where the AIs earn their keep by keeping everything straight and running smoothly despite the lack of regional AI influence. Apparently they've all taken the icons of angels when working, which the locals attribute to a benevolent system AI so they don't hassle their visitors much. Plus whenever they hassle a ghost the others come and trash the miscreant's system and zap him if they catch him in the Net.

Other reports I'd gotten said there were hundreds of **human AIs** at The Ghost Town, maybe thousands. These numbers can only be reconciled if we assume that perhaps all of them got together and had war to thin their ranks. Or maybe there were two politician human AIs who got everyone else to fight for them to help decide a dispute.

The advantage of being a human AI would seem to be an invulnerability to grey-matter-specific black ice, so if you can find The Ghost Town it might be a good place to recruit some runners. On the other hand, they have no need for food or weapons or money, so you'd better have a good dedicated system for them to claim as their own if you want to bribe their loyalty.

PERSONALITY PROFILE

RACHE BARTMOSS

"A friend of mine once said his life's ambition was to be shot by a jealous husband at the age of 103. Me, I want to push the envelope so far that my discoveries drive people insane, that the ordinary person can't look at me without feeling the feebleness of his own pathetic routine existence. My goal is to be brain-wiped at 103, mobbed by thousands of irate cyberpunk netrunners because I'm too cutting edge.

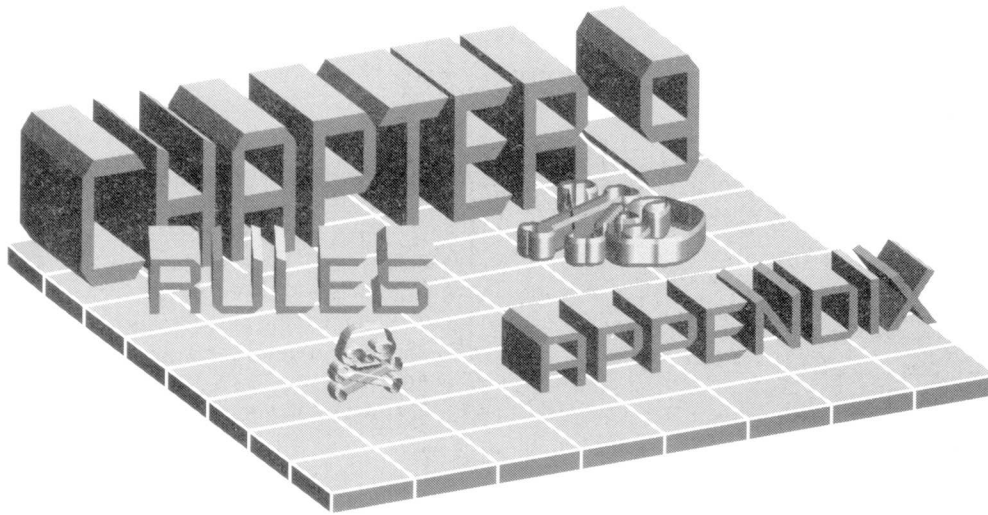
"I don't think I'll succeed, because the harder I drive to the Edge, the further it looks to be. I push myself over more and more ground, and it seems like I'm getting closer to the Edge, but I can't quite reach it. But that doesn't matter, because it's not flying over the Edge that counts, it's driving yourself towards it. Life without a goal is meaningless. When I die, I won't be some corporate cog sitting around saying, 'Well, I had a lot of money once.' I'll be screaming and singing, telling people, 'Yes, I did what I thought was right, without quitting, ever, until I was destroyed! They never took that from me!'

"I live for the drive, the struggle. I love Nietzsche, because he understood it, although he was wrong about the limits of infinity.

"Sheesh. Listen to me. I sound so serious. I better go attach a lightning rod to my sockets and stand in the rain a while."

—Rache Bartmoss, 1992 - 2020(?)

EXTRACTION COMPLETE: VIRUS SWEEP CLEAR...SUBSYS 1245....



This Chapter contains the rules systems and explanations that were simply too large to fit into a Hypertext area. As with all such documents, these rules should be seen as guidelines. Remember: it's your game.

A LITTLE TALK ABOUT NETRUNNING

The first thing to understand about Netrunning is just what a computer is. The thing on your desk is only hardware—just a box that carries out instructions. The real computer resides in what is called an Operating System (inside a bunch of silicon wafers we call a CPU). It is a sort of program that carries out its owner's instructions, like "run this program" or "let this me open this file to look inside it." Even an AI is a kind of super Operating System; a set of supersophisticated instructions that tell the computer what to do (like the "soul" tells your body what to do). AI's have one big advantage; because they are self-aware, they can ask themselves to do things instead of waiting around for human instructions.

With a regular computer (like the one I'm using now), you send messages to the Operating System. You ask it to do things; run the Space Invaders video game; open up the word processing file you wrote last night, whatever. In the 20th century, most advanced computers allow you to talk to the

Operating System by pushing a symbol displayed on the screen; like a miniature file folder when you want to look at a particular file, or a picture that represents the Space Invader's game you want to play. These symbols are called ICONs, and when you click on one with your mouse, you're really telling the Operating System to tell the computer to open that file or start playing that game. Every program in the computer, including the Operating System, is represented by some type of ICON (even if it's an invisible one).

Now imagine that you could see each ICON as a little three-dimensional picture, floating on the screen. When you clicked on it, you would still be asking the Operating System to perform a task, right? Well, Netrunning is basically routing the ICONs on the screen directly to your optic nerves, so you see them floating in front of your eyes without a screen.

How do you click on an ICON that's now inside your brain? You move towards it until from your point of view, you touch it. That tells the Operating System that you want it to start that program or open that file.

When you're Netrunning a computer, what you're really doing is moving your point of view to look over the computer's list of ICONs. Each program, as we said before, is represented by an ICON. The CPU ICON represents a filefolder with the operating system in it. Memory ICONs represent file folders holding information. A Code Gate ICON represents a program stored in the Operating System that monitors all the commands you give the computers' Operating System and if you give it a sensitive one, demands that you

give it a password before the Operating System will do what you want it to. A Data Wall ICON represents an Operating System program that requires that you have a certain code in order to get access to the Operating System at all.

At this point, most people ask, "What is black ice?" Black ice is really a series of programs stored in the Operating System of the computer. When you don't answer a password right or try to open an unauthorized file (or you try to give commands to the Operating system by going around the Data Wall program), it launches one of these programs. Which one launched is based on what you have just triggered; in effect, when you pass by a Hellhound ICON, what is really happening is that you have disturbed a file on which a Hellhound alert has been placed. If you trigger the alert by moving near the file, the Hellhound then performs its function.

CYBERDECKS AND COMMANDS

Now, how does that fit into Netrunning and cyberdecks? A cyberdeck is really a combination of a glorified modem (a remote telecommunications device, kind of like a phone; see the ISDN essay below) and a rather small and stupid computer. The modem part sends and receives signals through the Net. The computer part interprets the signals through a complex program called the Ihara-Grubb interface that turns electrical signals into visual and auditory data. In all cases, what you see in Netspace is only an illusion; the way a TV picture is only a translation of the signal that's been beamed from miles away.

There are two other programs on a cyberdeck. One is the Operating System; a program that listens to the instructions the Netrunner thinks to it and obeys his commands. The other is the CREATOR virtual reality system, which is really a complex drawing program that tells the I-G that "when you get this signal from the Net, show the guy this image instead of the one he normally would see." Our small and stupid computer also has a capacious memory; it can store and run various programs (as directed by its owner), and it also has a huge library of images that both CREATOR and the I-G interface draw upon to interpret what the Netrunner sees while in Netspace.

So what's the Netrunner doing during all this? A Netrunner's brain basically executes commands to his cyberdeck's Operating

System; a function not really any more complex than telling a smartgun to fire using interface plugs. In general, there are only four commands a Netrunner can tell his deck to do.

- The first (and most common) command is intuitive: Move my point of view of the Net to the place I want to go; sort of like pointing a virtual glove or joystick.

- The second most common command is: Activate a program or open a file.

By moving close to or through an ICON, the Netrunner is able to activate the program that the ICON represents, the same way people in the 20th century activated a program by clicking on it with a mouse. When they do this inside someone else's computer, it runs on that machine; they observe it through their remote point of view. When they run a program on their own machines, they observe it close up. When you pass through (or close to) an ICON in the Net, what's really happening is your cyberdeck is reading the signal of the originating computer and translating it into an ICON; you are "running" the ICON's program in your deck.

- The third command is: From the list of programs I have stored on this cyberdeck, run this one. This is how Netrunners get things done. Even the Menu is just another list of programs. The programs do the real work. When activated, they go out and perform the task they have been designed to do.

If a Netrunner needs a new kind of program, he must exit Netspace and laboriously write and save that new program, then load it into his deck for future use. In 99% of all cases, he will be writing it in a computer "language", a translation between the computer's normal binary code and some form of human language like E-BASIC or META-C. These days, very few people even know these languages; most programming in the 2000's is done in what is called "object-oriented" mode; you take little bits of the already written instruction code (usually represented by its own icons) and link them together like a flowchart.

- The fourth command, *Create Virtual Reality*, is a subset of the third. This is the heart of the Creator program. By activating the Creator drawing program hardwired into his cyberdeck, the runner is basically modify-

ing the deck's basic I-G interface program. First, a background is selected from a huge database of backgrounds, then modified by using simple controls to adjust color, shading and texture. Then the 3-D objects are selected from another database of objects scanned from real life, then stored in a compressed, high-resolution form. The objects can be decompressed and "assembled" into virtual reality on four different levels of resolution. When a runner saves a program, he is saving all the instructions for redrawing the virtual reality he's created. Anyone entering the Virtual (either where it is stored on the runner's cyberdeck or in another system) automatically activates the picture and causes the cyberdeck or computer to reconstruct it.

REAL WORLD TERMS FOR THE ETHEREAL.

Anyone can access Netspace (*the global computer network*) from their decks (*ISDN equipment with analog downward compatibility*) and use regular programs as well as navigate data domains (*local computer networks*). However, the Netrunners class (*ISDN data communications specialists*) is able to do custom alterations of the net navigation signals (*changing the Data-channel to redescribe the Bearer-channels and thus fooling the connecting computer*) to break in to data fortresses (*secured systems and networks*) by running the net raw (*interfacing by typed commands*) or using an armament of attack, defense and security programs (*underground pirate ISDN networking software*) for their own benefit.

Every netrunner may get hit by ice (*little network-based, security software agents*) that mess with the navigation signals to the intruding cyberdeck (*fooling the D-channel addressing the targeted ISDN equipment*) that can physically harm the deck and netrunner (*trick the ISDN equipment's software to trigger a short circuit frying the ISDN equipment and user*).

Now you know why we use the *Cyberpunk* terms for most of this stuff.

WHAT IS A "MODEM"? THE ISDN QUESTION

InterService Digital Network II transponders had replaced the classic Modem for all Netrunning purposes by 2010 (this second-generation system set up jointly by Internet and Worldsat). A computer or cyberdeck hooked up to an ISDN node sends its output to an internal switchboard (similar to the

twentieth-century Centrex phone systems) which converts the Netrunner's neural signals to a digital format for transmission along fiber-optic lines (as opposed to traditional modems which worked with auditory tones). This provides the perfect carrier for the I-G algorithms and allows baud rates in the 100,000-500,000 Kbaud range, over 1000x greater than current rates! Without this kind of transmission capability, true Netrunning as we know it would not be possible. Some of the problems a 'runner will find in SovSpace or Afrikani can be laid at the feet of the antique modem connections to the systems over there.

Modern cybermodems in 2020 primarily route data to ISDN II Netspace nodes for digital translation as well as adapt themselves to more primitive systems (i.e. auditory ones), which are below the current level of technology. In fact, most cybermodems now have the ISDN II protocols built in, so that they don't have to utilize outside translations. In addition, they usually have built-in computer systems which serve as micro PCs in themselves. The modem name has simply stuck even though the function of the device has changed radically. Which just goes to show you how conservative even edgerunners can be...

NEW NETRUNNING RULES

NETRUNNING FROM MAINFRAMES

A Net-runner with a cybermodem can only take one action per Net combat round. Netrunners who operate through a cybernetically-accessed workstation or mainframe can take multiple actions in a combat round if they run the **Multi-Tasker** program (MU 6, STR 5, 1140eb) first. This allows a single netrunner to take an extra action for every CPU he has greater than one (to a maximum of 3 actions). For every extra action he takes in a round, there is an additive -1 Speed penalty. The Multi-Tasker program remains active throughout the run, and can be attacked if an opposing netrunner penetrates the user's datafortress.

For purposes of making anti-personnel program attacks, a non-AI computer's Interface SA has a starting level of 4, and can be bought up like other skills. AIs automati-

cally have a starting Interface of 8; for them, netrunning is intuitive.

KEYBOARDS IN THE NET

Your cyberdeck got fried, but you've still got to make that run. You can't get your hands on another deck right away—but you do have this desktop PC and a basic ISDN modem... hmmm?

Points of interest:

- A computer/keyboard combo will not run your I-G interface program. You'll have to program your own interface routine. (Very Difficult task, *Programming* skill. Difficult task, *Expert* [Complex Computer Language] skill)

- Or, you can alter an already existing standard modem program to handle your cyberdeck programs. (Difficult or Average task, same skills apply) If you can do neither, a Tech can do it for 150-200eb.

- Once you've modified your interface routine, you also have to modify your software (Difficult or Average task per program, same skills apply as above). 50eb apiece if the job's done by others.

If you don't got the cash to change the programs, then you're out of luck; the only thing you'll be able to affect will be code gates (if you know the access code, you're in). You can still operate remotes and examine memory units, though.

- Interface special ability cannot be used. You use *Expert* [Complex Computer Language] skill instead. This also has a -3 penalty because of the slowness of keyboard interfaces. Fortunately, the lowest your skill can go is 0.

- No cybernetic interface means you don't use of your Reflex stat and Deck Speed modifiers for initiative, or your Intelligence stat for Anti-Personnel attacks. Instead you use your computer's Processor Speed (see table).

- Summary of formulas:** Initiative= Processor Speed + 1D10; Anti-personnel Attack= Program Str. + Processor Spd. + (*Expert* [Computer Language]-3) + 1D10

- Advantages to keyboard 'running:** Equipment loss only; any black program that reduces stats has no effect. Any program that

PROCESSOR SPEEDS		
Computer Type	value for generic machine	range of values for type
Supercomputer (A Cray-equivalent for 2020)	20	18-23
Mainframe (Microtech 9000)	15	12-20
Workstation/Mini-comp (Toshiba Lightning)	10	8-13
Desktop PC/Laptop (Nutek 101)	5	3-8
Pen Computer (Cute little netrun)	2	1-3
Pocket Organizer (Total desperation)	1	1

does hit point damage reduces your computer's Processor Speed by 1D6 points. When the speed hits zero, it crashes and dumps you out of the Net. (The computer might also need repair due to current surges, but that's a GM choice.) Glue works normally, JackAttack is not effective (being a biofeedback attack, it has no effect through a keyboard). Similarly, Liche and Knockout have no effect. All Anti-System programs work normally. Firestarter still blows up your modem. (Except now the fire might spread to your computer!)

SO YOU WANT TO KILL A DEMON?

We list several forms of "Assassin" program in *CP 2020* (pg. 139), including the Manticore, the Hydra, and the Dragon. These programs were specifically designed to kill the Demon series of programs. For those of you who would like to build your own, Assassin programs are written with a special Anti-Compiler function that has a programming Difficulty adder of 20.

NET ARCHITECTURE IN THE GAME

A single AI may not have more than 7 CPUs, if you attempted to do so, the AI personality would begin to fragment, forming multiples. You may have more than 7 CPU inside a single data fortress, but they must be grouped separately. They may communicate via a data management processor (a specialized form of LDL switching box).

Remember, a CPU only contains a computer's operating system, all other data and programs must be stored in units of memory. Connections between the CPU(s) and other

parts of the system are hard-wired connections and do not show up in the Net.

The connection between computer systems is the Net itself, but normally the I-G Algorithms do not let you see when two systems are actively communicating with each other. To do so, you must activate a Trace routine from the menu (it's a sub-function of your Long Distance Link routine on the menu). You must roll a (D10 + your Interface) total higher than a Difficulty

number generated by multiplying the number of code gates and LDLs in the datafortress by 2. If there is any active communication along any of these routes at the time of the Trace attempt, a green or blue line will appear from the code gate (or from the roof or floor of the datafortress in the case of an active LDL) and stretch off, out of the subgrid and across the local city grid. This line can be followed for as long as the communication between systems continues. If the line passes through a city grid to an LDL, the tracing runner must activate his Long Distance Link routine (and make a D10 roll vs the LDL's security level) in order to maintain the trace. If the line originated directly from an LDL inside the datafortress, the runner cannot follow it unless he first enters the datafortress, finds the LDL, and passes through it. This line is merely a representation, it cannot be tapped (in transit) from the Net; you must intercept the data when it first leaves or enters the CPUs of the sending and/or receiving systems.

Movement in the Net differs depending on the level—World, Regional, Citygrid, or Subgrid. At all levels, the LDLs operate on the "5 square jump" principle, although only those LDLs listed on the World map may be used for World level movement (see CP2020, pg. 144-146, current printing). The "walking" rule (traveling across the grid to reach distant systems without using an LDL), is different on the Regional level. At the subgrid/citygrid levels, walking is accomplished via interior building and surface lines, and can be done without penalty. Attempting to walk on the Regional level is fraught with problems; the architecture is unreliable, updating is slow, and even maintaining a connection is difficult (see Chapter 1, pg. 11). Thus a runner has a safe limit when

"walking" someplace from any LDL on the Regional level (it is also the furthest one can move in one round, as with the other levels). In most Regions this limit is 5 spaces, but in Afrikani, Sovspace, and Pacifica, the limit is 3 spaces due to scale and technology differences.

If the runner is attempting to cross distances longer than the safe limit via local switching lines, instead of using the direct-route trunk lines and microwave tower links that LDLs represent, they suffer the following penalties: there is a -2 REF penalty for Initiative rolls, a -1 Interface penalty for Anti-Personnel and Programming rolls. In addition, there is a 5% chance per square travelled beyond the safe limit that you will drop out of the Regional level into the nearest (or last passed through) city-grid. There is a lesser (2 %/sq) chance that you will drop out of the Net itself. These penalties also apply when walking across Regional borders, even if it is less than the safe limit. GMs are free to create additional Regional LDLs if they wish to expand accessibility.

At the World level, walking is impossible, all travel must be by LDL "jump."

NET FUMBLES

Net fumbles can be represented as your standard system error, drive crash, poor code, etc. This could fall under certain categories, just as other fumbles do (CP2020 current printing, pg.43). Roll 1D10, check table below.

- 1-4) Program is delayed, does not activate until next net round.
- 5-7) Deck is slowed, lose one action for 1-3 net rounds.
- 8-9) Program crashes and is useless until 'runner leaves Net and reinstalls program.
- 10) Deck interface crashes, dumps 'runner out of Net.

If there are Net fumbles, does that mean there are Net criticals? As everyone knows, it's easy to goof up on your PC, but what constitutes a "lucky shot" in hacking/programming? We decided to represent this as Speed. If you roll a 10 while making a Net combat roll, you get an automatic +1 to your next Net Initiative roll (you were so quick you "got the jump" on the other 'runner).

BATTLE PROGRAMMING RING

With this system, you can simulate the blazing code duels of the Netrunners in Aujourd'Oui (pg. 67) as well as many other code-oriented Net duels.

Only *Programming* and *Expert* (*Conceptual C*) skills are used. If you have both skills, you can add a value equal to your *Expert* (*Concept. C*) skill minus one to your *Programming* skill roll.

The target code starts on the middle step of a seven-step conceptualized linear path (see Diagram A, below). The Difficulty of the programming task decreases as you approach your opponent's end of the path and increases as you approach your own end.

Each successful programming manipulation attempt moves the code one step towards your opponent. For every 5 points that your roll beats the required number, you move the code another step.

Step Difficulty Numbers:

E=Easy, 10+

A= Average, 15+

D= Difficult, 20+

VD= Very Difficult, 25+

The following Modifiers can be added to the Difficulty (by GM choice):

Under Stress +3

Under Attack +3/+4

Excessive Outside Kibitzing +2/+3

Drunk or On Drugs +4

Complex Program (as applies to the initial code) +3

Very Complex Program +5

Step One: Make an initiative Roll

Step Two: Initiative winner makes a manipulation attempt, then other programmer makes attempt. Repeat.

Step Three: If the second programmer scores a multi-step success, he takes the Initiative. Return to Step Two.

Step Four: When you succeed in the last programming step, if your opponent cannot push the code back a step, he is "knocked out of the ring" and is the loser. You are both still in Net space, inside the Aujourd'Oui BBS, so what poor losers do is up to them...

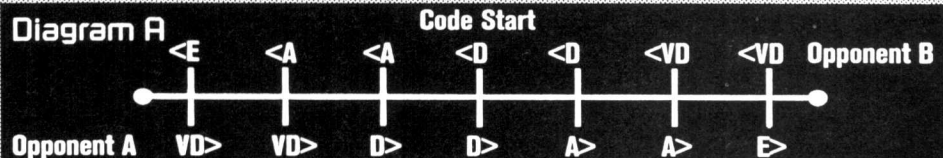
**MICRONETS: NETRUNNING
CYBERNETICS, VEHICLES,
YOUR SMART BED
AND ANYTHING ELSE COMPACT AND
PROGRAMMABLE.**

Face it. This is 2020 and even the entry keypad to your Chiba flat has been learning the subtleties of your cybernetic hand. If it was any smarter, it would sell you out with that information ... or has it? Sure, you can tell the International Products Video Wall at your Chiba flat to fly through 1000 channels looking for the coolest new Kerry Eurodyne video. But does that Video Wall keep the information to itself? When the Video Wall is searching, you're at home. Wouldn't Araska like to get a hold of that information? You're a netrunner shock-waving the Net, making it work for you. Get it Chombatta?? The best Netrunners have learned to run ALL nets ... the big and the small.

These days EVERYTHING has some sort of programming in it. The simplest has one microCPU running the show. The stuff most cyberpunks have use several microCPUs talking to each other like a bunch of bees in a hive. Frack! The latest top of the line General Products Relax-O-Bed has a dozen microCPUs monitoring things like your: position, amount you toss-n-turn and body surface temperature to fit itself to the "perfect sleep". It can also move the box spring coils to complement the rhythmic movements of you and your lover for the evening. All of these microCPUs talk to each other in what's called a microNet. While The Net is a global community exploring everything fit for man and beast, a microNet is a pinched-off part of cyberspace all to itself with very small scope and very defined purpose. MicroNets are in things like: your own cyberwear, your smartgun, that AV-4 you were chased by last night or the hot little red Audi convertible of that girl you've been trying to find an excuse to get to know.

PUTTING IT ALL IN GAME TERMS

MicroNets are small. You and your trodes barely have room to breathe. If you look at attacking a data fortress as running a break-in at a place the size of a convention



hall, running a microNet is like trying to do a 100 meter dash in a telephone booth. Thus Chombatta, there are a few changes on this part of The Edge.

DIFFERENCES:

- Only one netrunner can occupy a single microNet.
- A microNet is viewed as a single speck on a net square when a microNet is connected to cyberspace.
- Your regular netrunning programs are too big to run in a microNet. You program a microCPU in nanocode and not your regular languages. Nanocode is software written on the raw metal of a microCPU. It is custom tailor-fit for the single function the microCPU is doing. Usually a nanocode program is 50 to 250 lines long, and is written for that one function like: display to a biolight array, a feedback control equation for a cybernetic finger or power supply monitor. A program written in nanocode is only good for that microCPU and is not transportable.
- Another netrunner can attempt to throw a netrunner out of a microNet (treat as regular combat, but with no attacking program. This would be a netrunner's INT + Interface + 1D10 against each other).
- You can run a microNet through your deck or direct 'trode connection. Only a netrunner can microNetrun through a deck. However, a Techie class character can 'trode into a microNet and substitute their *Jury Rig* skill for *Interface* if the device is designed for it. A MedTech can only micronetrun cybernetics. Wireless connections can only work with cybernetics with radios or cellular (GM's call) connections. Any direct link ('trode or otherwise) requires physical contact, which can be difficult under many circumstances.

- A crashed microNet will reboot and start running within 1D6 turns.

HAZARDS:

- Occupying a microNet when it crashes can throw you out of the microNet and leave you stunned for 1D6 turns.
- The physical destruction of a microNet while running it (i.e. the cyberleg you were

EQUIPMENT AND THEIR MICRONET SIZE		
<u>Product</u>	<u>Number of microCPUs</u>	<u>Functions of the microNet's microCPUs</u>
Flashlight	1	track power consumption
Video Wall/Public Telephone	3	channel scan, voice i/o, media display
Smartgun	6	targeting, image identification, bullet count, gyro stabilization
Surface Car	12	engine control, environment controls, message machine, body wear monitoring, stereo, driver interface, problem diagnosis, driving controls, brakes
Deluxe Bed	12	position, multi-pressure, surface temperature, spring coil adjustment
AV-4	30	main computer interface, turbine controls, pilot interface, navigation, traffic net communications, interior environment, radar, exterior imaging, mounted weapons interface, auto pilot
Very Simple Cybernetic (wolvers, programmable tattoos)	1 to 3	neural interface, power, display
Simple Cybernetic	6	power control, image/audio focus (ear, eye), neural interface, biological infection treatment
Normal Cybernetic	10	power, neural interface, power distribution (arm, leg, internal organ), motion control, cyberskin nerve scanning, object balance, plug-in module interface
Complex Cybernetic	16	life support, power, emergency power (head, torso or full body replacement), external diagnosis interface, redundant neural interface, immunological system, 'trode interface, motion coordination, human behavior simulation
Cyberdeck	6 to 20	system status, module interface (depending on model), Netspace navigation, communication, visualization, deck crash response, electronic warfare, program execution, memory management, neural interface, power management

hacking into just blew to bits.) causes an instant 1D6 physical damage to the netrunner and stuns him for an equal number of turns.

- Most microNets in military and industrial devices come with anti-personnel code in some microCPUs. These are hidden with referee's placement and attack like a Sword program after an attempt to gain control of a microCPU is made. This is simple stuff, but quite effective. If this occurs during a direct 'trode link run, the only defense the 'runner or techie has is their *Jury Rig* or *Interface* and their base stat.

RUNNING A MICRONET

A typical microNetrun works like this:

1. Connect from outside; find a way to jack in.
2. Navigate the microNet; get past the encryption (like getting the password or just figuring out how the freaking programming works) to case the microNet.
3. Control the microCPUs; understand the details of its function and seize its attention.
4. Alter the microCPUs nanocode; going for the kill.

A list of the microCPU's and their accompanying tasks is the map of a microNet. One or

more of the microCPU's are listed as entry points on an open microNet. None are listed as entry on a closed microNet. A single turn involves one and only one of the following tasks:

• Connect from outside

This is the first throw made to access a microNet. No other action with the microNet can be done 'til this is successful.

Interface an open device ('trode link or wireless comm link designed to transmit and receive data) is usually Difficult (A Nearly Impossible task if the device has a radio scrambler, and a Neural Security Scan will stop all attempts). Difficulty can be modified based on circumstances (GMs call). Modifier: *Interface*.

Closed device (no external connection) is Very Difficult, modifier: *Electronics*. A physical link will probably be required (GM's call).

• Navigate the microNet

Lets you learn how the microNet functions, or passes its encryption. Once this succeeds, you know the map of the whole microNet and can start to control individual microCPUs. Difficult, modifier: *CyberTech*

• Control a microCPU

To change how a microCPU works, you must gain control and figure out how to pro-

gram this specific microCPU connection. Once this is done, you can now alter its nanocode.

Difficult, modifier: *Programming*. This can be Nearly Impossible if the cyberwear requires conscious control and/or adjustment (the wearer must try to resist takeover).

• Alter a microCPU's nanocode

The real meat. Altering the nanocode of a microCPU is the most hazardous but rewarding part of a microNetrun. Being successful at altering the coding allows to you can change how it operates.

Very Difficult, modifier: *Programming*. On a throw of 1 or less you crash the entire microNet stunning the netrunner (see above in Hazards).

NEW SOFTWARE

ANTI-PROGRAM (KILLER)

Lightning Bug 1,540cb

Class: Protection/Anti-IC, STR: 2 each, MU: 6

Lightning Bug is an active defense program. The program creates 6 motes of light that slowly circle the Netrunner. If any program comes within 1 grid space, one of the Lightning Bugs will immediately launch itself at the program. If it's successful, it will inflict 2 points of damage. The Lightning Bugs will each attack one by one until there are none left or the program has been de-rezzed. The advantage of Lightning Bug is that it is a defense program that doesn't need to be operated every turn, once you first run it and summon the Bugs, you don't have to bother with it from then on. You can focus on other programs while the Bugs are doing their thing. Note: once all 6 Bugs are gone, you must leave the Net and re-boot the program to activate it again.

ICON: 6 motes of light that slowly alternate between red and white. The motes lazily circle the Netrunner.

Chameleon 1650cb

Class: Anti-System/Anti-IC, STR: 4, MU: 6

Fool that Monitor!

Chameleon is a powerful program designed to fool Monitor programs and kill

software. When carried, it works just like a simple Killer-IV. When it kills a program, it reconfigures it's code and appearance until it resembles the program it has just killed. When a Chameleon is encountered by a Monitor (or a Sysop), the Monitor must make a STR (Interface) + 1d10 roll versus the Chameleon's roll (STR 4 + 1d10) to notice that anything is wrong. It must make this roll every time it is encountered.

ICON: When carried, it resembles a Killer (the standard robotic samurai), but the samurai has no face or mask, just a polished mirror that reflects the ICON of the program it is attacking. After it kills the software, it mutates and changes until it exactly resembles the software it destroyed.

INTRUSION

Portal 750cb

Class: Intrusion, STR 2, MU: 6

This silent intrusion program emulates a part of the data wall and integrates itself into it (3 turns, no alert). Once this is done, it opens a portal in the data wall and allows the Netrunner to slip through. When the Netrunner has passed through, the program will end its run and the data wall will return to normal (unlike other Intrusion programs, there is no giveaway gap left behind in the Data Wall).

ICON: A metallic door that slowly meshes with the data wall and then swings open for the Netrunner

ANTI PERSONNEL

Cerebus 9,500cb

Class: Anti-personnel, STR: 6, MU: 8

Cerebus is a Pit Bull program with the ability to fire Hellbolts. It will detect and follow a Netrunner. If the Netrunner escapes, Cerebus will lurk within the borders of the Net subgrid in which it was launched and await the Netrunner's return. Note: this means it could be waiting outside a particular datafortress; be on guard!

ICON: Cerebus appears as a dark, metallic dog with two heads. One of the heads fires Hellbolts out of its eyes and the other howls and barks as it pursues the Netrunner.

King Trail 3500cb

Class: Anti-personnel, STR: 3, MU: 2

King Trail hits a target with a glowing object causing it to generate a glowing trail of fluid-like light very similar to the king trail of a

EXAMPLE MICRONETRAN

This can go like finding where this girl's Audi is parked and finding the entrance to its microNet. That could be the entry 'trode on the door handle or calling into its car phone to get to the message machine's microCPU (Connect from outside to an open microNet, roll a 7 + Interface 6 + INT 8 = 21 > 20). Now run the Audi's microNet 'til you find the microCPU that's timing the spark plugs to burn the CHOOH₂. (Navigate microNet, roll a 9 + TECH 7 + CyberTech 5 = 21 > 20) You get a little programming in this microCPU so the spark plug stops firing on a phone call to the car's message machine at your command (take control of the timing microCPU on a roll of 6+ Programming 8+INT 8 = 22 > 20 and to alter the programming on a roll of 9 + INT 8 + Programming 8 = 25 = 25, just made it). You now have a perfect way to come in as the Knight in Shining Mirror-shades to rescue her on a stranded road. Just make sure she doesn't take you as a desperate nomad when you approach her car on the road. You do know how to dodge the shots from her Colt 2000 right??

snail or slug for 3D6 turns. Anyone noticing this trail will be able to know the net runner's exact location when one intersects the trail as long as the netrunner is attached to it. The trail will not adhere to any other netrunner. The connection to the trail can be broken with any intrusion program. Treat the King Trail as a STR 4 Data Wall. A successful attack on the King Trail will stop the slime from molting for the target 1D6 turns. Two successful attacks destroys it.

ICON: a glowing yellow banana slug

EVASION

Spore 2320eb

Class: Evasion, STR:7, MU: 7

Functions: Evasion/Stealth, Intrusion (one use only), Utility (one use only)
Options: Movement, Trace, Invisibility, Endurance, Simple Icon.

Spore creates multiple copies of the core program of an Artificial Intelligence, surrounds them in a defensive software and launches them into the Net. The multiple copies then seek out other computers and attempt to supplant them with this new code. The number of spores released is equal to twice the INT of the core AI releasing them. In addition, AIs often use Replicator (CP 2020, pg. 138) to create thousands of "decoys" to distract attackers.

Spores are most vulnerable at their creation. If attacked with anti-program software, the anti-program will kill one spore per point of STR of the program, if it can successfully attack the sporing AI. Spores can be attacked this way for three rounds before being too far away to attack in this manner. After that, Spore Hunting programs are the only way to find and attack them.

Once free, the smaller spore modules are as capable as the original program, but their ability to access their skills diminishes (divide all skills except Interface by 2. No skill should go below 1). The Spore may also use any programs that were packed along with the core program in its defense (up to 10 MU can be packed into this defensive shell). Any software that inflicts up to the Spore's INT in damage will destroy the Spore and all the core software entirely. The exception is Eradicator which can kill any spore it contacts.

The trace option is used to find signals to possible new homes, but can also allow the AI to attempt to follow any attacking netrunner

back to his home system where a takeover attempt can be made.

When a spore encounters a computer system, it will attack the data walls and if successful, will take over the CPUs. The program uses the AI's core INT+(a intrusion subprogram, i.e. Hammer, etc.) +Interface skill+1D10 versus the datawalls. Once inside, even if there is no AI in residence, the spore must defeat the computer in a INT+1D10 roll. This intrusion aspect can only be used once. If it fails, the spore de-rezes on the spot.

Spores can exist in the net for an indeterminate amount of time before dissolution, but there is no going back: The Spore program results in the "death" of the original software and the parent AI no longer exists in its original system. Thus this is something done only in extremis and rarely more than once.

ICON: Each spore looks like a small mote of light.

The threat of unrestricted AI sporing has generated the following counter-spore program.

Eradicator 1600eb

Class: Anti-IC, STR:8 vs. spores, 5 vs. others, MU:7

Functions: Anti-program

Options: Speed, Contextual Icon

This micropahge is a powerful killer program designed specifically to destroy spores and will work as a Killer 5 program otherwise. When this program successfully attacks a sporing AI, it can capture and destroy up to its STR of true spores that bear information that turn. If it fails to defeat the AI in a roll off, it was confused and is unable to destroy any real spores that turn. The nature of the sporing act does not allow more than three turns of netrunner combat before spores are too dispersed to attack as a collective group. It is not necessary for the Eradicator to destroy the spores: it may hold them inert and harmless as well.

ICON: A glowing ameoba with huge jaws.

TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS

(NEW CLASS THAT AFFECTS STORAGE AND MOVEMENT OF A DECK)

Trailer Hitch 300 eb

Class: Transportation, STR: 1, MU: 3

Trailer Hitch is a dynamic data compacting program for increasing deck storage by

slowing down the access routines to the net. It take 3 MU to run and adds 20% extra (round up) to the remaining memory in your deck but decreases the deck's speed by 1.

ICON: an open-topped, single-exit trailer.

18-Wheeler

500 eb

Class: Transportation, STR: 1; MU: 4

Takes 4 MU to run and then doubles the remaining memory in your deck but reduces you deck's speed to 1. This a good program when you're in a pretty secured (?) area of net space and you need to suck up tons of data into your deck

ICON: an 18-wheeler trailer with the netrunner's regular icon on the sides of the trailer.

SYSTEMWARE

Shrouded Gate

3,000eb+1,000eb/Code Gate STR point

Class: Systemware; STR (Invisibility subroutine); MU: 4

They can't get in through what they don't see! New from Microtech! The shrouded code gate is used for those datafortresses that want to be really secure.

By incorporating Invisibility and VR subroutines into the programming structure of the standard code gate, Microtech has created a CodeGate that is invisible to most normal interfaces! While more expensive than the standard code gate, it allows you to purchase lower strength gates (he can't try and crack what he can't see). You can also conceal parts of your DataFortress from you own employees (so those areas holding the Black files won't be nosed around in by your own people). Shrouded gates are invisible for all intents and purposes. A SeeYa (or other detection program specifically designed to reveal Invisible programs) gets a chance to reveal them, but otherwise they are impossible to detect.

Cloak

4,000eb per CPU

Class: Special Systemware

Now you can hide from EVERYBODY!

Let's face it, there are some facilities that you just don't want people to know about. Whether it's a secret research facility, or a hidden training center, sometimes it's better if people just don't know where it is. Physically hiding them is easy, but hiding them in the Net... Up until now, if you wanted access to the boundless amounts of information in the

Net, you had to be willing to accept the fact that everyone could see your DataFortress...and thanks to the I-G algorithms, if they knew where your Fortress was, they could find your facility. No longer! InfoNet announces the new Cloak systemware!

With Cloak in place, your DataFortress is shrouded in a VR/Invisibility subroutine that essentially erases it from the Net—while still allowing you access. If you have outsiders that you want to have access, just give them the Net co-ordinates, and the password. They will be able to get in, but no one else can see the Fortress, so they won't! Note: it has been found that the Cloak routine can impair processing power and is still very large. Cloak hides the ENTIRE DATAFORTRESS behind an Invisibility subroutine (Strength: 6). It is also very expensive, both in terms of processing power and memory. It uses up 5MU per CPU, and neutralizes an entire point of INT per CPU (in other words, a computer with 4 CPUs and a Cloak would have an effective INT of 8 while running Cloak). This sudden lobotomization can really freak with slightly unstable AIs. You are Warned.

Monitor

950eb

Class: Detection/Systemware, STR: 4, MU: 7

Never worry about your software again!

Sick and tired of everyone (even your own employees) slashing down your software, and you don't even know it till long after the fact? No more!

The Monitor, by Arasaka's NetWare division, continuously checks each program on a set schedule, making sure that each is functioning properly. If it finds that a program is functioning improperly or has been corrupted by a virus (roll vs the virus STR+1d10), it will de-rezz it (instantaneous for system programs, otherwise roll against the other program's STR), and reload a new version from memory. If the program is missing from its assigned position in the DataFortress, it will sound an alarm, reload a new copy of the program from memory (takes one turn), and then goes and interrogates every active user it can find inside the Fortress (it does incorporate SeeYa subroutines, allowing it to detect invisible netrunners). The interrogation must be defeated via a Decryption program (treat as a Code Gate with Strength: 4). If it detects an unauthorized user, it will try and Trace him back to his real-

space location. Each Monitor can check a number of codegates and programs equal to the number of CPUs in the system minus one. It will either check them randomly, or according to a set schedule (usually the latter). Of course, the larger the DataFortress, the longer this takes. If detected, it can be killed. Of course, there could be a Monitor set to check the first Monitor...

A RACHE SPECIAL

This program was cooked up by Rache himself. As such, it violates a lot of what we know about Netrunning (like the 5 space movement limit). But then, that's Rache for you. GMs should only allow access to such an item under special circumstances. **Warning: improper use of this program may unbalance a campaign. Actually, proper use may as well...**

Rice Burner

Cost: Gotta talk to

Rache... STR: 2, MU: 2 + special

The rice burner adds +2 to your Icon's movement allowance by running multiple net space navigation routines, attempting to second-guess the net access signals. This program takes 2 MU to run and then half of the remaining deck memory to increase movement in the Net. Any remaining memory can be used for regular data storage.

ICON: Japanese-style racing motorcycle

Neural Recognition Security Circuits

COST: 2000EB

The ultimate in cyberdeck security system, neural recognition circuitry scans the brainwave pattern of anyone who studs into the secured interface and checks it against a re-recorded pattern (presumably, that of the rightful owner). If the patterns don't match, the secured system will not operate. Also available for vehicular interface systems.

Hardened Cyberdeck Circuitry

COST: Adds 20% to total cost.

Have you every wondered why a military cyberdeck is on every hacker's wish list? It's more than just the armored casing. By enclosing all vital hardware and wiring within a composite shell of ceramics and polymers, interwoven with special metallic alloy threads, a combat deck is rendered immune to the effects of EMP, microwaves, magnetic fields, electric shocks, and mild radiation exposure. Standard decks may be upgraded by a skilled Tech if they can get ahold of the required materials. (I'm sure you'll think of something...)

Sealed Combat Assault Cyberdeck

COST: Models vary. Base is 6000EB + upgrades

Developed for the U.S. Navy's SEAL teams, a sealed deck is a cellular combat assault deck with an airtight polymer/Kevlar casing (SP 20) and memory-plastic seals for all option ports and chipslots. Two layers of rubberized insulation inside the casing ensure that the user is safe from electric shock. This type of deck may even be used underwater, provided that the user first jacks-in above water. Includes a Flip-Switch.

Langley Autosystems Datastick®*

Mark VII cyberdeck

COST: 9500 eb

Known for its unique flattened-baton shaped, chrome-on-black design, the

TECHNICAL ITEMS

EBM XR-10 Chip-Rack Deck Extension

COST: 5000EB

Approximately the size of a scientific-function pocket calculator, this after-market deck upgrade plugs into nay available Input/Output (option) port on most cyberdeck models, effectively providing an additional 10MU to maximum capacity. This option does not add memory in the traditional fashion of simply tacking on an extra memory core, but rather by linking ten micro-condensed RAM data cores with an ingenious "shuffling" system that allows floating memory substitutions. In game terms, if a program is loaded into an XR-10 is activated, the host-deck ignores an equal amount of program space in it's own memory and runs the select-ed program and then returns to normal opera-

Datastick® has been the choice of stylish netrunners all over nspace. A typical "stick deck" has the following stats: Speed: +3, MU: 3, Memory: 25, Data Walls: +4, cellular capability.

Liz Cyber SpanDeck Wearable Net runner Suit

COST: 17,000 per jumpsuit + 2000 to 5000 per Interface Jewelry

Using the latest in flexible/floppable circuitry, the SpanDeck, jumpsuit is a cyberdeck with dozens of pieces of redundant circuitry are woven into this skin-tight outfit that will shutdown in a picosecond by just commanding one of it's passive, woven-in trode's so one can pass the most inquisitive security search for a cyberdeck when you enter a corporate center. The accommodating belts and jewelry are the connections to traditional cyberdeck peripherals.

Stats: Awareness/Notice modification to detect cyberdeck: -5, Speed: +2, MU: 2, Memory: 10, Data Walls: +2.

A COMBAT CYBERDECK:

Microtech CAD-4 "Commando"

Sealed Cellular Combat Assault Deck

CPU 1, MU 30, Data Walls 6, Speed +4

Contains Flip switch (*Chromebook 1*, pg.9), Hardened Circuitry, and Cellular transmission (this allows stored data to be sent to others)

Standard-issue cyberdeck for American Special Warfare units. The above profile is for the stock deck, before customizations by individual units.

These cost the government about 37,400 eb each (hey, these are your tax dollars). If found on the black market (civilian use prohibited, of course), expect a 30-40% bump up in price.

NETRUNNER TEMPLATES

Throughout the text, we've described the various netrunners encountered as variations of the following templates. These templates were designed to show the broad variety of skills that can be useful for a netrunner. For example: the Composition skill is intended to reflect a creative ability with the programs in addition to the Programming skill itself. It should not be construed to indicate any musi-

cal or other ability (unless that fits the GM's conception of the NPC). These are intended merely as frameworks on which you can hang your own details. The skills and attributes listed on these templates can range up or down by one point or more if the GM sees fit. Please adjust them as your campaign requires.

All of the netrunners are assumed to have neural processors, plugs, and cybermodem links as basic equipment; and while some suggestions are given, any additional cyberware is up to the GM.

WEEFLE-LEVEL RUNNER (RANK BEGINNER)

INT:8, REF:7, TECH:6, COOL:7, ATTR:6, LUCK:6, MA:5, BODY:5 EMP: 6

Skills:

Interface 2

Awareness/Notice 4, Composition 3, Education/Gen.Know. 5, Programming 5, System Knowledge 5, Basic Tech 4, Cyberdeck Design 4, Cyber Tech 3, Electronics 5
+15 points of Pickup Skills

Cyberdeck:

Basic: 10 MU, Speed 0, Data walls 2
Options: keyboard, vidboard, printer, maybe one level of Speed or Data Wall upgrade

Program Mix (not all will fit in deck at once):

Bloodhound

SeeYa

Shield

Stun

News at 8

Phone Home

Databaser

Gatmaster

Electrolock

MID-LEVEL RUNNER (OFFICE HACK)

INT:8, REF:7, TECH:8, COOL:7, ATTR:6, LUCK:6, MA:6, BODY:7 EMP: 5

Skills:

Interface 4

Awareness/Notice 4, Composition 2, Education/Gen.Know. 4, Programming 6, System Knowledge 6, Basic Tech 6, Cyberdeck Design 6, Cyber Tech 2, Electronics 3
+17 points of Pickup Skills

Cyberdeck:

Mid-range deck: 10-20 MU, Speed +1-+3, Data walls 3-5

Options: vidboard, chip reader/recorder or mini-printer, maybe auto-punchout (*Chromebook 1*), or Deckmate Micro-comp combo (*Chromebook 2*). Possibly a portable model.

At this level, combat runners would use a Cybermodem Helmet (*Chromebook 1*) or Armdeck (*Chromebook 2*).

Program Mix (not all will fit in deck at once):

Pit Bull or Bulldog (*Chromebook 1*)

SeeYa

Hidden Virtue

Invisibility

ForceShield or Flack

Killer II or IV

Manticore

Spazz or Knockout

Imp II

Viddy Master

Phone Home

Hotwire or Dee-2 or Crystal Ball

Rerezz

Filelocker

PRO-LEVEL RUNNER (CYBERPUNK OR CORPORATE JOCKEY)

INT:9, REF:8, TECH:8, COOL:8, ATTR:6, LUCK:7, MA:7, BODY:7 EMP:4

Skills:

Interface 6

Awareness/Notice 5, Composition 4, Education/Gen.Know. 6, Programming 6, System Knowledge 6, Basic Tech 4, Cyberdeck Design 2, Cyber Tech 1, Electronics 5
+22 points of Pickup Skills

Cyberdeck:

Same deck as a Mid-Runner with: 30 MU, Data walls 6-7

Options: Cellular portable or Cyberlimb model with most standard options. Maybe WetDrives w/links (*Chromebooks 1 & 2*), micro-computer links (*Chromebook 2*), cyberdeck security systems (*Chromebooks 1*), Virtual BBS add-ons (*Chromebook 2*)

Combat runners would use a Cybermodem Suit (*Chromebook 1*).

At this level, some runners would be using work-

RULES APPENDIX

station-level (CPU 2-3) computers w/cyber-controls and add-on modems for netrunning.

Program Mix (not all will fit in deck at once):

Raffles
Guard-Dog (*Chromebook 1*)
SmartEye (*Chromebook 1*)
Hidden Virtue
DeckCrash
Invisibility
ForceShield or Reflector
Killer IV or VI
Hydra
Sword or Hellbolt or Firestarter
Spazz or Jack Attack
Glue
Imp II or Afreet II
Crystal Ball
Dee-2
Databaser
Alias
Rerezz
Gatmaster
Filelocker

TOP-LEVEL RUNNER (CYBERPUNK OR CORPORATE MERC)

INT:9, REF:8, TECH:9, COOL:9, ATTR:7, LUCK:8,
MA:8, BODY:7 EMP: 3

Skills:

Interface 8
Awareness/Notice 6, Composition 3,
Education/Gen.Know. 5, Programming 7, System
Knowledge 7, Basic Tech 5, Cyberdeck Design 5,
Cyber Tech 3, Electronics 6
+22 points of Pickup Skills

Cyberdeck:

Completely custom-built deck: 40 MU, Speed: +4-
+5, Data walls 8-10
Options: Anything you want. The deck will be fully
portable and protected.
Some people will be running out of modified work-
stations and through Corporate mainframes
w/cyber-controls and add-on modems.

Program Mix (not all will fit in deck at once):

Pit Bull
Guard-Dog (*Chromebook 1*)
SmartEye (*Chromebook 1*)
Hidden Virtue
SeeYa

RACHE BARTMOSS

The one, the only, the human meatloaf. Still, he
was/is a force to be reckoned with. These stats
are most useful if you run him before he got
killed, but he's not out of it even now.

Role: Netrunner

INT:10, REF:10/12, TECH:8, COOL:9, ATTR:7,
LUCK:8, MA:7 (not now, of course), BODY:6
EMP: 2

Skills:

Interface 12
Awareness/Notice 9, Persuasion 9, Composition
6, Education/Gen.Know. 6, Programming 11,
System Knowledge 13, Basic Tech 7, Cyberdeck
Design 9, Cyber Tech 3, Electronics 8, Athletics 6,
Stealth 8, Driving 4, Handgun 5, SMG 3, Martial
Arts 2, Dodge 6, Expert: Chemistry 4 and probably
a lot more that even we don't know about..

Cyberware:

Neural processor, 4 X plugs, cybermodem link,
Kerezinkov boost (+2), 2 X chipware socket. He
may have a cyberleg or two, but we doubt it.

Cyberdeck:

Completely custom-built deck: 100 MU, Speed:
+7, Data walls 12

Options: Anything he wants. The deck is fully
portable and protected. If it can be done with a
deck, he's found a way to do it.
Sometimes he runs out of modified mainframes
w/cyber controls and add-on modems (which
with the Multi-Tasker program might allow him
more actions, see pg. 144). His current system
isn't designed to handle his frozen state, but it
will be upgraded by Alt in 2026 (see
Cybergeneration).

Program Mix:

Anything that has already been published plus
several that no one else has ever seen before.
Even the standard stuff that he uses will proba-
bly be 1-2 points of STR higher than usual. Use
his God-like Net powers with vicious intelligence.

Poison Flatline
DeckCrash
Invisibility
ForceShield
Reflector
Killer VI
Hydra
Hellbolt
Jack Attack
Afreet II

SPIDER MURPHY

Rache's long-suffering comrade-in-chips and
compiler of his memoirs, she is a world-
renowned runner in her own right as well. She
has been known to use a rather "well-endowed"
Japanimation-style icon, which is very effective
in disarming inquisitive Netwatch goons. It also
doesn't look a thing like her real-life style, which
serves to protect her meat identity.

Role: Netrunner

INT: 10, REF: 8, TECH: 8, COOL: 9, ATTR: 7, LUCK:
6, MA: 4, BODY: 4 EMP: 6

Skills:

Interface 10
Awareness/Notice 9, Composition 5,
Education/Gen.Know. 8, Programming 10, System
Knowledge 10, Basic Tech 6, Cyberdeck Design 9,
Electronics 6, Library Research 10, Athletics 4,
Dodge & Escape 4, Handgun 5

Cyberware:

Neural processor, 2 x plugs, cybermodem link,
chipware socket, pain editor, memory chips,
motion detector, digital recorder, voice synthe-
sizer

Cyberdeck:

Completely custom-built deck: 80 MU, Speed: +6,
Data walls 11

Options: Anything you want. The deck is fully
portable and protected.
Sometimes she runs out of modified mainframes
w/cyber controls and add-on modems (which
with the Multi-Tasker program might allow her
more actions, see pg. 144).

Program Mix:

Similar to Rache but not as flamboyant (or as
homicidal). Even the standard stuff that she uses
will probably be 1-2 points of STR higher than
usual.

Vampyre II (*Chromebook 1*)
Viddy Master
Hotwire
Crystal Ball
Dee-2
Alias
Rerezz
Gatmaster
Packer
Backup

RACHE BARTMOSS

the World's Greatest Netrunner™

IS DEAD.

Which finally gives him time to write his memoirs...

HERE ARE RACHE'S WORDS OF WISDOM for weeflerunners and pro netjocks alike, with commentaries from his top 'runner associate, Spider Murphy. Rache shows you Transcendental Sentience Als, Netwatch Icemen, Arasaka Dataforts, and software that will make you want to gnaw on the wallpaper. He tells you more about the Net than you'll probably ever want to know. But you'd better listen, because, even dead, Rache is still riding the Edge.

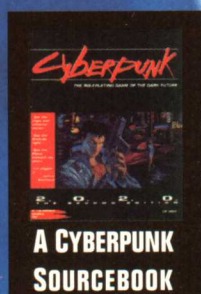
Rache Bartmoss' *Guide to the Net* provides Rache's overview for each of the regions of the Net as well as:

- 🌐 Detailed color regional maps
- 🏙️ Lots of new city grids
- ⚡ New dataforts that you'll never crack
- ⊕ New software
- 👤 New Netrunning options
- 🌀 An entirely new style of run: the MicroNet

SO GRAB YOUR CYBERDECK, CHIP IN YOUR HOTTEST SOFTWARE, ACTIVATE YOUR REFLEX BOOST, AND GET READY TO TOUR THE NET WITH RACHE BARTMOSS. IT'S A RIDE YOU WON'T FORGET.

RACHE BARTMOSS' GUIDE TO THE NET

**R. TALSORIAN
GAMES, INC.**



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