

**FIRESTORM:**

# **STORMFRONT**

**THE FOURTH CORPORATE WAR:  
BOOK ONE**

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THE FOURTH CORPORATE WAR BOOK ONE

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                         |     |
|-----------------------------------------|-----|
| INTRODUCTION                            | 3   |
| Examining the Corporate Wars            | 7   |
| CHAPTER 1: THE OCEAN WAR                |     |
| Ocean War Briefing                      | 8   |
| The Best Laid Plans                     | 12  |
| Personality Profiles                    | 15  |
| What The Big Boys Want                  | 17  |
| Not Blood, But Money                    | 18  |
| Getting Their Feet Wet                  | 21  |
| CHAPTER 2: TECHNICAL BRIEF              |     |
| The Corporate Oceans                    | 23  |
| Dive School for PCs                     | 23  |
| Occupations                             | 24  |
| NewTech and Cyberware                   | 27  |
| 21st Century Diving Systems             | 29  |
| Underwater Gear and Weapons             | 32  |
| Ocean War Vehicles                      | 35  |
| Here There Be Whales                    | 40  |
| Typical Oceanic Facilities              | 42  |
| Ocean War Teams                         | 49  |
| Underwater Combat and Adventuring Rules | 57  |
| CHAPTER 3: OCEAN WAR ADVENTURES         |     |
| Ocean War Timeline                      | 62  |
| Subplots in the Ocean War               | 63  |
| Ocean War Mission Folios                | 66  |
| CHAPTER 4: THE SHADOW WAR               |     |
| Shadow War Briefing                     | 76  |
| Personality Profiles                    | 83  |
| What The Big Boys Want                  | 85  |
| Covert Ops Guidelines                   | 86  |
| Smart Cyberpunks, Foolish Choices       | 91  |
| CHAPTER 5: TECHNICAL BRIEF              |     |
| Shadow War Occupations                  | 93  |
| Hardware                                | 96  |
| Shadow War Vehicles                     | 101 |
| Typical Corporate Facilities            | 104 |
| Shadow War Teams                        | 111 |
| Shadow War Training                     | 117 |
| CHAPTER 6: SHADOW WAR ADVENTURES        |     |
| Shadow War Timeline                     | 124 |
| Subplots in the Shadow War              | 126 |
| Shadow War Mission Folios               | 128 |
| File: 6 Dark Errand                     | 138 |
| Epilogue                                | 144 |



## REFeree's INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Stormfront™*, Book One of *Firestorm™*, a two-part series for *Cyberpunk 2020™*. This book is a watershed event for all you 'punkers out there. As you'll soon see, *Stormfront™* lays the groundwork for the next generation of *Cyberpunk™* in a living, breathing, in-your-face format.

### So What The Hell's Going On?

There's a storm coming, gatos, and the Edgerunners are going to get caught in the middle of it. Modern business has become savagely Darwinian, and one company (IHAG, a German nanotech company) has shown itself to be weak. And by the natural laws of economics, two of its predatory cousins (OTEC and CINO) are vying for the right to cull IHAG from the herd and claim the remains. And, although the weapons of choice are supposed to be stock shares, in this new age of corporate firepower neither side is willing to simply sit back and talk peacefully about it. In fact, each has contracted with major paramilitary concerns (Militech and Arasaka, respectively) to ensure their firm control of the negotiations.

The result is a typical 21st century war: Intense strikes by each corporation against the other, using small professional units to inflict as much damage as practical. Each mission is designed to destroy or disable key enemy resources in order to tie up money, panic employees and investors, and drain assets. The purpose of all this violence is to erode public and seller confidence in each opponent and thus weaken their economic position at the bidding table.

Because no matter how much blood gets spilled, it's still all about the money.

### WHY A CORPORATE WAR?

Look, gato—There have been three major corporate wars within the last 16 years, right? And minor corporate shake-downs like this one happen all the time. By now you and your group have probably played hardball with the megacorps enough to realize that fights like the OTEC/CINO confrontation happen all the time. Let's face it, the big boys just never seem to learn. So no, the dark future isn't getting any brighter.

But it will get stranger.

You see, unfortunately, Militech and Arasaka start to lose some of their professionalism during this slapfest, as they take the fight bit-by-bit to each other. Like rival lions drawn to a kill by the hyenas, the battle soon becomes one of dominance, not food. By the time OTEC and CINO have come bloodily to terms (exactly how this is resolved will up to you, based on your individual campaign), the two security megacorporations have begun their own brouhaha that will

continue to offer employment and excitement to those daring Edgerunners who have the stomach for it.

And that's just in Book One.

### How Do I Use This Book?

*Stormfront™* is designed primarily as a sourcebook instead of a scenario pack. It focuses on the background, people, places, and things that form the first two phases of *Firestorm™*: the Ocean War and the Shadow War. It's packed full of data, just like a regular sourcebook, but we've coupled all that info with maps, adventure hooks, and NPCs, making this book a multi-purpose campaign tool. Although part of this book is presented in a linear format, *Stormfront™* is designed so that you can decide how it best suits your current campaign world without being forced to follow a single story line. If you don't like the scenarios, or something you find in the chronology doesn't suit your world, nobody's stopping you from changing it.

But we have to let you know, certain events from these conflicts are going to have long-term ramifications in the *Cyberpunk™* world. Where possible, we've tried to let you know what these are as you get to them, but be ready for some surprises as things develop.

As you read through the book, decide where your PCs enter the story. Will they begin at the beginning and play their way through the entire fight? Or would you rather dump them into the fray randomly? Or do they try to stay out of it, only to see the repercussions gradually hit the Street and change everything around them? For now, what we suggest you do is to read through the entire book once, then go back and decide where you want to go from there.

### BACKGROUND BRIEFINGS

First, we give you a breakdown of the situation as reported by Merrill, Asukaga, & Finch financial analysts. This gives an overview of the situation at the beginning of the hostilities and provides likely courses of action for each side to take. This should give the Ref some ideas for activities and possible scenarios himself. How much of this briefing you share with the players is up to you, but be careful—in this situation, less is definitely more.

We then provide profiles on the corporations involved, including personnel dossiers on the fast movers and heavy hitters. This gives you insight into the minds behind the machinations and lets you bring the player characters face to face with the Big Movers in the Game, if you are so inclined. The corporate profiles can be useful to the players, but beware allowing them to see the personality profiles. That sort of info should come at too high a price for them to pay....



## TECHNICAL BRIEFINGS

We next include an extensive look at the equipment and facilities of the two combatants, with nifty gadgets, newtech, new career types, and other goodies. These are the chapters your players will drool over, with new skills, weapons, and even new occupations to choose from. Note that *Stormfront™* may require your player characters to learn some new skills in order to be hip deep in the action. Here, we've included the training loops and rules to get them up to speed and on the firing line in record time.

These chapters also feature pre-made NPC teams you can use to shake up your PCs or pull their butts out of the fire. These are elite teams, but you can scale them up or down to suit the power level of your campaign.

## ADVENTURE CHAPTERS

Each of these starts with a complete monthly chronology of the fighting as it progresses, a play-by-play analysis of the major events, and a way to keep track of where things stand. Many of these events are malleable, and you can rearrange them to suit your campaign. Just note that the overall course has a definite direction ... right towards serious trouble.

Each month comes with its own little hooks and major adventure opportunities. Several of these are outlined in a series of Mission Folios which give you typical adventure types to use as you wish while playing out the *Firestorm™* campaign.

All this is presented in a way so that you can throw your PCs into the fray anytime, anywhere. Yes, friends, regardless of what kind of character mix you've got in your mob, you can use the information provided to insert your PCs into the wonderful world of corporate warfare.

'Zat enough for ya, gatos?

## ON THE SIDELINES

Now, it's entirely possible that you don't want to run your players through the actual events of the book, aquatic warfare and black ops not being particularly attractive to someone running a Fixer-or Rockerboy-based campaign.

Hey, we aren't here to twist your arm. Even if you don't use the adventures, there is plenty of cool new tech, skills, and data here to add to any campaign. The underwater combat rules allow you to take your ops into the Big Blue. The covert war essays finally codify the typical types of the missions most Edgerunners are already handling. Now they can finally find out if they're doing them right.

In addition, the events in *Stormfront™* can be shunted to the background of your campaign, appearing in screamsheet reports and video sound bites. But the effects will still be felt throughout the Street as black ops activity picks up, resources vanish, alliances shift, and the tension mounts. As the Goliaths of Militech and Arasaka get rolling, the Street is going to feel it.

*Stormfront™* is an chance to shake things up. We think that's one of the chilliest opportunities we can give you.

## EXAMINING THE CORPORATE WARS

To understand how the corporate wars were fought (and how the current situation may differ), let's examine the previous three conflicts:

### THE FIRST CORPORATE WAR (August 2004 - February 2006)

The First Corporate War began simply enough: EBM's leveraged buyout of the failing Transworld Airlines turned unfriendly after their initial deal with Transworld's CEO went sour. Orbital Air, foaming at the mouth to obtain TWA's air traffic facilities in the US, came to TWA's aid, blocking EBM's buyout attempt.

EBM struck first, dispatching terrorists to kidnap the OA negotiations team en route to close the TWA deal. The terrorists bungled, and EBM's anonymity was compromised. Orbital Air immediately went to work, recruiting Zetatech as an ally, who unleashed a massive wave of Net attacks against EBM. These attacks, though damaging, were quickly put down, forcing Zetatech out of the war.

EBM responded with a wave of attacks against TWA and OA facilities. Orbital Air met this challenge well, beefing up security and using their dominance in LEO to establish a blockade against EBM facilities. Orbital Air finally struck back with a wave of terrorism and piracy of their own. EBM answered this threat with an army of corporate solos and proxy Third World troops.

During this period, both companies changed allies as frequently as a joygirl changes partners. Hundreds of millions in Eurodollars were wasted, stolen, or simply destroyed as both firms attempted to cut each other's funding. In fact, at one point, both sides had to find financial supporters just to save their current allies from being wiped out.

There were only two major battles during the conflict. The first occurred when OA commandos captured a central EBM space station in response to a similarly large hijacking on that same day by EBM. Both sides were chastised by the European Space Agency, who lifted all the blockades and warned the competitors not to extend their fight into LEO again. The second battle didn't occur until a year later, when OA commandos attacked CEO Ulf Grunwalder's compound in Bavaria, capturing him and forcing EBM to surrender.

The ramifications of this war were vast. It was the first conflict of its kind. More importantly, it gave other companies the green light to use wholesale military tactics to obtain favorable business results. Although some smaller firms had engaged in petty armed squabbles in the past, nothing had ever matched the ferocity and size of this conflict. And it seemed only a matter of time before another one would come.



## THE SECOND CORPORATE WAR (April 2008 - August 2010)

The Second Corporate War, probably the most globally devastating of the corporate conflicts, began as a misunderstanding between the oil giants Petrochem and SovOil.

Relations began to sour between the two firms when a merger deal fell through at the eleventh hour. A huge drilling accident at a Petrochem platform then brought the two companies to blows in a conflict the likes of which the Pacific Rim had not seen since World War Two.

Initially, SovOil enjoyed a string of military victories, although both sides had severely crippled each others' oil facilities within just a few weeks. Petrochem fought back hard, expending untold millions to regain the upper hand, at the cost of thousands of lives. Petrochem's success peaked with their surprise capture of the Spratly Island chain and their assassination of SovOil founder and CEO Anatoly Novikovo.

But it was still not enough. SovOil easily repelled Petrochem's follow-up offensive of October 2009, reducing Petrochem's forces in the Pacific to impotency. There was no formal surrender, but the war effectively ended with SovOil victorious.

The Second Corporate War had several ramifications. First, the war shocked the hell out of analysts and the public in general who believed that corporate conflict could never elevate past the point the first war had reached.

Second, this war marked the first time that a multinational firm actually publicly defied national governments.

SovOil completely ignored the word of nations and did whatever it wished. Both sides used the smaller PacRim nations as extensions of their own armed forces, actually replacing administrations in some cases and installing friendly ones. In fact, Petrochem's assassination of Novikovo was carried out with a squadron of modified Mirage III fighters on loan from Malaysia.

Worst of all, because of constant raiding by both sides against each other's oil refineries, drilling facilities, and pipelines, the war left most of the southern Pacific Rim badly polluted. The South China Sea, the focus of the conflict, became a lifeless chemical stew, all but uninhabitable to this day. Entire national economies were ruined, and although SovOil was forced to pay reparations, no amount of money could ever undo the damage.

## THE THIRD CORPORATE WAR (February 2016 - November 2016)

The Third Corporate War was another milestone in corporate warfare because it was fought almost entirely in the net—almost.

Hostilities began when financial examiners from the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce uncovered a confidence scheme being perpetrated by certain investment counselors at Merrill, Asukaga, and Finch against private investors, using the Rothstein Fund (a subsidiary of the Bank of New York) as leverage. They notified the District Attorney's office, who began an investigation the next day.

The Rothstein Fund, angered by MA&F's duplicity and not wishing to get dragged down in the investigation, turned everything they had over to the DA's office. They also hired local street netrunners to begin probing MA&F's data fortresses in search of the truth.

MA&F's administration took this move by a former ally as a direct attack. They immediately countered by stepping up net security and unleashed their netrunners to launch an assault on the Rothstein Fund, first hitting Rothstein's financial targets. Then the MA&F strike teams turned their attention to actually destroying Rothstein computer systems, which escalated the fighting.

For several days, the situation was a confused melee. Data fortresses became armed camps as everyone nervously watched to see what would happen next. Netwatch responded by limiting net access and cracking down on computer crime, making several sweeps resulting in numerous arrests and flatlines.

Both the Rothstein Fund and MA&F decided to take it to the meat world; they began hiring mercenaries. During a 12-hour period, short pitched battles were fought in LEO and on Earth, all to destroy the physical locations of the

enemy's net communications gear. These battles ended with considerable loss of life and millions of dollars in material destruction.

The next six months consisted of endless net raids, most of them inconsequential and undecisive. Indeed, more damage was done during the 12 hours of actual fire fights (that ammo stuff is expensive, y'know) than during the entire remainder of the conflict. When it was over, the Rothstein Fund ceased to exist as single entity. MA&F turned the corpses of two of their executives who had started the whole mess over to the LA DA. They also got stuck with the bill for damages done in LEO and on Earth.

By this time, corporate conflict shocked no one, although a number of analysts were surprised the war lasted as long as it did. The way the war was fought, being based mostly in the net, was rather unusual, and it sparked a couple-dozen theories by various pundits that perhaps this was the new way corporate wars would be fought. Others maintained that, much like the infantry in military doctrine, solos will never go out of style.



## 1: THE OCEAN WAR

