

FULL METAL CYBERPUNK

INTERFACE ZERO 2.0



THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS



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WARNING! MATURE AUDIENCES ONLY!

Interface Zero 2.0 is a cyberpunk game with adult themes. We're going to use language some people might not be comfortable with. We're going to talk politics, and we're going to talk religion. We use the races and cultures in *Interface Zero* as an abstraction of the evils of racial intolerance in the real world. We don't apologize for this. The Cyberpunk genre isn't politically correct. It

doesn't care if you like the word "fuck" or not. It doesn't concern itself with your belief system, or your slant on politics. To water this book down is to do a great disservice to the genre as a whole. We hope you keep on reading, but will understand if you don't.

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INTRODUCTION

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WELCOME TO TEXAS

Howdy, pardner, welcome to Texas! I'm Pecos Bill, your guide. Okay, now that we got that bullshit out of the way, let's describe what the Republic of Texas isn't. Not everyone here wears cowboy hats. Nor do we refer to each other "Tex." If you want to survive here, amigo, you better do more than just learn the lingo. Take the wrong step here and you can find yourself waking up dead. Scope this shit I've gathered over the years and you can avoid the rattlesnake in the grass. The key thing to remember is that Texans take "Don't mess with Texas" seriously. Get caught and thrown in VR prison over your own fuckery, don't blame me 'cause that dog don't hunt, comprende?

#Boomstick_Bob: Nice name, jackass.

#LowkeedTweed: Whoa, get a load of this jackass. What's with the folksy shit? Does anyone believe he's for real?

#TexasUberAlles: Ever been to Texas? They're pretty damn serious.

#LowkeedTweed: Yeah, no thanks, I think I'll take my brand of crazies.

#TexasUberAlles: Hope they're as up front and honest.

Texas is as metropolitan as any other nation. Yeah, we do things differently here, but that doesn't mean we're some Podunk backwater hicks without a clue to the ways of the world. Texans are highly independent and value their freedom, but we're like this because we're free and we owe that to keeping the Republic's borders right where they are. Most of us don't want to be bothered, which is why we prefer to expand internally and through the global network than by trying to move our borders. Besides, there's too much bullshit on the other side of those lines that we can do without.

The real Texas is the one no media corp will show you because it would ruin the carefully crafted image they've built their business on. The true Texas is filled with people just scraping by and willing to do whatever they need to make ends meet. Guns help with that, but they're also a symbol of what makes Texas unique. Guns made Texas a republic before it joined the United States. Guns are what helped Texas remain true to itself when the Death came. Guns are what keep Texas from falling to our two greatest enemies: Mexico and the NAC.

With this in mind, most of the business in the nation happens in the forgotten alleys below the radar, and it's all highly illegal but necessary to keep the nation strong. See, while there's all sorts of vice to be had and no threat of your poison of choice running dry, most Texans do what they do for themselves as much as for the nation—but mostly for themselves.

The thing most people don't understand about Texans is that they're honest to a fault; not because we're dumb, but because being able to whip out a piece and stand your ground makes it

possible to say whatever the hell you want. Keep in mind that you shouldn't necessarily take a Texan for his word, though. Just because we don't have to lie doesn't mean we don't. Go 'head and keep missing the point, it works in our favor.

If you're new to the nation, let me give you some advice: shut the fuck up, keep your eyes down and just watch and learn. Texan megasprawns can be meaner than those on foreign soil. If you don't draw attention to your n00b status, you'll get along just fine until you learn to appreciate the true cost of personal freedom. It won't take long, trust me.

Don't worry, just because everyone's armed, it doesn't mean there's going to be a shootout over every beef. Only the dumbest ganger would expect flying lead to be the answer to every problem, probably be dead in a week to boot. You have to know when to show a gun, let alone use it, to survive here, omae.

However you got this file, congratulations. I didn't bother to hide it because I was aware that you couldn't trace it back to me. One of the benefits of having crypter friends in some key places in this great nation of ours.

So if you're looking to work with a megacorp, there's plenty to do from top-notch research and other on-the-level business to the down-and-dirty where all the real work is done. There's also a desperate need for ranch hands at the cloning facilities. Mercenaries and bodyguards are always welcome. Hell, any local will tell you most outsiders are dumb enough to go where they won't. Probably why so many go missing. The oil's long gone, but there's plenty of ways to hit pay dirt.

I've been all over this nation and I can tell you exactly which way and why the wind blows. Mexico sucks and the NAC blows. As for why...that's depends if you're riding the tornado or if it's running you down. Been on both ends, hombres. You don't have to believe me or even take my meaning, but that's on you. I've used one viper to wrap up another and even rode the proverbial tiger and came out the better for it.

As for me, I've already made my stacks of cash and don't feel the need to be in the shit anymore. You can take what I say at face value or not, it's your funeral, bud. The only thing I really care about is that you learn what it's really like here and why Texans love Texas so damn much. Peel those scales from your eyes, amigos, and realize that there's a reason we remained intact. Welcome to Texas; fuck with it and you might go home in a small box if you're lucky.

#Nick_NAC_Jack: Ain't no way Texas is that scary.

#SmuggleMe_This: Cleary you haven't met any Texans.

#1337_Freet_Pete: Yeah, they're pretty brash, but likable. Met a few and found them to be straightforward even if they shoot from the hip.

#SmuggleMe_This: Heh.

LIFE IN THE LONE STAR

GETTING TEXAS

There are some pretty important things to know about Texas that don't include any of the garbage people've been pushing for over two hundred years. Yeah, we got our ass handed to us at the Alamo, but we won. Yes, beef was our big industry before and after the Civil War. Yes, our history's got some embarrassing moments in it, but the core of our view has always been personal freedom, which—when you look at the first Civil War—is pretty ironic. When the second Civil War came, what most people call the Death, we got it right. The government had finally overstepped its boundaries and we weren't going to put up with that shit. Texas was started by people who wanted to do things their own way, and we've held to that ever since.

Texans have always been Texans first, and everything else second. But what does that mean? That's not so easy to answer because we're pretty much individualists to the core. Our media reflects this to some extent, but it's only a glimmer of reality. The best way to get Texas is to be here. The second best is to just accept this one fact: "Don't mess with Texas!" It's as much a statement of what we feel about our great nation as it is what people feel about themselves. Mainly it comes down to a sense of rugged individualism; Texas has mostly had to scratch-build everything, which means we're keen on ingenuity and making do with what's on hand.

So, when the Death came, we didn't con ourselves thinking the seeds that grew into the Coalition were going to let us live as we've always have. We declared our independence, the military forces here sided with us and basically told the old government what to do to themselves. Washington fell and someone set off a couple of dirty bombs in our largest sprawl. We still didn't break and you'd have to be willing to face an armed populace. We've even vat-grown and built our ranks just to have more hands to hold guns.

We've scaled back on the fleshier cannon fodder, given all of their problems, but that doesn't mean they aren't used. Simulacra make up the bulk of the forces these days for several reasons: they're stable, they don't require as much upkeep, and if they go AWOL, they might live just a bit longer than they would in our hot zones along the border. Good work for the bounty hunters and it's a new sport of sorts for those interested in tracking 'em down.

Here's what's probably going to fuck your head up something fierce: Texas is big and full of people. No, seriously. East Texas is heavily populated. Even before the Death, we were second in terms of size and population. Alaska's off on its own and California's big cities got fried, New York's drowning, and with Chicago going it solo, that left us with a shit ton of infrastructure that the NAC didn't get. And unless they magically grew sprawls hundreds of miles long to connect their cities, they've got a bunch of uninhabited open land, meaning they're not large enough to win a war with us without some serious aid from outside. This matters because shitheads think that just because

west Texas and the southern portion have been traditionally sparsely populated that we look like a bunch of cowpokes in giant hats and shiny belt buckles that will blind you. We're mostly sophisticated urbanites.

RECENT TEXAS HISTORY

Okay, so if you haven't heard, there was a pretty big event we call the Texas Tussle. For most people who fired first is academic since the old nation is dead and buried. The audio and visual feeds for that incident are now legendary in these parts, and we still hold to the belief that they fired first. When the dust settled, not much had been resolved. Naturally this meant there were a lot of hurt feelings. It's been 30 years, but we're still pissed about that whole incident.

The riots that started the Texas Tussle might have been the first signs of succession, but the GLU were the first to break free from the NAC and we weren't far behind. The rioters started the ball rolling. Texans are proud of what we did to help build up the US, so you can understand why we might not have wanted to give up the ghost.

Much of our "stalling" was our quiet preparations of a vat-grown army for the coming brawl and kept the NAC busy watching the Great Lakes Union. Given our nation's history, we didn't see it as leaving a democracy as much as preserving one. Our Constitution, even when we were a part of the old government, had more rights than the feds granted. But, God, guns, and glory can only be taken so far before that shit gets real old real fast. So, we left when they decided to detonate their nuke in Dallas. The NAC didn't take too kindly to that and decided we needed to water the tree of liberty with as much of our own blood as theirs—which we did, and gladly. Luckily, most of our air force using the DFW airport wasn't destroyed outright, it was just knocked out of the fight from the EMP damage; 'cept for the fallout, that is. Turns out the dirty bombs were flawed, causing them to do more damage to electronics than anything else. This put us right back where we started, before we got annexed in the first place, and we couldn't be happier. We're independent to our core, after all.

CULTURE

Most people live and die in the sprawls, pretty much like everyone else does. Sure, some folks wear Stetsons and boots, but they are the exception. Texans are pretty honest, though. Most will tell you how they feel about you, and then shoot you if there's an issue they have with you. In other places, they don't bother with the formalities of letting you know why. It's all about the civility of it, not just the deed. Talk all the shit you want, but be prepared to back it up. Same goes for lying. You can lie through your teeth all day long, but if you get caught, you'll be swallowing them.

Texans are highly individualistic—that part the media gets right. We live or die based on us holding our own against all enemies—foreign and domestic. For all this, though, we still appreciate the finer things in life, at least many of us do. You get a few lone wolves

who take that rugged individualism shit to an extreme, but they leave the sprawls and head for the south and west. Most of 'em probably die within a week or come crawling back when they realize their TAP won't grant them access to all the things they take for granted.

One of the reasons people act like they do here is because Texans love their guns. It's not hard to understand why when you think about how liberating it is to feel secure when you know you can kill any asshole who tries to take what's yours. Plus it doesn't hurt knowing you can speak your mind and nobody can do a damn thing about it without your gun chiming in. Really, it makes a world of difference. I can see how confusing that would be to outsiders who don't appreciate just how much freedom Texans have and how that's influenced things. Much of our history is defined by the gun and what it protected.

Here's something else to bear in mind: we don't ignore good ideas because someone else came up with them first. We might bitch and moan you beat us to it, but then we do what Texans really do best: make it our own and Texas-size that fucker. 'Cause we want to let you know you're doing it wrong. We have a flair for these things. Enjoy breakfast burritos; you're welcome. What about Tex-Mex; we're in the fucking name! We fuse things together to make a new breed in a league all its own. That's why everything's bigger in Texas.

There're no castes in Texas. So, by all rights, you can rise as high as you can reach, but that often comes at a price most amigos ain't willing to pay. Nobody here gives a damn what title you give yourself. You best con to "ma'am," "mister," or "misses" or some such other honorific, but that's all you're getting. You can have the respect of your office or position, but don't expect anything beyond that. That's asking for a fight. Take what you earn, you get more that way. Anything else, and you're sure to draw at least a beating and a loss of recognition for whatever title you hold.

Texans have a swagger that is unique. We're proud of our heritage and its legacy. You'd have the swagger too if you'd grown up in this environment. Even the silver spoon crowd has to watch their step. Sure, they have a different set of rules they play by for their social circle, but one wrong move and they can be thrown to the gutter wolves. In Texas, we like to believe it's hard to climb and easy to fall, which is often true. The rich play by different rules in that regard as well, but hey, that's why everyone wants to be on top. In the end though, when you've learned the rules the hard way, you know you're tough enough to play the long game and see it to the end.

Other than that, Texans don't necessarily share a whole lot in common with one another beyond a love of the nation and for which it stands. That's pretty much the beauty of the Republic. We know we don't have to be a certain way and have no predefined role in life. We get to blaze our own trails. Like-minded people band together; it's only natural to form a clique that groks you, omae. It's also a means to survive.

RELIGION

Here's something you might find surprising: religion's not all that important to most Texans. Less than a fifth of Texas shares radically similar views as those now ruling the NAC. Our third largest group: atheists. That should tell you something about our views on religion. It ain't about having one, it's about keeping it

to yourself. When the bombing runs started, that pretty much woke up most of the nation to the reality of zealotry. So, that said, what sorts of faiths can you find here? Practically everything, but what follows are some of the most notable movements and faiths in the nation.

CHRISTIANITY

Yep, we got a lot of Christians here still. The various sects have mellowed out considerably from their past conservative views. Some say it's out of fear for being seen as NAC sympathizers. The militancy hasn't really gone away, though. You can count on several things remaining true of hombres: they're still waiting for that Second Coming and they're still angry as hell, just now it's a righteous fire aimed at the faithful whom they feel betrayed the religion. Turns out that actualized theocracy scares the bejzus out of people who thought that's what they wanted.

ROMAN CATHOLIC

Catholicism is on the decline in Texas for no other reason than the tragedy that is Europe post-Charon. The church has been of use to the nation, though. One of the benefits of flying under the flag of a faith is that envoys can cross borders with little fear of molestation. There have been at least a few trips where the Catholics have more than proven their value as good, honest Texans and seen vital shipments of goods cross the ocean. It's enough that evangelicals have changed their opinions of the Church, though they still don't take to a foreigner governing daily life of Texans.

ATHEISM

Yep, the belief in non-belief is huge in Texas these days. Kind of hard to believe in a god who'd either let the world get to this fractured state or that would condone the continued existence of the travesty that is the NAC. Throw in all the crazy cults that have sprung up around one crazy belief or another, and you have compelling reasons not to worship anything. In a lot of ways, it just makes more sense not to, amigo.

VOODOO 2.0

Probably one of the strangest faiths to spill over from Louisiana when the NAC started their rhetoric was voodoo. It's not the fact that the religion is what it is, but rather the historic stance Texans have had towards non-Christian faiths. With the rise of A.I., though, things just went a bit sideways. The loa apparently inhabit the Global DataNet. At least, that's what the adherents of this faith claim. It might not be the spirit realm, omae, but they believe the 'Net is alive.

CHURCH OF WORMWOOD

Seems every nation has a group that pronounces doom and gloom upon the rest of the world for its sinning ways. Texas isn't the exception to the rule. In the eyes of other Christians, the Church of Wormwood isn't a Christian group per se, but that don't mean they don't see themselves that way. Problem is, they do and they'd love nothing more than to get their hands on a fusion reactor or three and rig them to blow. Their view is that the world is just waiting for the poisoned star to crash down before the end of days can accelerate and take a third of the population with it.

FEEDING THE MASSES

Texas is big and it's got a lot of sprawl. How do you stuff all them screaming mouths with food, omae? There ain't no cows around to do the job any more, but science has helped solve that dilemma with cloned beef. Some of the open land in the western part of the state isn't all that great for farming and, well, you can just forget the south.

It's all good though; there are several ways we've got that covered. Every city has at least a handful of vertical farms and we have a brisk trade importing foodstuffs from such giants as Jian Foods. There's also a lot of work going into rebuilding the seafood habitats off the coast. The problem is that there's no population controls in place, because, well, that would be unTexan. So, the biggest chink in our armor would have to be our bellies—for now.

What most Texans actually eat depends a lot on where they live and how much they're willing to spend. Somehow, the rich manage to get crabs and lobsters, but they're rare enough as it is and most of those species are going the way of the dinosaurs, meaning most can't afford a nibble. The majority of the people have to make do with protein pastes and dried starches laced with enough sugar and salt to hide just how nasty this shit tastes. Let's face it, if you saw what it looks like, you'd think it was crapped out by some bioform.

GROWING UP, NOT OUT

Steel, concrete, and glass are extraordinary building materials, they're hard, smooth, and sharp. The problem is that they can also become brittle and shatter. Texas has had to learn to bend. Tornadoes and hurricanes will do that. So, while the buildings are sleek and shiny, they're made up as much from composites as they are from concrete and steel. This makes them flexible and strong.

Some people swear that the buildings are alive since some have the ability to change internal structure. That's all thanks to nanotech. Some of the firefights between gangers and the bombings during the war stressed how important clearing the debris is. The buildings now are designed to be self-healing, albeit in a limited capacity. A full-on block war won't disappear overnight. Contractors have to come in and load the matter compilers with more material—assuming the gangers allow them to. Granted this isn't the standard everywhere, but it's been steadily becoming the norm for the last 20 years.

Notice there was no mention of wooden sidewalks, dirt roads, and adobe buildings made of clay and mud? That's because that shit only exists in the minds of the media. It's been nearly 100 years since anyone's built new structures like that that weren't purely to suck more money out of tourists. Don't let all them lights blind you, compadre, that's the real Republic you're seeing.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Texas has come a long way since it went independent. The hell that is living in the urban jungle is hard to escape, omae, but with a bit of art to serve as distraction you can make it through the day. Even the hard working, honest poor indulge in one entertainment or another. Think of it as a reward and incentive for putting in a

hard day's work. Nothing like coming home, popping open a cold one and sinking into a good show.

These are welcome diversions in a world without mercy. It's not that the programming put out by the networks is new. Most shows are formulaic, but they're comfortable, familiar. They present a world that reflects the values of Texans, even if those values aren't expressed in the sprawls. There's always a way to tune out the world outside when things get too hairy.

SIMS

The Republic has always had a thriving art scene in Austin, and with all the media tech at our disposal, the nation has its own media style and rivals even some of the NAC's own works. We call the whole thing Austywood, but it isn't just in Austin. The arts in Texas are in every plex. The megasprawls all have their own studios. Hell, some even got contract stars. The studios make movies in all genres, even if they have a Texas flair.

Then there's the regularly scheduled programming that runs 24/7 on the various networks. In addition to a lot of old programming nobody can get paid on with most of the previous owners going up in a flash, dying in a massive quake, or being forced to head inland, there are several new shows that run as well. Long live the television, amigo, even if it is streamed through your TAP.

MUSIC

Music is alive and well from the "keep Austin weird" days before the megasprawls. Like our movie studios, our music scene is as much a part of our national identity as it is the culture war that separates us from our enemies, especially the NAC. Media's one of those things that make it across borders with almost no effort. And, when it comes down to it, there's always the airwaves, little used as they are.

Every genre is well represented. The big three are country, metal, and electronica. Other than that, you'll find some huge groups in uniquely Texan genres like Tejano (yeah, that started here). Like we did with cuisine, we've always had people in the arts who looked to blend different genres in interesting ways. Rap's still kicking, though it's fused with aggrotech because life wasn't hard enough already.

SYNTH

One of the newer genres on the scene is also the most mind-bending. Synth is hard to classify because the performers borrow from three or more genres at once to create new material. Some is airy, some is dissonant as hell. But, what can you expect from the vat-grown set, eh? I'll tell you what, omae, I'd steer clear of that shit if I were you. It's not that the music isn't good, it's just that the people who listen to it are damn passionate and a bit touchy on the subject of what is or isn't synth. All you have to do is listen to Walker Norris and scope all the feeds regarding that act to see how crazy some of these fans are. More about that later when I talk about Austin.

SPORTS

Texans love their sports, always have. Hell, we still have rodeo, even if the bulls are mechanical. So, here's a rundown of the bigger draws in the nation.

FOOTBALL

Football is still king, even with the rise of gladiatorial style games. Arenas are shared by a few teams representing areas of a plex that used to be a city before the sprawl. Other than being a 2.0, no other augmentations are allowed. Riots sometimes occur before the game and you're likely to find gangers shooting it out with a rival gang after their team's lost the game.

You'd think all this violence would have caused schools to shut down their sports programs, but you'd be wrong, amigo. This is far from the case. This is Texas we're talking about. Football's just one of the many ways you can toughen up a kid to prepare your spawn for the harsh realities. There are a dozen teams in the Texas Football League and countless numbers in the university system.

BASEBALL

Baseball's not as big, but we still have a league. Texans rejected an attempt to add augmented players to the game. Even to this day, it's controversial that 2.0s are allowed. It's one of the few areas where Texans preferred the old way of doing things. As a result, outsiders wonder if the nation is as forward thinking as we claim to be. We know that the Japanese have gone the opposite way, but there's something to be said for personal improvement, partner. Technology won't solve all of your problems, even if makes life more exciting.

GLADIATORIAL GAMES

All that pent-up anger has to get released somehow and there aren't enough football teams or games in a season to let it bleed off. That's where the gladiatorial games come in. Growing out of mixed martial arts and the popularity of drone combat, gladiatorial matches bring with them the glory of one-on-one combat with just enough blood to slake the thirst of even the hardest ganger. To get any more violent, you'd have to go murder someone in a gruesome manner, omae. Some of the fights are so punishing that they should be classified as torture.

INDUSTRY & TECHNOLOGY

Texas makes as much of its own products as it can, but it isn't enough to keep the population supplied. We import what we need to, but we make sure our trades put us on the winning side of the deal. Texas does a lot of things best: beef, energy, and guns for sure, but we also export culture and business savvy. Those five things alone have helped keep Texas free. They aren't the only thing keeping us safe. In fact, some of this makes us a target.

Act of God Armaments is perhaps our chief corporation responsible for our military's might and its winning ways. And, the good folks at AGA help keep our citizens supplied with enough weaponry to serve as a reserve force to keep the NAC and Mexico from getting any funny ideas. AGA is headquartered in Austin, so they're pretty chummy with the government. We kind of need it that way.

Okay, so Texas has always been known for beef, so none of that should surprise you. The only thing that's changed is how we grow it. Though it's funny how few ask why a T-bone steak is boneless nowadays. The meat's tasty enough, so no one complains much. What we don't process ourselves is sent to our allies and Jian Foods, but most of it stays home.



THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS

Now, there isn't a lot of oil left in Texas, but we (and most of the world) seem to be moving on to new energy supplies. That doesn't mean we don't have a supply of fuel for internal combustion engines, if we need it. Things is, we've gone nuclear and cold fusion energy is our newest export—and the world's ever needy with the power hungry Global DataNet. That need makes what we got desirable to friend and foe alike.

Texas is a powerhouse and it shows in our arms as much as it does in our aerospace technology. See, when the Death came, we already had an aerospace manufacturer next door to Carswell. Combined with all that infrastructure in Houston for training astronauts, we came out well ahead of the NAC, especially when LA went up in smoke and both the Badlands and Cascadia stood in the way physically. Sucks to be them, amigo.

In regards to the Global DataNet, we've got a crack bunch working in every VR and HR market. This is where our business acumen and culture exports come from. We try to downplay this a lot so nobody gets wise to how well we know the business of business and subtle warfare. How do you think some of our media gets in the hands of pirates in enemy nations? It all can't be stolen, not with some of the more anti-NAC policies and the like on full display. Hell, we even report on news those bastards don't want their own to see.

One of the things Texas has done since the Death has been to try to move as much of our needs fulfillment in-house. Simply translated; there're more factories in the Republic now than there were before Weber's disastrous election. It ain't enough, though. Not by a long shot and it's pretty much an open secret that we need to import goods of all kinds. Texas isn't exactly what you'd call resource rich these days.

Let's highlight a few things Texas has become known for.

CYBERNETICS

Some Texans made this a priority for vets before the Death, so we have people who worked very hard to return these heroes back to as full functionality as possible. The TAP allowed us to get them out of wheelchairs and give them the ability to feel like their artificial limbs were real to the point they could feel the warmth of the hand they were shaking. With several corps making different breakthroughs in recent years, there seems to be no limit to the capabilities we can grant amputees. Getting chromed up is making us faster and stronger than ever. It doesn't hurt that some of it starting to look more like flesh, either.

NANITIC RENEWAL

Nanite technology has allowed us to accomplish some amazing things in Texas. It's helping us build the space needle and developments in construction have led to other advantages as well. Texas is no stranger to foul weather, especially when things got real dicey there for a while. Nanotech helped on that front and in sporadic urban renewal projects, which people wondering about using it for more than as routine medication delivery systems. Many suspect that the bio industries are actively working on such treatments with a vocal few insisting that companies like AetherScope have already cracked that particular nut. Whatever the case may be, there's been enough progress that people think that biological renewal is just over the horizon.

GOLEMMECHS

What can one say about Texas in this area that hasn't been documented to death, omae? Plenty, it turns out. AGA is our biggest supplier of golemmechs, but what makes the Republic's equipment such top-notch hardware isn't just the crack pilots we have that can milk them babies for all their worth. It's also the weaponry. Let's just say that there's a reason you'll hear "peace through superior firepower" when hombres in the know talk about our golemmechs. What makes Texas stand out in this arena is that our gear is designed to go toe-to-toe with vehicles larger than they are. We believe in giving as good as we get in a fight and these babies prove it.

BRAIN TRUST

Probably one of the most controversial practices initiated by the government was the establishment of the Brain Trust. See, it's a matter of national security that we keep the best and brightest around as long as possible. Everyone who's accomplished something important technologically or militarily are deemed too important to die. Okay, they can physically breathe their last, but the minds in those meat shells are another story. Before they can slip off that mortal coil, they have to submit to a memory dubbing. It's easy to see why that'd be a problem for Texans, but it's as simple as this: your rights end where my nose begins.

HYBRIDS

Personally, I don't care what a person does to their body. Hell, going chrome is no different than having your bio code hacked. Some people don't see it that way. Legally, hybrids aren't treated any differently and that has a lot to do with how adding one animal or another to your double helixes has its uses militarily. Need a night recon across the Rio Grande, there's someone for that. Need to break down hastily built barricades, there're plenty of biggun's for that, too. So, while it's not legal to discriminate against hybrids, it doesn't mean they don't get shit on by a lot of people. I will say they have it a might better than zeeks, though.

#LowkeedTweed: *What's a biggun?*

#BbbBbbbbBbbb: *It's slang for large-sized people.*

MILITARY

Soldiers and veterans have always held a special place in Texan culture. That's because we had to fight for our rights from the get go and we still have to today. The Alamo's a bit of a shrine, you see. It serves as a constant reminder of how much blood our brave men and women have had to shed to keep Texas a land of freedom where you can live damn near however you choose. They might not be gods, but most Texans will trust soldiers and vets more than the average Joe.

"Don't mess with Texas" is pretty much an anthem now for our armed forces. The issue is something we're pretty set on. Seriously, as far as our fighting men and women are concerned, you just don't fuck with this nation. And, since they're tough and backed by some of the finest weaponry the world over, let's just

say I'd listen to them if I were you. And if the guns don't convince you, the rest of the armaments will. Just ask Mexico.

Now, there are a few things you should know about the military and how it's structured, but the details are a bit sketchy as there are a lot of state secrets. After all, being proud of our men and women and their armaments isn't the same as being blind to the needs to keep the more sensitive things under wraps. So, let's get a few things out of the way.

What we lack in manpower we make up for in firepower. The Republic boasts some of the best military hardware in the world. This includes golemmechs. Having the largest base in the US before the Death meant we were well stocked with gear to outfit our units after the dust settled and our borders held firm. Then again, having plenty of tanks in reserve will do that for you.

Now, it's no big secret that we use simulacra on the front lines. We also employ androids, bioroids, and cyborgs. Rumor has it that we've even got special units of hybrids and zeeks, but none of the brass has ever admitted to any such programs. I've even heard stories of hybrids with gills working for the Navy. I'm not sure I believe that one mainly on account of how small our navy is.

Our army is what most folks think of when it comes to the Republic's national defenses, but we've got a decent air force and navy as well. We're smaller than we'd like to be in the skies, but we're large enough to keep our skies safe. We even have an entire flight wing of drones that are a match for anything the NAC or Mexico can throw at us. Suffice to say, we can flood our airspace.

The area where many see a questionable front is our navy. See, unlike our army and air force, our navy has a bunch of mismatched ships. Some are glorified boats. We get that it looks bad and all, but it's also an advantage. Our enemies are unaware of our capabilities and some of our smaller craft have surprisingly mean punches. It might help hide some of the holes in our defenses, but they're there. One of the most glaring is the squatters on the old offshore platforms. For some reason or another, we can't seem to get rid of the rabble and their piracy. The other problem is with the smuggling we don't want.

That's okay, talk amongst some of the brass is that there's some new ships or units coming online out of Galveston soon. Whatever it is, it's sure to keep both the NAC and Mexico out of our coastal waters. That should clear the way to get rid of the squatters without any interference, but that's a bit more complicated believe you me.

BUSINESS

Whether you skipped ahead or didn't get the point I've been trying to make, amigo, let me stress this again: Texans are pretty honest. Now, that don't mean they won't lie through their teeth. You should really pay more attention and get the subtext, amigo. Business in Texas is all about the cash. Nobody here has any illusions about anything else. They're going to do everything they can to cut the best deal in their favor that they can get. It's all about playing those cards as if you were spades tight.

Most people are too fucking stupid to understand that while a businessman might be telling you one thing, and be completely truthful in how he feels, he's still working the business. Yeah, it seems duplicitous, but that's what you get when you don't pay attention to what's really going on is a two-pronged offensive. On one front, you have a charm offensive working to break you down, on the other is the ruthless drive to get the better end of

the deal. It's a corpsucker thing. The megacorps are pretty quick to shit can anyone they think isn't maximizing the bottom line. There's some motivation for you right there, omae.

All that cultural stuff your eyes glazed over while you scanned through this document, go back and re-read them. Make sure you get in between the lines. You'll thank me for it. Words are weapons in Texas, with as deadly consequences as bullets screaming through your eye holes. Both can blind the dumb bastard who doesn't get out of the way. The suits might distract you, but you'd best keep in mind that these vatos are out for as much carnage as your average tweeker on a massive bender. They're just doing it with numbers rather than bodies. The outcome's got a greater impact, though. Never forget that.

Texas companies are pretty much as they've always been: loyal to Texas. This doesn't mean they're like as not to toe any lines set by the government. On the contrary, they're operating statements all read like the freedoms enshrined in our Constitution taken to their ultimate conclusion. The same can be said about the culture of our megacorps. They're not going to sit by while some piss ant with a pen and a legal fetish decides what liberties should be curbed. This is the nation where you go big or you go home.

To this day, we claim the integrated circuit was born here. Why? Because Texas Instruments developed the transistor at the same time as Bell Labs—okay, so we were a couple of months behind—and then went and spawned the idea that became the IC you need to make computers work, amigo. Point is, hombres, we made the shit you use to live in the modern world a reality. You're welcome. Argue the facts all you want, but we're dead set on this issue. We're nothing if not competitive and we'll be damned if you think you're going to steal our thunder. And that's the same attitude that underlies our corporate culture.

We're Texans and we're going to do whatever the hell we want. We're also proud to live in a nation that protects this right, which is why even the most ruthless corporation is careful not to get too greedy. Why do you think there's so many subsidiaries out there for AGA alone? Gotta fill them holes that might otherwise cause the whole system to implode. Plus, if you keep it in house, you keep everything close to home, meaning an ever tighter amount of control and assurance that your employees and local consumers will likely rally to your defense when the shit hits the fan.

MEGACORPORATIONS

Let's take a look at some of the big corporations that make Texas work. Some you probably know quite well, others are more powerful than what you might expect given the kind of work they do and you depend upon.

ACT OF GOD ARMAMENTS

Being one of the world's premier arms makers in a nation that's always romanticized the gun makes AGA a symbol of the Texan spirit. This doesn't mean the megacorp is on the level with the public or the government though. Hell, some think they are the government. One of the reported slogans AGA corpsuckers use amongst themselves is "guns make your world a safer place to live." The theory being that if everyone has a gun, nobody will want to be shot, and everyone will want to have the biggest gun they can. But, life in the sprawl sucks harder than a vacuum, omae.

THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS

The Republic of Texas is a constitutional democratic republic. We have rule by representation, which is good if you consider most of the people on the streets having access to the levers of government would be disastrous if they had direct say in things. That's what is says on paper anyway. Turns out it doesn't always work like it's supposed to. Partly because a lot of dumb fucks just don't vote. They're free not to, but then you get what you deserve, right?

Corruption is always a threat and we have plenty to go around, but most of it is on a borough level than nationwide. It's the corps who likely have the most to do with that. Problem is we have so many loyalists running the megacorps that it's hard to differentiate between necessary top secret projects to give Texans an edge and what's plain ol' nefarious.

Where things really break down is in the sprawls. The damn things are so big that they're harder to manage than anyone realizes. They're divided up into boroughs that are pretty much on the scale of metropolises in their own right. Add to this the competing jurisdictions of law enforcement groups and municipal agencies keeping things from falling into ruin, well you get the picture. As long as it works most folks don't pay attention. Take away their water and power and watch 'em riot, though.

So, for lack of a better way of doing things, the sprawls all have governors with mayors serving as the heads of boroughs or sectors. The system is a bit messy, but it's worked for now. Nobody's figured out how to make a sprawl work anywhere. There's just too many people to not fuck it up. That's where all the layers of bureaucracy come in with the aid of private enterprise.

Money's still a problem, though. Okay, it's the main problem; the little snake in our garden, if you will. Greasing the wheels of commerce, government, and justice takes a lot of scratch, amigo. That's the reason the people on top are hard to knock off of their high places. See, all that private enterprise puts us in a bit of a sticky situation. We need the various contracted companies to help the Republic gain greater stability according to the powers that be. Truthfully, I think we strapped a saddle to a tiger.

Everything's compartmentalized, so it's a wonder anything actually works. The various jurisdictions are left to themselves to figure out how best to use the money they get to keep their part of Texas' infrastructure running. Each jurisdiction has to hold public meetings, so people can bitch about whatever they like, but there are some changes. First, no frivolous bullshit. If it works for everyone else, it's really your problem, not the system. Second, most of these meetings are now virtual, meaning you have to log into some boring VR room after going through a bunch of authentications. Third, most people don't bother because they're either too busy scratching out an existence or are too busy not giving a fuck. Gotta love all that apathy, mi amigos.

To say zeeks got it bad is an understatement. They're often treated worse'n the vat-grown crowd. Not too hard to see why. You ain't gotta worry about a sim trying to poke in your brain without asking. That said, zeeks got rights even if most people ignore 'em. There are people agitating to get those rights recognized, but that's asking a might too much. Part of the problem is that there are so many others vying for equality and recognition on an already emotionally taxed population. I don't want to say you need to wait your turn, but...c'est la vie, omae.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Okay, while we're surrounded by enemies on nearly all sides, we do have relations with other nations that don't involve hostilities. What follows is a brief view of the more important enemies, allies, trading partners, and frenemies we have.

NORTH AMERICAN COALITION (NAC)

Can't very well start any discussion without first talking about the Evil Empire to the north, can we, amigos? The NAC is our sworn enemy. We hate them nearly as much as we've hated anyone before them. The NAC is a disease wrapped in a fanatical view of righteous tyranny. The whole sorry lot can go straight to hell and ride the Devil's dick for all I care. And that's how you should feel if you're a good, decent, honest Texan. Their whole system and outlook are what triggered the Death. While we signed a treaty that secured our borders, that doesn't mean we aren't locked in a war with them. There's just fewer bits of lead flying about while the main battle takes place on the 'Net and global markets. And for that part, we've got mutual embargoes on one another.

MEXICO

Fuck Mexico. They keep trying to erase our borders and most of the puppet masters are former drug lords, the same scum we kept trying to beat like a rented mule bred with a dead horse. Not cool, pinches. We tried offering them some peace treaties, but they kept agitating us with claims that our southern regions were in need of law and order. We even offered them a copy of Santa Ana's wooden leg to make them go away and play nice. Nah, that wasn't good enough. I've seen who's really causing the trouble along the border and I can tell you most of it isn't Texas. So, I just got a peaceful, heartfelt message for them liars and cheats: chinga tu madre y chupa mi verga, cabrones.

ATLANTICA

I love these guys! What can I say, in this shitty era, ain't nobody got our back like the good ol' cradle of liberty. Atlantica is our closest trading partners minus the bullshit with the NAC trying to run interference and seize our goods. There's many ways to smuggle, amigo. We communicate with Atlantica as much as we can, but it gets dicey at times. Kinda hard to get a message out there to coordinate efforts when you got this fat slab of land between the two filled with people who want to squeeze until you pop. There's a good portion of our sims that feature Alanticans as the heroes against the Evil Empire; and why not, even if they're locked in a police state vibe, they're still the enemy of our enemy.

CARIBBEAN ECONOMIC LEAGUE

The CEL is one of chief trading partners. Well, more like they help us trade more than anything else. We provide them with a bit of cloned beef and some power reactors amongst normal trade relations and in return we get a reliable haven where we can move goods between us and Europe. For some, it seems a bit of a culture shock that we're working with Cuba against the bulk of what was once the US. It's actually a great partnership and we're glad to work with them since they did side with us against the NAC.

JAILBREAKER

Nicknames: Tech Guru, Magic Man, Priest, Inside Man, Chop Shop
"Warranties ain't worth the paper they're printed on. It's just another way to keep you in the corpsuckers' pocket. Lemme free you from your prison and keep your overseers from tracking you."

- **Bonus Credits:** 3,000 plus (Repair die x 150) every Advance
- **Requisites:** Rigger, Splicer
- **Perks:** Everyone who needs to know knows you go to a specialist to set your tech right before you try using it long-term. That pays its own dividends with +1 to Street Cred.

GOLEMMECH JOCKEY

Nicknames: Flyboy, CDAT, Oz, Puppeteer, Puppetmaster
"Nothing quite feels like being strapped in and taking a beatdown without feeling a thing. The best part is returning the favor and then some."

- **Bonus Credits:** 3,000 every Advance
- **Requisites:** Ace (Golemmech)
- **Perks:** Access to golemmechs owned by corporate/government employer. The Golemmech Jockey may only use the mech on operations sanctioned by the parent corp or government.

PIRATE

Nicknames: Sea Rat, Scruffy Dog, Blockade Bait, Reaver
"I'm taking back what's mine and then some."

- **Bonus Credits:** 1,000 plus (1d4 x 100) every Advance
- **Requisites:** Steady Hands, Thief
- **Perks:** Either call upon 1d6 extras each game session to take care of minor tasks (GM has final say) or own a DB Water Spider Twin-hull Speed boat.

POLITICO

Nicknames: Shyster, Baby Kisser, Apologist, Bullshitter, Lobbyist, Shill

"A job's a job. If I don't say it, someone else will."

- **Bonus Credits:** 4,000 every Advance
- **Requisites:** Charismatic, Persuasion d6+
- **Perks:** One additional Contact.

RANGER

Nicknames: Lawdog, Tonto, Kimosabe, Troubleshooter

"We never back down. If you get on our radar, you best remember that."

- **Bonus Credits:** 6,000 each Advance
- **Requisites:** Ranger
- **Perks:** Ranger Riot Power Armor, useable only on sanctioned operations (GM approval).

RIGGER

Nicknames: Tinkerer, MacGyver, Wrench, Tech Whisperer

"Ain't nothin' I can't fix. Ain't nothing that needs to go to the trash heap without checking with me first if you value how you spend your creds."

- **Bonus Credits:** 3,000 plus (Repair die x 150) every Advance
- **Requisites:** Rigger
- **Perks:** Own a repair shop.

WEAPONSMITH

Nicknames: Gunsmith, Q, Death Dealer, Plumber

"If I made it, it wasn't pointed at you."

- **Bonus Credits:** 5,000 plus (Repair die x 200) every Advance
- **Requisites:** Splicer
- **Perks:** +1 Contact

NEW HINDRANCES

AJAX PROTOCOL/VIRUS (MAJOR)

You've either been engineered with Ajax or have been infected with it. It's only a matter of time before you begin to experience delusions. When you do, it's everyone else around you that'll suffer. In 1d4 years, Ajax will take its toll and force you to see the horrors of your actions. Until then, you must make a Spirit check whenever you are stressed. Failure causes Ajax to create the illusion that you are surrounded by sheep that need to be shorn and prepared for slaughter.

EX-CON (MAJOR)

The human brain can on average only hold about 500 years of memory. Unfortunately for you, you fall within that statistic and got sent to VR prison for a 2-year term. Long enough to not remember much about your time on the outside, your past associations, and whomever you've pissed off. Your lack of knowledge of your past has people treat you as an Outsider—both society at large and your former criminal associates—as well as being wanted by someone for something in the past you can't remember.

EQUIPMENT

MALMART TEXAS

Yeah, now that's what I'm talking about, amigo. Let's get right to the meat of things. You want goods, eh? Well, you've come to the right place. The Republic's got some primo shit, but there are a few problems getting it. First off, we do exist under the rule of law, so you can't just up and buy any old thing you want. There's also a waiting list for some of these things as well. Now, it's not that we're too poor or unable to manufacture everything on our own. Texas makes a lot of capital; it's not a matter of cash, it's a matter of supply and demand. See, the companies supply a lot of goods that the government demands have lots of neat little tracking features embedded in them. Now, if you're using things all legal like, you're good to go, amigo. Otherwise you're going to need a few crypters, gear heads, and handymen to get you scrubbed clean of any bugs, you savvy?

Your best bet is to get it local. Now, that might not be fast and cheap, but it'll be clean of snoopers. Well, most of 'em anyway. You gotta watch who you're getting your gear from unless you like to be caught with your ass hanging out. Plenty of vatos out there who'd love to jack your shit after they've installed it in you. Miss a single payment and you won't even see them repo your limbs, let alone your other gear.

ARMOR

Here in Texas, we got a few types of armor you're less likely to see anywhere else. Mostly it's because, even though we live in 2090, the old-school western lifestyle is still a thing, especially on the ranches out west,

ROAD WEAR TAN GALAN HAT

Riding the empty highways means you gotta keep your dome covered, amigo. But lookin' sharp's just as important. Make sure you're as styling as your iron horse. The nanoweave supports lightweight ceramic plates and hides the Neck Stabilization System that deploys when your hat detects an imminent impact (collision damage reduced by 1 die).

WASTELAND TRADERS BRUSHMASTER DUSTER

Iconic and trendy, our duster line is guaranteed to capture that Old West feel and provide you with the quality protection you've come to expect from Wasteland Traders. This coat is durable, lightweight, and woven throughout with ceramic microfibers to ensure you have ease of movement while roving the trails. Its lighter armor compared to other long coats is more than made

up for with the reactive camouflage that breaks up the wearer's silhouette (acts like light cover).

WASTELAND TRADERS DUSTBUSTER BANDANA

Whether you just need to protect your lungs or identity, our bandana is exactly what you need. It won't give you any protection from lead poisoning to the face, but it'll keep the dust out of you. And, in the open spaces you're apt to find yourself, not sucking in toxins is a good thing (+1 to Vigor rolls).

WASTELAND TRADERS TRAILMASTER DUSTER

This is our premier duster. If you find you travel the open roads more often than not, this is the coat for you. Nothing fancy, just a damn fine looking set of threads woven through with ceramic microfibers and strategically placed lightweight ceramic plates designed to keep road rash and bullets from leaving a bit of yourself spilled on the highway.

CYBERNETICS

There are plenty of ways to get chromed up in the Republic that have little to do with the west as it was, but that doesn't stop some people from using names that invoke the past nor does it make some dipshits think they're some new fangled version of Billy the Kid. What it boils down to is this, amigo: the style and the attitude that the Old West represented and nothing says that more than replacing useless meat with more useful bits of metal or new and improved meat.

AUGMENTATION PACKAGES

DESPERADO

If you find yourself on the wrong side of the law more often than not, this package is for you. Stay a step or two ahead of the fuzz!

- **Parts:** Enhanced Articulation, Advanced Smartgun System, Trauma Suppressor
- **Cost:** 60,000
- **Strain:** 6

ROUGH RIDER

Don't fear the wastes, conquer them! This package helps you maintain when you have to spend time in the brush and barrens of the world.

TYPE (PERSONAL)	ARMOR	WEIGHT	COST	NOTES
RW Tan Galan Hat	+1	-	1,000	Covers head, Neck Stabilization System
WT Brushmaster Duster	+2	8	4,000	Covers torso, arms, legs; see description
WT Dustbuster Bandana	-	-	25	Covers face, see description
WT Trailmaster Duster	+3	8	6,000	Covers torso, arms, legs

THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS

AGA HARRIER ATTACK QUADCOPTER

The Harrier sports four of the company's infamous adjustable ducted lifting blades, dual lateral missile pods, and a nose mounted ballistic mount. It is the perfect system for anti-personnel, anti-vehicle, and some anti-emplacement work.

Equipped with side-mounted rocket pods and a forward facing minigun, the Harrier is more than capable of holding its own and bringing destruction to bear on its immediate sphere of influence. Add to it the advanced optics package that AGA often includes on its higher end combat drones, and this quadcopter is the last thing anyone wants to find above them.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d10

Skills: Notice d6, Piloting d8, Shooting d8

Pace: —; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 11(3)

Special Abilities:

- **Advanced Optics:** The Harrier is equipped with AGA's combat optics which includes telescopic, low light, and thermal vision. It adds a +2 to sight-based Notice rolls and ignores lighting penalties.
- **Armor +3:** Layered ceramics and silicon carbide fibers.
- **Flight:** Pace 16", Climb 1.
- **Weapon Mount:** Twin bilateral weapon mounted forward facing rocket launchers (Range 24/48/96; Damage 2d8+4; RoF 1-2; Shots 10; HW, MBT)
- **Size +1**
- **Weapon Mount:** Undernose forward facing weapon mounted 180 Degree arc minigun (Range 24/48/96; Damage 2d8; RoF 6; Shots 1,000; AP 3, Auto, HW)

AUROCH

Modeled on the ancestor of cattle, this brute is big and mean. This four-legged drone is designed to ram targets. Failing that, it has a weapons mount for indiscriminate carnage.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d6

Skills: Notice d6, Driving d6, Shooting d6

Pace: 12; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 11 (4)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +4:** Reinforced plating, Heavy Armor.
- **Ram:** The front of the Auroch ends in a ram designed to punch through/knock over obstacles and absorb impact, reducing ramming damage to the Auroch by half.
- **Size +2:** The Auroch is size of a bull.
- **Weapon Mount:** An integrated weapon gimbal that can hold a single weapon and ammo (up to 100 lb).

DESTRIER

When some lab monster isn't an option, there's the destrier. Modeled on the Black Knight War Horse, this sleeker drone is designed to patrol and walk perimeters. They are often loaded with a sprite to better judge what actions to take in any given situation.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Notice d6, Driving d8, Shooting d8

Pace: 16; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 9 (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Reinforced plating, Heavy Armor.

- **Sensor Suite:** Equipped with the latest sensors, the destrier gains +4 Notice vs. sound, motion, strong chemicals, radiation, or electrical fields up to 500 yards.
- **Size +2:** The Destrier is size of a draft horse.
- **Weapon Mount:** 7.62mm machine gun (Range 30/60/120; Damage 2d8+1; ROF 4; Shots 1,000, AP 2)

DRUGS

Chrome not enough to keep you on the bleeding edge or isn't your style? That's okay, compadre, we've got all the standard drugs and then this new shit you don't want anywhere near your veins.

SYNTH

Nicknames: Voice of God, Choir, Sonic, Eargasm

Duration: 1d4 hours.

Method of Ingestion: Injection, inhalation, snorting

Effect: Synth was developed by the NAC as a way to heighten the senses of its soldiers, but they found out it can be used to control people and mainly enhanced the user's hearing. The effect boosts Notice rolls vs. hearing by one die type per dose.

Side effects: The effects of Synth reduce the inhibitions of the user, making them susceptible to suggestions as they try to take in all the auditory sensory input they can. Spirit rolls are reduced by -1 per dose against all social conflicts to influence the character's behavior.

Addictiveness Rating: -3 penalty to Spirit rolls to avoid becoming addicted for each dose taken within a 24 hour period. (Major Habit)

Cost per dose: 200 credits

WAR BRINGER

Nicknames: Gladiator's Milk

Duration: 1d4 Hours

Method of Ingestion: Drinking

Effect: War Bringer is a liquid steroid commonly used by professional gladiators, and other people who specialize in hand to hand combat. War Bringer is a variant of Synth, but instead of Notice rolls, the drug boosts the user's Fighting rolls by a single die type per dose.

Side effects: Once Warbringer wears off, the user gains a single level of fatigue for every dose injected due to severe dehydration, with the relevant penalties.

Addictiveness Rating: -3 penalty to Spirit rolls to avoid becoming addicted for each dose taken within a 24hour period. (Major Habit)

Cost per dose: 300 credits

MECHS AND POWER ARMOR

AGA MINOTAUR

Designed for shock troops, this armor gives the nation the edge over regular infantry. The favorite tactic is to jump into the middle of a platoon and wreak havoc with melee weapons.

Weapons:

- 20 mm Gyroc Pistol (Range 12/24/48; Damage 3d6; RoF 1; Shots 10; HW, SBT, min. arming distance 6")
- Ceramic Axe (Str+d12, AP 2)
- Retractable Monofilament Whip (AGI+d6; AP 6, HW, Reach 3, d12 extra damage on a raise)

AGA RANGER RIOT ARMOR

When the Rangers waded into a riot, they go in armed (and armored) to disperse the crowds by any means necessary. To aid in this goal, the riot armor has lethal and nonlethal weapons.

Weapons:

- Furious Assault Rifle (Range 24/48/96; Damage 2d8+2; RoF 4; Shots 50, AP 2, Auto, requires suit's power)
- Shoulder Mounted Heat Ray (Range Cone; Nonlethal; RoF 1; Shots -, AP 2, requires suit's power)
- Stun Baton (Str+d8; Nonlethal, +1 Parry, requires suit's power)
- Shield (+2 Parry, +2 Armor vs. ranged attacks)

AGA RIDGE RUNNER

Given the varied terrain in Texas, the need for power armor that can take the high ground and relay reports back to supporting units is crucial. This armor lets the pilot make long range attacks and reposition quickly.

Weapons:

- Shoulder Mounted 20MW Pulse Laser (Range 75/150/300; Damage 2d10; RoF 1; Shots -, AP 5, HW)
- Vindicator Rail Cannon (Range 50/100/200; Damage 3d8; RoF 1, Shorts 20, HW)

RAVENLOCKE COYOTE

Not just thematically designed for Texas, this armor is crafted to patrol the streets of the urban jungle, as well as the abandoned towns where stealth is a necessity.

Weapons:

- Shoulder Mounted Missile Pod (Range 100/200/400; Damage 5d6; RoF 1-4; Shots 8; AP 15, HW)
- Sentinel HMG (Range 50/100/200; Damage 2d10; RoF 3; Shots 200, AP 4)
- 20mm Gyroc Pistol (Range 12/24/48; Damage 3d6; RoF 1; Shots 10; HW, SBT, min. arming distance 6")

AGA MYRMIDON

Nothing short of terror can describe the Myrmidon's presence on the battlefield. This suit is the juggernaut of the Republic's power armor corps and brings an onslaught of death to the nation's enemies.

Weapons:

- 2x Shoulder Mounted Grenade Launcher (Range 24/48/96; Damage 4d6 (or by grenade), RoF 3; Shots 20; HW, LBT)
- Annihilator Shotgun (Range 12/24/48; Damage 1-3d8; RoF 3; Shots 12; Auto)

POWERED ARMOR	ARMOR	PACE	RUNNING DIE	FIREWALL	WEIGHT	COST
AGA Minotaur Notes: Jump Pack, Strength Enhancement Weapons: 20mm Gyroc Pistol, Ceramic Axe, Monofilament Whip	+10	8	--	8	100	Military
AGA Ranger Riot Armor Notes: Battery Pack, Self Sealing, Targeting System Weapons: Furious Assault Rifle, Heat Ray, Shield, Stun Baton	+10	8	--	8	100	Military
AGA Ridge Runner Notes: Jump Pack, Signal Booster Weapons: Shoulder Mounted 20MW Pulse Laser, Vindicator Rail Cannon	+8	10	d10	8	100	Military
Ravenlocke Coyote Notes: Stealth System, Targeting System Weapons: Shoulder Mounted Missile Pod, 20mm Gyroc Pistol, Sentinel HMG	+8	8	--	8	100	Military
AGA Myrmidon Notes: Battery Pack, Pace, Sensor Suite, Signal Booster, Targeting System Weapons: 2x Shoulder Mounted Grenade Launcher, Shotgun	+14	10	d10	8	300	Military

MEDICAL EQUIPMENT

There's only two pieces of gear to really write home about, and they both come from AetherScope.

NANETIC MONITOR

AetherScope's nanetic monitor is a series of nanites that interface with your TAP to let you know your medical state at all times. This might not seem useful, but it provides a +2 to Healing rolls to anyone you allow to access your TAP. The monitor comes with an emergency protocol that gives first responders this data.

NANETIC RESEQUENCERS

Feeling a bit fried from being out in the wastelands for too long, heavy radiation exposure, or an attack from a toxic roach? AetherScope has just the thing to help fix you up. The nanites will resequence your DNA, repairing any damage caused (Healing d6) and providing a +4 to heal naturally if in the body before exposure to the damage source. The nanites last for up to 5 years.

NAME	COST	WEIGHT
Nanetic Monitor	5,000	-
Nanetic Resequencers	20,000	-

VEHICLES

Not a lot of unique transports available in Texas, but what we got is enough to stand out as quintessentially Texan, amigo.

WASTELAND TRADERS RAIDER SPECIAL

Light, fast, and perfect for getting in and out of hot zones, the Raider Special is ideal for putting ground between you and your foes. It has a few drawbacks, though. The Raider Special leaves the crew mostly exposed and looks like the inner frame of another vehicle. The roll cage provides protection for the driver and 3 passengers, as the remaining passenger operating the vehicle's weapon is standing partially above the cage.

Notes: Roll Cage

Weapons:

- Left and right side mounts, provide +1 to stability.
- Heavy 360 Pintle Mounted Bessy MG (Range 50/100/200; Damage 2d10; RoF 3; Shots 200; AP 4, HW)

FORD ROCKHOPPER

The Ford Rockhopper is an all-purpose off-road vehicle, but its specialty is transporting goods over rugged terrain where roads fail to go. Its lighter armor than some other transports is what gives it its higher top speed than other similar vehicles.

Notes: Solid Core Tires: +2 Toughness against called shots to tires.

Weapons:

- Turreted LAC-15 (Range 50/100/200; Damage 2d10+1; RoF 4; Shots 120; AP 5, Auto, HW)

URBAN PUNK DESPERADO

Need a good ride that can get you and part of your crew out of the area? Look no further than the Desperado, a bike specifically built for the urban combat zone. Whether you want to ride in style or get where you're going without having to fight traffic, this bike is designed for you. Like any of our gear, it comes customized with you gang's colors and insignia.

WATERCRAFT

RAVENLOCKE CORSAIR

The Corsair is one of the most fearsome watercraft available to the public and it's become a favorite of pirates the world over for its size, speed, and firepower. Get in, get out, and scuttle what can't be salvaged with the Corsair. Hell, run a few blockades while you at it, you'll stand a fair chance of making it.

Weapons:

- 2x Pintle Mount "Bessy".50 HMG (Range 50/100/200; Damage 2d10; RoF 3; Shots 100, AP 4, HW)
- Bow mounted Liberator Mini Gun (Range 24/48/96; Damage 2d8; RoF 6; Shots 1,000; AP3, Auto, HW)

WASTELAND TRADERS TRI-REME

It wouldn't be a Wasteland Traders product if it didn't have that low-tech feel, omae. And that's exactly what you'll get with the WT Tri-reme. Bring back the glory days of fighting on the open water with a ram designed to sink your enemies while taking as little damage as you can in the process. Triremes are a bit slow, but with the wasted areas of the seas where you need one of these vessels, it's all the speed you need.

Weapons:

- Ram: (AP 4, Halves damage sustained while ramming)
- Fixed Liberator Mini Gun (Range 24/48/96; Damage 2d8; RoF 6; Shots 1,000; AP 3, Auto, HW)

CARS	ACC/TS	TOUGH	COST	CREW	NOTES
WT Raider Special	20/80	4	20,000	1+4	Roll Cage, Weapon System
Ford Rockhopper	20/60	10/12 (2)	10,000	1+3	20 cu ft. storage, 4WD, Weapon System
MOTORCYCLES					
UP Desperado	35/72	6(2)	6,000	1+1	
WATERCRAFT					
Ravenlocke Corsair	10/40	15 (5)	500,000	3+50	Weapon System
WT Tri-reme	5/20	12 (4)	25,000	1+4	Ram, Weapon System

GAZETEER

REGIONS OF TEXAS

Trying to understand the big picture that's the Republic of Texas? You need to first learn how each region works. That's because Texas is big and has seven distinct areas based on geography and climate. It not only affects how Texans see the world, but also how they see their nation and why the Republic functions the way it does. For outsiders, these appear as differences without distinctions.

There are no districts, state lines, or the like in the Republic of Texas. Outside of whatever jurisdictions that impact a Texan's daily life, the regions are the only real demarcations that are used to distinguish one type of Texan from another. Otherwise, it's the sprawls that everyone is identified by. There's more uniformity between sprawls in a region than differences, so while the denizens of the North-Texas Megasprawl might understand the difference between their side of the sprawl from the other or even Denison, they're not so keen on what's the difference between Amarillo and Lubbock. Like the numbered FM streets, it all makes sense if you live here but it doesn't mean you know your own home, omae.

So, what follows is a breakdown of how Texans live in these regions and their views on some of what I've already touched on.

PANHANDLE PLAINS

You want to know what life is like in the Texas Panhandle, omae? It ain't as dull and dry as it used to be. Life in the sprawls is just as dodgy here as it is anywhere else. 'Course, that's not all there is out here. We're wedged between the NAC to the north and east and the Badlands to the west. There's plenty of prairies, but don't look for any tiny houses.

When you leave the safety of the sprawls, you're in for a cultural shock. It's not the kind you might think like all those HR flicks keeps selling you, nor is it anything like the VR some asshats set up as a sort of sick joke. The Panhandle is drowning in farms. These are high tech facilities, not some Podunk operations where an overall-wearing geezer walks around with a pitchfork. The Republic has too many mouths to feed for that shit.

Let's get down to what you will find: security and tons of it. Some AgroCorps look more like prison camps than farms. That's because a lot of what you get out here is environmentally controlled on all levels. Some produce is so fragile that you'd think a mosquito taking a piss would kill the whole operation. Then again, they just might.

The climate here is so much milder than the rest of the state that it requires less energy to keep the facilities at the desired levels. Some crops can grow in a matter of days, according to some reports. If that's the case, it gives a whole new meaning to watching grass grow. It might be exciting for a change.

Another neat feature of modern farming is that most of it is vertical. This requires less water, less soil, and a lot less land, which makes the Panhandle look like a weird graveyard in some

places. Just replace the ghouls with some nasty looking hybrid dogs and more firepower. Thing is, we might not do it as well as other nations that have even less land, but rumor has it we're far better at it than the NAC. They're not the breadbasket they used to be, and that's gotta hurt.

The security here is no joke. When you consider how much the NAC would really like to just roll on in and force us to bow to their will, it makes more sense why the farms feel more like top secret compounds. It also explains why the RoT flies patrols along with the corpsuckers. Most of 'em are unmarked, too.

#Coyote_riendo: Sounds more like a prison than a free country to me, vato.

#Billy_Black_Eyes: Maybe it is, but who's got the keys to the locks, omae?

#JadeHelmSurvivor: Nah, you're both wrong, it's a beachhead for a free democracy.

#Coyote_riendo: Ese, you drank the wrong shit. Neither side's a democracy in this farce.

#JadeHelmSurvivor: It's shit like this why we've never given you bastard back the wooden leg.

#God_H8s_Vats: And this is why we're going to take back our country.

LAY OF THE LAND

There are three megaplexes in the Panhandle: Lubbock, Amarillo, and Wichita Falls. When you consider all the rest of the real estate, which makes for a lot of open territory, just no dogies to git along. The majority of the corps here are in the ag tech sector. This means there's lots of nano- and bioengineering, especially in Lubbock and Amarillo. I'll get to Wichita Falls in a bit. Lubbock and Amarillo have a not-so-friendly rivalry going on, but it's more like a dysfunctional family since the ag corps here pretty much close ranks when ag corps from the Big Bend try to muscle in on their territory.

There's been speculation that there's some sort of association all the corp heads belong to that discusses their strategies to stay on top. No one knows where they meet being split between the two sprawls, but nobody's been able to track their movements and lived to tell the tale. Or, so the rumor goes. The same goes of hacking into a virtual meeting. That just leaves plenty of speculation that there's a black network the ag corps use.

As I said, outside of the food production, Lubbock and Amarillo are both swimming in nano- and bioengineering corps. These companies produce anything from medical supplies to high-grade construction equipment, most of which is used to support the ag corps. The nano firms build a lot of specialized gear needed for the vertical farms and the medical sector, and usually send it off to the bioengineers, the farms or the military. What's left over is often bought up by one corpsucker or another.

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There's been a fixer or two who've been able to get their hands on some primo shit, amigo, so don't think it's all going to the elite.

In fact, some of the gear the nano firms churn out, as often as not, end up in the hands of cops and security firms all over the place. I hear their goods are pretty popular in the Free Cities. It's hard to say what those people are planning to do with what's essentially military grade hardware masquerading as farm and hospital equipment, but then again, nobody knows what to think about the Badlands, even the politicians. Only thing for sure, it's best to have them as allies than not, even if that means giving them the tools to harvest/heal their own people.

If you're looking to live on the bleeding edge, and I do mean bleeding, then Wichita Falls is the place to be. It's as close to a police state as any place in Texas has come. The plex is on the edge for some pretty damn good reasons, chief among them is the NAC. See, there's nothing really near the Panhandle in regards to NAC settlements other than Oklahoma City, but that doesn't mean there aren't any military bases close by. Trust me, this has a lot of people spooked, which is why the Republic has security forces everywhere. You can't throw a rock without hitting one. You'd think it was a border town.

In addition to a lot of troops, there's a sizeable Ranger presence in Wichita Falls. The gangs here aren't any more violent than they are in, say, the North-Texas Megasprawl, but where there's a lot of security and fear, there's a shit ton of money to be made. And believe you me, hombre, everyone wants a slice of that pie. That's why there's a lot of security firms in the Falls along with a vast support network for third-party contractors there to make sure the military and the cops have all the gear they can drown in. It's only a matter of time before the hammer drops.

AMARILLO

If any 'burg can be said to be the big dog in the Panhandle, it's Amarillo and everyone knows it. It isn't just its size, 'cause it's almost the same damn population size as Lubbock and just a shade under the Falls sprawl. Amarillo's king for one reason only: it's in the middle of all that primo farmscape that is the heart of the Panhandle Plains. And it's also the home of GRASS, the kind you need for cloned beef. See, nobody took kindly to the purple slime we used to grow the cloned beef in. It looked pretty unappetizing. GRASS also makes the cloning take less time, which means more food can be churned out sooner. You can be sure that the NAC wants this for their starving masses. Even in the Republic, there's a chokehold on GRASS: Biofeed Industries is the only manufacturer of the stuff.

Outside the megaplexes the plains are dotted with cloning facilities. Most are for cloned beef. Rumors abound that some of these places make people. I wouldn't put much stock in that as our simulacra are needed for the front lines, so they need to be as close to our military installations as possible, making the better choices to be in other regions, like Big Bend, and next door to Ft. Hood.

GRASS is a big deal. Without it, RoT can't produce such large quantities of cloned beef. Amarillo ships the stuff all over the nation. What this means for you, ami, is that if you go poking your nose where it's not wanted, it's definitely going to get bloodied. The security is tight and if you could steal a batch of the shit, what would you do with it? You can sure as hell bet that Biofeed and the megacorp ranch that paid for it will hunt you down.

AgroCorps vie for market share and DNA sequences. It's no secret, and they are always looking for ways to increase their databases and add to their sequencing techniques in order to get the best meat out of their latest batches as possible. Makes it a bit interesting watching some of the black markets in the area where some of the companies try to find stolen samples for reverse engineering. Chances are pretty good that what you'll find is either unusable or so well known that the corps walk away empty handed.

#WonderFallsGuy: Amarillo's a cake walk. Ya'll need to go somewhere real, like the Falls.

#MeisterBurger_Thyme: You're seriously talking out your ass, WFG.

#WonderFallsGuy: You'd like to think so, but other than rustling there's just eating GRASS with the brass. Here, we got lead to go with that brass.

THE LOTUS

The Lotus is someone's idea of a sick joke to go along with the Brahmin nickname for cloned beef. The Lotus has two meanings and it's something a local can help you figure out. The biotech beef cloning business core is what most outsiders know of as the Lotus. It's where you'll find offices for every major producer in the nation along with Biofeed's headquarters and that of the industry's association. But there's also another place in Amarillo that few people will ever see and the cloning industry, both loathes and secretly supports: the black market for trafficked meat samples that can be reverse engineered where each corp hopes it can snag a sample that will give it the best beef out there.

#MeisterBurger_Thyme: Yeah, we'll leave that shit for assholes like WFG to come and find out how "safe" it is around here.

HELICAL WAY

Helical Way is dominated by one company: AetherScope. There are others with research campuses that are clustered in the area, but everything about the layout of the streets and the terminology plastered over everything bear the markings of AetherScope's alchemical lingo. Helical Way is where many experiments in bioforms are performed at the behest of both government and corporations for both security purposes and personal gain. Helical Way also contains several hybrid facilities where conversions are readably available, but they're ostensibly under strict guidelines.

#God_H8s_Vats: Yeah, no. Just no. This is why we need to take back our country from the heathens.

#TexasUberAlles: Fuck you, NACkie.

#God_H8s_Vats: Aww, someone got sand in their ass jelly?

#MeisterBurger_Thyme: TUA, let the prick think what he wants. Maybe we can make him walk the spiral path.

LUBBOCK

Lubbock looks a bit like Amarillo's twin in that they're both AgCorp and nanotech heavy. They are surrounded by cloning ranches and vertical farms, and all the trappings that go with them. Lubbock, however, is further away from the border with the NAC and doesn't have the burden of GRASS. That said, the city's just as close to the Badlands as its twin. Want to have trade goods or

BIG BEND

The region is in direct competition with the Panhandle in regards to cloned beef. In fact, the range wars between ranchers is just as important as the ones between the two regions. You could use an off-hand quip and chalk it up to business as usual, but that would cheapen just how intense the relationship between a regions beef is with its image. People also enjoy having a steady paycheck, so take that for what it's worth. Like any Panhandle corp, hacking attempts and break-ins are pretty much par for the course here. This includes the range wars between regional and transregional ranchers. They look like any other hostile corporate takeover action: a combination of corporate espionage and rustling that involves stealing raw beef and DNA sequences stored on corporate servers that look more military than civilian.

Life in the Big Bend is less intense than the Panhandle, but that don't make it any easier. See, for one, we've got the Badlands to the north and west and Mexico to the south. It's like a wedge of civilization cutting through a rock and a hard place, and at its point is El Paso. If you want to live out your life in relative safety, then you best stick with the Midland-Odessa sprawl. It's closer to the Panhandle, but it's in no danger of being overrun by the Mexicans.

Other than the borders, ranching, and three cities, the big feature that catches most people's attention is the amount of open space in the Bend. There weren't a lot of people here to begin with, and if it weren't for the Brahmin and the need to process all of that meat, the place wouldn't have the numbers it does. Big Bend country has always been known for its small towns, but most of those dried up when the cattle made their grand exit from the world. That's probably one of the most interesting features of the region given that other than the southern plains, it's the only one that's like that.

The climate is a bit warmer than the Panhandle, but at least it isn't as bad as the Badlands or have the thick tropical humidity that you'd get living on the coast. There aren't nearly as many vertical farms and cloning ranches as there is in the Panhandle, but it's proportionate. The Big Bend isn't really known as the nation's breadbasket. Rather, it's the processing heart of the nation's beef supply. But, what most people think of when it comes to the Bend is the smuggling.

Smuggling comes mostly from two directions: the Badlands and the South Texas Plains. A lot of the smuggling benefits the militias that fill in the holes in the RoT's military forces. Some say it's a blessing, others a curse. I tend to think it's a bit of both and a necessary evil. Usually what's filtered up through the south and makes it this far are goods that people desperately need. Unless you're buying from a fence or working to traffic the goods, then I advise you stay away from that bit of business. I've seen a sure bet deal go south and it ain't pretty. When smiles and salutations give way to a hail of gunfire, you'll see how dodgy things can get.

The ongoing problems with Mexico and unchecked crime in the South have made things tenuous at best. Sure, we got plenty of people to draft into the military, but that goes against the whole spirit of independence. So, we got a few well hidden and guarded bioroid plants to churn out trained soldiers ready to patrol the borders, if need be. There are a few bugs that still need to be

worked out, though. We learned that lesson during the Second Civil War and have been retooling things as we go. It's why we rely more on simulacra rather than bioroids these days. That's okay, though. AetherScope's been making headway in that area from what I've seen of the newer models that've been dropped on the front lines.

The Badlands are pretty much a double edged sword. Free Cities are trading partners, but it's not clear how loyal they are to anything but money. Not to say Texans don't care about money, but most of us are committed to the ideal that is Texas. Then there's whatever is going on in Phoenix. Texans don't scare easily, but the city's silence is not something those in the Bend take lightly. Anything that can cause a whole sprawl to go dark is bad. Anything that can cause such an event to occur so close to us, not cool, compadres.

#Boomstick_Bob: This place'd be boring as shit if it weren't for the Badlands and Mexico.

#1337_Freet_Pete: You're kidding, right? What about the windfarms?

#Boomstick_Bob: What about them?

#1337_Freet_Pete: I've heard tales of people disappearing around them. An old man and weird afterlife experiences.

#Boomstick_Bob: Urban legends to scare the kiddies, that's all.

#JadeHelmSurvivor: Don't go there, omae. I know some people that went missing for days. They didn't come back right in the head. Some scary Voodoo shit.

#MeisterBurger_Thyme: I heard it was Native American stuff.

#JadeHelmSurvivor: Whatever it is, it's weird.

#Billy_Black_Eyes: Sounds like something's going on.

LAY OF THE LAND

The Big Bend is smaller than the Pandhandle and less populated as a result, but this region was always relatively empty compared to the rest of the nation, even before the rise of the megasprawls. It was used mainly for ranching and farming the way the Panhandle has been. The ground here is generally flat with a few rolling hills, which made it ideal for raising beef. It sort of necessitated all that empty land staying empty. These days, though, it has given rise to a new set of troubles all of its own.

All that empty land meant that in the early part of this century ranchers and farmers started cashing in on another farming commodity: wind. So, we've got the empty space for the region's share of folks who prefer to go it alone to go ahead and give it a try. The modern fusion generators made that project seem quaint given their massive output. Over the years, however, there are plenty of groups who've made use of the old wind farms to remain off the grid. That doesn't mean they've been successful.

The nation needed some military bases in a hurry after we parted ways with the old government. Fort Stockton served in a pinch even though it hadn't been used that way for nearly two hundred years. Given that and the new jobs in the Midland-Odessa plex, the move was a good thing for the residents. They called it the "Big Move," but a lot of people had left long before the government decided to take the town over. Ft. Stockton

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pretty much serves as a centralized command center of sorts. The brass at the installation oversee most of the operations along the Rio Grande from Del Rio to El Paso, including troop rotations and backup for when things go horribly wrong, which everyone believes is just a matter of time.

One of the chief “exports” from the region is exporting. Most of this is the beef from the Midland-Odessa Sprawl Complex, but there’s a healthy amount of goods from the Badlands and smuggling from points south that manage to make it into the nation. The region’s got little else to offer given that it’s pretty dry compared to the rest of Texas. It’s the high plains that really sets the region apart. The only other commodity would be the ongoing border war with Mexico. All them golemmechs along the riverbanks makes it difficult for them to get a word in edgewise. Vegas might be a viper’s nest, but at least they don’t want us dead.

There are three cities in the Bend that are worth noting, amigo: El Paso, Del Rio, and The Midland-Odessa Sprawl Complex. Other than Fort Stockton, there really isn’t a significant population center in the region beyond these four points of interest. The three cities form the triangle that anchors the region firmly as Texan soil and they’ve done a damn good job of it so far, omae. The few incursions that Mexico has made over the river have all been short lived. They may have the numbers, but we got the guns, amigo.

EL PASO

El Paso’s a touchy place these days and for some pretty good reasons. You try living in a city that’s wedged between one enemy to the south and the wastelands to the north. Pinched in between that is El Paso. You can consider it the gateway to our “West”, if you like. Some people like to call it that, but it’s more like a gateway to hell and hell lite. To live in this town, you gotta be tough, and I don’t mean dealing with normal sprawl life bullshit, I mean being hemmed in by armies that like to shoot at each other.

This is a mean ass city, omae. Don’t let anyone fool you. It might look calm on the surface, but that’s only because someone’s about to be shot. More like a whole lotta someones, but hey, why finagle the numbers if you don’t have to? There’s a lot to do here for any street samurai who’s looking for a cut of the deal. You’d be surprised how much trafficking happens in the middle of a soft war. Given some of the relations we have with cities in the Badlands, there’s a great deal at stake that you best be sure the Mexicans would love to see go away. It’d put a bit of a hurt on our western flank and that’s trouble we don’t need with things being as thin as they are.

Old El Paso’s a thing of the past, just like the Old West that never really was Texan. The spirit of the old southwest is there in ragged scraps, but it’s mostly in HR now. What did you expect adobe housing? You’d have to be a real pinche to think that. This is a city of steel, glass, and concrete, cabron. You don’t hold on to a spear point of land using sticks and stones, only the keenest edge will do. However, your image might be right on one account: there are a lot of people who treat the sprawl—or sections thereof—as their own private fiefs. There’s really no other way to describe them than as modern interpretations of the bandito. Hell, I’ve heard

#Coyote_riendo: You pinches think your tough but you ain’t shit.

#TexasUberAlles: Looks like someone’s pissed he can’t have a wooden leg up his ass.

#Coyote_riendo: Chinga tu madre.

#TexasUberAlles: Go eat a cactus.



tales and seen the footage to back up the story of one ganger who has gone so far as to wear the sombrero and bandoleers. Some criminals really have no class.

El Paso's got an assload of problems, ami, but don't let that fool you into thinking there's no power structure here. Some of it came from the population the sprawl absorbed from Ft. Stockton. They were the hard cases that had to be forcefully moved off their land and have the stack of bills pressed into their fists. Needless to say, they didn't fit in all that well with the bad seeds that were already here. The city's parceled out to various private agencies and local cops, but the real power here is the military. They're keeping the sprawl's government propped up. In order to lessen crime enough to give the civilian authorities a chance to control the problems happening further from the river's edge, they carved out a space near the sprawl's western edge.

#El_Lobo_Malvado: You go too far, ese. You insult my heritage.

#SmuggleMe_This: We should meet up in the Square, compadre. We'll see how much insultin' we'll get done. You'll be the guest of honor.

#Nick_NAC_Jack: And you wonder why we see you as heathens?

#TexasUberAlles: Bite me, NACKie.

GATEWAY SQUARE

While El Paso has some hot spots in more ways than one, Gateway Square is perhaps the hottest. More interesting things happen here than anywhere else in the city. You'd think this would make the cops and soldiers lock it down like a supermax prison, but you'd be wrong. See, amigo, if you did something stupid like that the crime in the rest of the town would increase and make El Paso vulnerable to all sorts of calamities. Not the sort of thing you'd want to do in these parts. If you come to El Paso, you should know that Gateway Square wasn't planned. It was a necessity that forced the local authorities and the military to spend resources building.

Gateway Square is a lazier-faire bazaar filled with everything you might want or need at some point. Mexican and Texan troops are often seen here under the guise of being off duty, but everyone knows what's really going on. The city government, backed by the military, declared that it would serve as neutral ground and everyone who's anyone in El Paso has a vested interest at stake that the place remains open. Pull a gun here and you'll get a face full of barrels in every direction you turn. It's probably one of the few times you'll see battlefield opponents on the same side.

DEL RIO

Del Rio is probably the closest thing you'll find to a frontier town in Texas these days—albeit with a high-tech twist. It's a border station to be sure, but the problems with Mexico seem to have left the place relatively unscathed. That leaves people a might suspicious and for good reason given our nations' respective histories. Del Rio's biggest problem is with the trouble that brews up from the southern part of Texas. Mostly smuggling, but also a lot of strange shit from someone's secret project they'd best have preferred stay out of the public eye.

This city is too small to be rightly called a sprawl, but it's nothing to sneeze at. Del Rio's a control point for traffic coming through the South Texas Plains via Hill Country. Both of those together should give any Texan worth their salt pause. The result is that the city's

inverted in terms of how most pre-sprawl towns evolved. Rather than the affluent fleeing from the city's center where urban decay has taken hold, they've moved inward and turned it into a fortress of sorts while the poor occupy the outskirts where any number of atrocious fates awaits them.

The urban core of Del Rio is home to all of the amenities you'd find in places like the North Texas Megaplex, but its isolation makes it seem out of place. For the modern sprawler, it really does feel like the outskirts of town are the end of civilization and the beginning of a true wilderness. And, with the bioroid horrors that roam the area it's little wonder that nobody wants to live on the edge of town here. It's sort of like a prison in reverse where you want to be an inmate.

HUNTING GROUNDS

Some interesting sports have arisen in the aftermath of the Second Civil War and the Hunting Grounds are no exception. This gruesome underground sport can only be described as the brain child of a sadist or the idly affluent. While some of the game these hunters seek are legitimate animals—engineered or otherwise—that doesn't mean there aren't other options on the menu. The Hunting Grounds is the term given to anything that's not inside the urban core, to include the surrounding open plains. The hunters have a strange notion of fair sport, so they at least let the intended target (if not an animal) know that it's the object of the hunt. Most of the targets are vat-grown or hybrid, but regular humans are killed as well. This gives fuel to the view that the people behind the hunts are 2.0s who feel above the rest of the masses. These are some twisted hombres. I'd give them a wide berth if I were you, muchacho.

#Nick_NAC_Jack: The fuck is this shit?! You hunt your own people?

#El_Lobo_Malvado: And they say we're bad.

#Boomstick_Bob: Not as bad as your pharmaralies.

#Billy_Black_Eyes: I'm sure it's a small group responsible for this.

#Nick_NAC_Jack: How can you be sure with all the lies about the NAC that spew from this hell mouth of a nation?

#Billy_Black_Eyes: Because no culture can be that thoroughly evil, omae.

MIDLAND-ODESSA SPRAWL COMPLEX

The Midland-Odessa sprawl absorbed a lot of Big Bend's population when the world seemed to collapse. The promise of jobs and security lured many here. In addition to meat and food processing, it's the default central hub of life in the area. The MOSC or M-O is filled with promises of safety and shelter, but a lot of those are illusions of the average sprawler's imagination. This isn't to say that MOSC isn't home to some great opportunities for the crowd looking for a boring life. Rather, there's fewer opportunities than anyone lets on. The MOSC is a meat grinder waiting for its next meal.

The sprawl is built around transportation since there was little else left for it after GLUTTON's run. The area was once referred to as the Petroplex because of the oil that used to be in the region along with all of the oil corps that were here as well. When that went away, the only things left were ranching and transportation, and well, that story's getting a bit long in the tooth now. So, MOSC has some ranching that takes place around it, but it's really more

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of a logistical hub for the nation. MOSC has several megacorps that specialize in moving and tracking goods from one place to another, so they have plenty of work here for people to do. There's also Grub Rustlers to factor in here. So, when energy made its exit, ranching, meat packing, and transportation took over as the major industries. And, well, there's always cargo to be moved and when it's en route, it's vulnerable. Guess what that means, omae. Wanna ride shotgun on a caravan bringing meat to the military or the masses? MOSC is the happening place to be.

#WonderFallsGuy: Wow, still sounds like a boring ass podunk down.

#1337_Freet_Pete: Clearly, you've never made a run there. It's also got a lot of those old, abandoned wind farms nearby.

#WonderFallsGuy: You're seriously buying into that shit? You're dumber than I thought.

#1337_Freet_Pete: No, but dying by inches is bad for business.

JUNCTION POINT

Junction Point is the massive land-based shipping arm of the MOSC's transportation network. A lot of the cargo moved through this area is sent to places all over the nation. It's still cheaper to move goods by ground than air, so there're plenty of opportunists out there looking to knock over a truck or three. Junction Point is the name given to the numerous distribution centers that have clustered together to take advantage of the ease of access to the highway and rail lines that gird the nation.

TARMAC CITY

The old Midland-Odessa airport wasn't large enough to handle the needs of the nation even before the Death made self-reliance important. Tarmac City replaced the old airport as a result. Technically it's still called Midland International, but the dam thing is so large and has near constant air traffic that it's just called Tarmac City now. It's reported often enough that some people spend most of their time there that it functions like a city within the middle of the MOSC. Pretty crazy, amigo, but likely true. The security here is pretty good, so that might be one of the reasons that some workers have made the place their de facto home.

#1337_Freet_Pete: Been here a few times for deliveries and this is pretty accurate.

#TexasUberAlles: So, why are people living there?

#1337_Freet_Pete: Why else, money and first dibs on primo good, amigo.

FORT STOCKTON

There isn't much to say about this place mainly because nobody is allowed on it. The old fort was of no use to a modern military, but the location made it ideal for the needs of the Republic. When you factor in that most people had already left the area, there wasn't a lot of reason not to remilitarize the place. It just made a lot of sense.

Ft. Stockton is considered high security in part because of the state of undeclared war that exists between the Republic and Mexico. But the truth of it is that there's a lot of sensitive information stored here because of the coordinated efforts along the border. There are also some new golemmechs and vehicles

that are apparently being field tested here, but not much is known about them either.

The base is a combined arms installation in that both air force and army units are permanently stationed here. The joint status of the base is nothing unusual as most of our military bases are joint operations. The high degree of interaction between the troops, however is another story. Some ex-soldiers claim this is a result of the shared resources that the two branches use while others believe it has something to do with the overlap in technical services they both use. There's also claims of heavy cross-training that goes on here as well.

#Gropo4Lyfe: Bullshit! They're killing us and nobody's doing a goddamn thing about it.

#TexasUberAlles: The fuck you going on about?

#Billy_Black_Eyes: I think he's referring to the rumor that Texas is killing its own cyborgs and simulacra.

#Gropo4Lyfe: Damn straight, and it's no rumor. I've seen it myself.

HILL COUNTRY

The geographical heart of the nation is also its political and cultural heart. Hill Country is rugged and, like its name implies, filled with hills. There's a bit of ranching that goes on in the area, but it's fairly limited since most of the southern part of the region is forested. It wasn't always this way, but all the asphalt we laid down over a hundred years changed that quite a bit. Hill Country can be pretty rugged and you'd be well advised to watch where you step if you plan on blazing your own trails.

Hill Country is a hard land that can come back and bite you in the ass, omae. And if it's not the land itself, better be on the lookout for scorpions, centipedes, and other venomous critters. Ever seen a Conan film? Well, you should, amigo. For one, you can find them for free, and two, the writer of the original stories lived in Hill Country and based the landscapes on his Texan surroundings. While there are some areas that are a bit sparse, most of it is thick with vegetation and there are plenty of hidden drop-offs carved out by one water way or another.

All this is well and good, but what does that have to do with living in this region of Texas? Well, for one, there aren't a lot of options beyond the Austin-Antonio Sprawl. It's pretty much the only place anyone thinks of when it comes to living here. There isn't a lot to see outside of the sprawl that doesn't involve a lot of things others would rather you didn't see. You don't really want to know what that might entail, mainly because people start dying from the curiosity.

Some of the military armament and equipment testing facilities are hidden in Hill Country. This is as much to keep prying eyes off what's going on as it is for safety reasons. Okay, so the megacorps might be soulless bastards in suits, but that doesn't mean they aren't interested in preventing mass casualties from one of their tests. It's bad for their public image, which hurts their bottom lines, not to mention political pressure.

In the days before the sprawl, there were several housing developments near lakes and rivers that attracted vacationers, but there's not a lot of reason to live outside of the sprawl given the dangers that well up from the south. In fact, that's one of the daily miseries people face if they chance it and choose to reside outside

THE SOUND AND THE FUROR

As to the music side of things, there's a lot of to talk about all on its own. Music has always inspired. Good music has always pissed off the ones who don't get the message. Austin has long been the home of a vibrant music community. But it has its share of demons; some familiar, some downright acts of war. The drug and booze filled flash-in-the-pan route is old hat, but the masses are always in the mood for stories of fallen heroes. So, when you look at how music has been used by artists and the industry to further some end (usually filling someone's coffers), it shouldn't be a surprise that it's still as political as ever in the Republic.

The best example of this is Synth. Originally it was a genre defined by the simulacra and bioroids who used it as a way to express their feelings. That lasted as long as the NAC's intrusion on the scene. See, Synth actually gained quite a following after the dust from the Second Civil War settled. That lasted until the drug associated with the genre was introduced in Austin followed by music flooding in from the NAC.

#Gropo4Lyfe: Hell yeah. Now you're talking about what makes Texas great. Best damn music there is. Rock the Synth!

#God_H8s_Vats: Proof you're all devil spawn and need to be exterminated.

#Gropo4Lyfe: No accounting for taste. Which is why the NAC sucks harder than vacuum.

RANGER STATION

The building complex used by the Rangers goes by the Station moniker because of the urban jungle that is the new world we inhabit, amigo. Too bad most of the wildlife is human, though. The rangers are supposed to be the federal level cops that patrol the nation via mid- to high-level investigations and deal with the criminal element too violent or too widespread for local authorities to handle. Problem is there's too many problems and not enough of "solutions."

They've always gone by the "One Riot, One Ranger" motto, but sometimes one isn't enough. After the Death, we had to take over a lot of services and duties the FBI used to handle. Thankfully, we absorbed the majority of their staff the same way we got out military. That ensured we didn't have to start over, but it also didn't prepare us for such a massive influx of people who weren't versed in our way of doing things. Needless to say, we had a rough patch there, but we survived and are all the better for it. There are more skills in the Rangers now than before.

Outside of the duties of protection of government officials, Rangers don't get involved much with the day-to-day law enforcement of the Megaplex, other than national cases. The main bulk of their work is handling things on an up close and personal level while getting local agencies to work together and assist the Rangers across jurisdictional bounds. The motto is a bit misleading for people who think they don't have any backup. One Ranger doesn't mean one cop without support.

THE LINE IN THE DIGITAL SAND

If there's any area where government and megacorps can be seen working in tandem, it's with the firewall closer to the Antonio side of the sprawl. See, there are a few rogue AIs running about in the sprawl that are up to no good. Somehow, they're directing legions

of gangers. If it wasn't bad enough that they existed, imagine the havoc they create using disorganized crime. The firewall stretches across the Megaplex from east to west and has several names: the Great Firewall, the Digital Divide, Great Wall of Kyle, and C#eckpoint C#harlie. Whatever you call it, it's one of the greatest filters ever built in the history of the wired world. My crypter friends tell me the defenses of the firewall are truly impressive. They supposedly rival the black sites hidden in the recessed corners of VR.

#Axiom/Synopsis: That thing's no joke. Some of my friends helped build it. We're always trying to crack it just to plug up any holes. It's shifty as hell.

#RangerOne: Good, keep those damned AI at bay.

#TexasUberAlles: Yup, I wanna keep seeing my sims.

SYMPHONY OF DESTRUCTION?

What good could come from warring AIs in the San Antonio side of the Megaplex? No, really, I'm asking. At times it's a wonder that the Net doesn't come crashing down around us, omae. The glitching has gone down over the years, but it happens sporadically and usually in a single neighborhood. The worst part of it is the inability to tell how much of any Net surge is an attack on a building or if it's a clash between rival AIs. Some think it's both as the two often go together, but it is infrequent enough that there isn't any way to know for sure. I've got info that connects at least five gangs to two of the AIs: 3 Kings Crew, La Loca Eme, the McQuades, Six-Three Mafia, and Crosstown Saints. None of these gangers are vatos you want to mess with.

Yes, multiple AIs. Some hackers who've encountered them know there are at least two. Some claim there are more than that, but this is based on the peculiar feelings they've gotten from their brief encounters with the AIs. The differences are stark and enough to make anyone come away with the sense that there are at least three AI, if not more.

#Nick_NAC_Jack: Well, hell, just hand CHARON the keys while you're at it. AIs running gangs, that's gotta be bullshit.

#Billy_Black_Eyes: I don't know, stranger things have happened, ami.

ANTONIO MARKET

The rampant gang warfare and AI havoc makes for easy work moving contraband into the city from the lawless southern regions of the nation. People call it the Antonio Market, but it's a misnomer likely meant to be intentionally misleading. Unlike the smuggling from western parts that filters in, this isn't about things people need that we can't make here. The Antonio Market is the name given to the illicit trade route that leads through this part of the sprawl and worms its way north. Part of the reason for the route's name is all the money that changes hands along the way. The gangs all have a small slice of the action, but it's limited mainly to a few weapons and a handful of drugs, amigo. The smugglers who funnel things in through San Antonio never let the gangs see just how much and what kinds of contraband they have for several reasons; the possibility of being robbed, and the prying eyes of the Rangers are chief amongst these. The hotter merchandise is distributed through a few trusted fences and stored in remote, out-of-the-way areas of Hill Country where few need or want to go.

#Gropo4Lyfe: This is why we say don't mess with Texas.
#God_H8s_Vats: Whatever, meat puppet. Your military is small enough that we can crush you.
#Gropo4Lyfe: Yeah, I bet you say that when you shit yourself watching our Myrmidons tear your forces a new ass.

ROBOTICS ROW

Need some heavy equipment or even a service drone? Robotics Row is the area of Killeen where you'll find fine, Texan built machinery. Most of the goods here are pre-ordered, so you'll be waiting a long ass time for yours if you want to make sure it comes from the good ol' Lone Star Nation. There's enough that gets skimmed off the top that there's always someone with a new piece ready to sell you.

DENISON

Denison sits on the northern edge of the region, right up against the Red River. The core of this sprawl has always been tight on the border, which makes living here a bitch-and-a-half sometimes with the NAC on the other side. This really colored the attitude of the town when the Death took place with some of the damage done by NAC forces when they tried to smash into our ranks. Now though...

Ever wanted to live in Cold War Berlin? Then Denison is the place for you. Not that it's on the border, per se, but sprawl growth since the treaty has the city creeping ever closer. Nothing quite puts a smile on your face like two militaries staring across national borders waiting to see who blinks first, amigo. It's the jungle and it might not get worse here every day, but it sure in the hell doesn't get better.

Anyone dumb enough to get caught crossing better have a good reason or get shot for their troubles. The bridge is heavily patrolled by both sides and the river's pretty much an unsafe place to be. It's less about why they're crossing than what they might be carrying—again. Suffice it to say, the paranoia's pretty high. If you know how to play the game, you can make a killing. Otherwise, someone else will be doing the killing.

Because of the level of security, you can get anything you can think of, amigo. I know that sounds back asswards, but it's pretty much true with all that stress and fear requiring no end of vices one can satisfy to take the edge off. And, there's plenty of guns and ammo in case shit goes south in a hurry, which it probably will. Good thing most of the army in Denison is on the border, eh, partner?

Okay, so there's a lot of security south of town as well, but Denison's still a free city and people still have a right to exercise their personal liberties. This just makes law enforcement's job a little harder than usual, meaning a bit of private security goes a long way on both sides of the blue line. Both sets of which are always fond of asking "any other reason why you might need to up your personal security?" Uh, yeah, cabrones, plenty if you're carrying all the guns a golemmech can hold. Things got this way because some believe Denison is one of the NAC's staging points for their propagand and drug smuggling operations as the Texas side of the town is unguarded.

#Nick_NAC_Jack: More bullshit propaganda.

#WonderFallsGuy: Tell that to the pile of NACkies I've bagged and stacked like cordwood.
#Nick_NAC_Jack: So, you admit to kidnapping and murdering our innocent civilians?
#WonderFallsGuy: Innocent NACkie is an oxymoron.

LAKE TEXOHOMA

If there's any place where shit is often the worst in Denison, it's gotta be everything butted up against the lake. The Red River's bad enough, but damn if there isn't a story about the bullshit that takes place on the lake or lakefront every day. Most of it is smuggling operations where one military or the other catches some fuckers in the act and then they start trading lead, drawing the attention of the other side, who then try to rescue their "innocent" citizens. It's not that we're in an open war, but hey, that doesn't mean the border doesn't heat up from time to time.

PINEYWOODS

Life in most of the Pineywoods is a bit of a slower pace than the rest of the nation, only by dint of the lack of people who live here. The place still has residents, but many of the towns emptied out when most of the jobs moved to the sprawls. There were only a handful of choices: the Megaplex, the Megasprawl, Texarkana, and Houston. And most of 'em went in one of those four directions.

Pineywoods got harder to live in as bioforms either escaped or were purposefully released into the wild. At this point it doesn't really matter as the damage's already been done. Even if the NAC wanted to invade from this part of our nation, we'd laugh at them. It's not that we want to give them the reason to, but just that the bioforms would be as much of a hassle to their progress as they've been to us. I just might pay good money to see a beatdown like that.

So, yeah, the place is just a bit on the wild side—as much as any place can be said to be truly wild anymore. We like it that way because it provides some great hunting grounds and we've always been into all sorts of outdoors sporting events. If you can't kill a NAC soldier, omae, it's pretty satisfying to take down something nearly as lethal. But camping's not something people want to do for too long around here unless they got a healthy dose of crazy in them. And, well, let's just say that we've got a few hermits that live around these parts as much as they do in the west and south. It's just that going off grid here is pretty much not a good idea unless you're running from the cops, the corps, or a network of powerful gangers.

Lest you go thinking that this region is thick with trees, that's not the case like it used to be. There are a bunch of open spaces in the Pineywoods. It's just not that apparent with the regions name. Here's how it works: the further east you go, the thicker the forests become with the densest being at the borders with the NAC. Let your imagination run with that as it will. I'm sure by now that it's pretty clear just how much interaction we have with the NAC that's, shall we say, hazardous to one's health.

#God_H8s_Vats: More proof of your heathen ways. Even the land is rejecting your unglodliness.
#LowkeedTweed: I can't take you seriously anymore.
#Billy_Black_Eyes: You're assuming someone did, omae.

LAY OF THE LAND

This region is filled with trees and rivers, which means it's a nest for all sorts of activities. Pineywoods is home to a number of small towns (mostly abandoned), but the most notable are Huntsville, and Texarkana, which gives the region a less than stellar reputation. When you look at what each of the towns offer, you can see why most people pretty much stay out of the region unless they have a good reason to be here. There probably are nearly as many shady ventures taking place in the Pineywoods as there is in Hill Country. The forests make good cover, just like the hills.

Militarily, there's a significant presence in Texarkana for some pretty obvious reasons. But, besides the bitter dispute between the NAC and ourselves, there's also some good-sized military installations in the area. See, before the Death, Texarkana had Red River Army Depot. While it wasn't much good for anyone during the dust-up that gave us our independence, it's been a solid base for vehicle maintenance and upgrades as well as for its original purpose: ammo storage. And, believe you me, there's no shortage of need for that in Texarkana.

While Texarkana anchors the northeastern corner of the region, Huntsville "anchors" the southern portion of the region, but that really doesn't mean all that much given that it's not that far from Houston. The area doesn't need as much support from a town in the area when it's got all that firepower just a few dozen miles away.

Pineywoods has a lot of rural space for as many reasons to do with the rivers and lakes as it does the trees. This just makes it less likely that anyone would want to live here. Add to that all the rain the region sees during the year, and it leaves a bunch of land useless for urban development. As for a training ground for some special ops units, well, that's another story altogether.

TEXARKANA

Depending on whom you ask, Texarkana is either an unmitigated disaster politically, a work in progress, proof the old system was better, that freedom beats tyranny in all guises, or a mixture of all the above. There's a pervasive libertarian spirit that runs through the sprawl. Basically, this just means life along the wall is rough and feels like you're a pariah for being born here. That might be why so many mercs, hybrids, and ex-pats call the place home. East Texarkana might be a flame for the proverbial moth, but surprisingly few are drawn to it. Most Texans are apt to smuggle in everyday goods made in East Texarkana as much for personal gain as for profit. Then again, anything we can get out of the NAC that we can use against them is always a good thing, amigo.

Problem is that all of this activity is bad for national morale, which is why so many people see Texarkana as an embarrassment. So much attention has been paid by both the NAC and our own government to the sprawl that the only way to prevent an escalation in hostilities was to build the wall separating East Texarkana from the RoT's side of the city. But we didn't stop there, omae. No, we built the goddamn wall for miles past that and then around the sprawl as well. It didn't take long for Texarkansans to feel like they were living in either an occupied territory or a very large prison. Hence the surly attitudes here directed as much towards the NAC as well as their next-door neighbors.

Now, this wouldn't be all that bad if it weren't for the massive build-up of East Texarkana by the NAC. It's as if they're trying to entice our people to rebel and join the Evil Empire with promises

of steady wages in shit jobs that just oil their war machinery. Fuck that, omae, we're having none of that in this nation.

Texarkana is home to an ongoing proxy war between the NAC and the Republic. The wall doesn't do a damn thing to slow down the aggression on both sides. They hit us, we hit back. That's how it goes. Gladiatorial games are the number one spectacle, but espionage is number two. The NAC and RoT have an impressive number of agents in Texarkana running some operation or other. As much of the action is on the other side of the wall as it is in Texarkana itself.

As for Texarkana itself, you have to examine some of its more well-known locations to get a feel for how damaged this city is.

#LowkeedTweed: *Wow, this sounds like a prison camp. That's some sad shit, people.*

#KnuckleYouUnder: *Eh, it ain't so bad. You get used to it after a while. Pounding NACkies gets to be real fun when you've done it a few times.*

BLOOD ALLEY/CORPSE ROW

So, it don't matter what you call it, but Blood Alley and Corpse Row are apt names for the section of the sprawl that's home to many mercenary and ex-soldier bioroids and hybrids. This little slice of hell is located near a section of border wall in a seedier side of the sprawl. Despite all this, it hasn't stopped people from settling near it or setting up shop like the many bars along the strip. Cops are generally scarce as the residents and clients are not just violent, but highly trained. Even gangers tend to stay out of the way of the ex-soldiers and mercenaries with a deep-seated hatred of the NAC that either call the place home or frequent the place. This has led the residents to police the strip themselves—when they feel the need that is. Throw in the known bigotry of the NAC to their kind and it isn't hard to imagine their hand in all of this. I know a good number of mercs who live in that place and none of my sources anywhere have news of anyone in the Republic wanting to target these people.

Wondering how the place got its name? It's because of all the bodies and bloodied victims found lying in or near the streets in numbers higher than the rest of the sprawl. It makes people cast aspersions on outsiders, but c'est la vie. What's worse, there's little anyone can do as few, if any, witnesses ever see the perpetrators before it's too late.

Too many of them look like the rest of the sprawl's population to raise any alarms. Since Texarkana's a beacon for NAC hybrids looking for a safe haven, my money is on the Coalition's goon squads looking for retribution for defection. Pretty fucked up, amigo, since they don't want these people as it is. Yeah, nothing says you feel welcome amongst outcasts like fear your neighbors might want to kiss you with a fist. The NAC denies all of this, but since most of these professions and lifestyles aren't forbidden in the Republic, it's hard to imagine all the violence comes from honest Texans trying to eke out a life.

#KnuckleYouUnder: *You'll never find a nicer bunch of people, amigos. We look out for one another and that's all you really need to know. Don't like it? Get to steppin'.*

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GATESIDE PARK

Near one of the larger gates allowing passage through the wall—hey, just because the NAC are a bunch of dicks doesn't mean we can't take advantage of normalizing relations or extending propaganda across a controlled border—is Gateside Park. It's a beautiful respite amongst the dregs of this burg kept that way by proximity to an army garrison in the sprawl and a sizeable police and private security presence. This ensures the park stays green and welcoming by day. Night...well, now that's another story.

Gateside Park is huge for a downtrodden city like Texarkana. It was once a slum where crime was so rampant that the only solution was to raze the neighborhood. So, while the cops got a break and the city government avoided further negative press, it only dispersed the crime to other places during the day and brought in another criminal element when the sun sets.

It's an unwritten rule, but everyone knows you get the hell out when the sun goes down unless you want to observe things you best not see. Gateside Park is a smuggler's paradise after nightfall. All sorts of illicit trade takes place, but the most notable is goods trafficked into the Republic. It's the arms shipments the Rangers care about. Gang violence is high enough without the weapons coming across. Most are likely ending up in the hands of NAC sleeper agents, which is bad enough and potentially less harmful to Texarkana in the short term. The government and security guys turn a blind eye since most of the items being smuggled in are the things honest Texans want and need but we can't meet demands with our limited manufacturing. Hell, even some of the NAC made dinnerware can be found in our military's mess halls.

AMARILLO STEAKS PAVILION

The Pavilion, as it's often called, is home to the gladiatorial games the city has become known for. Some of the combats are pretty meaty, which is either ironic or brilliant for the cloned beef giant. Depending on the type of combat taking place in the Pavilion, there are often as many fights inside the ring as outside. While that speaks to the toughness of the citizens, the Pavilion hosts anything from old school boxing and mixed martial arts matches up to drone fights. What's weird is how many fans some of these events can draw, like fencing. Pretty random when the town's too bloody for football.

THE DRAIN

Few people know where it is, but most know about the Drain. The most infamous place in Texarkana, only the truly desperate or crazy go there to compete. The drain is the largest underground lethal combat arena in the nation. There are few to no rules in the Drain. You enter the ring and you leave when your opponent is dead.

The place gets its name from the large grated drain used to sluice out the blood between matches. Most of the carnage is caused by sharp weapons, but there are a few matches where only fists and feet fly. Pretty much anything goes, but there's one sacrosanct rule: no ranged weapons. As a result, security in the Drain is obscenely tight. The only weapons allowed in are those used by the combatants and the facility's owners and their security team. Anyone caught with a weapon is as likely to end up in the ring as they are to be executed on sight. There's even a combat drone used as a spectacle to remind the audience of how serious the management takes these rules.

How come the place hasn't been shut down, you ask? Probably because the rumors about the ongoing fight between the NAC and RoT soldiers stationed on both sides of the wall are true. The story goes that the soldiers routinely fight each other as payback. Another tale has the Drain as a front for the military to test out its training practices as well as some super-soldier drugs. Whatever the reason, the Drain has been operational for years and doesn't seem to be slowing down any and the Rangers are hard pressed to do anything to make a noticeable difference.

#KnuckleYouUnder: Wanna see some proxy wars up close and personal like? Yeah, you do. Every decent Texan wants to see NACKies stuffed into body bags.

#Nick_NAC_Jack: Our president would never condone such a thing.

#KnuckleYouUnder: Then your top brass is lying to him.

#God_H8s_Vats: I bet he's one of those filthy hybrids, Jack. Don't pay him any attention, he'll get his. They all will.

#KnuckleYouUnder: Come party with me at the Drain and find out, assclown.

TEXARKANA FIELD

The second most important sport in Texarkana is baseball. It doesn't make much sense, amigo, given that it the sprawl's violence doomed the football franchise, but there it is. Some people think the fervor for baseball is a thumb in the eye of the NAC as a reminder of what used to be. It takes all kinds to build a strong team and the game harkens back to the simpler past and glories of a system the NAC has completely abandoned in the eyes of many of the sprawl's residents. All of this has elevated the game to a symbol of Texan patriotism without the rivalry and violence every other sport seems to engender in this city. There are occasional fights, but the only way to cause a near riot is if a player is caught doping or otherwise cheating. Then there's hell to play.

HUNTSVILLE

Looking to go to college, do a stint in prison, or have a relatively boring life? No? Then avoid Huntsville at all costs. This is not the town for you. If someone disappears, they left town or went to jail, got it? And, no, I'm not under duress or surveillance. It's still Texas. People sometimes get lost in the forests.

Huntsville is known mainly for two things: prison and death row. So, we might not execute as many felons as we once did, but capital punishment is alive and well in the Republic. Though most do time in VR, there are a few who are like rabid animals and need to be dealt with as such because not even VR time can reform them.

Huntsville is a good place for a prison because it's practically surrounded by wilderness, which means punishment and reformation can go on uninterrupted. Only time will tell if this Texas brand of justice will succeed where others have failed.

NORTH GULF COAST

Life in the Gulf Coast is a bit of a mixed bag. It's a bit odd as we have to refer to it not as the single region that it's always been, but between the well policed and defended northern section and the chaos that's gripped the southern part of the nation. There's a couple of reasons that this is the case: the north's the home of the Texas navy and it's also the center of the Republic's space program. Let's not forget the ever-present NAC on the border.

There's plenty of things that can go wrong and if they did, we'd be fucked. Houston's our energy source and we've got a surplus of it. Problem is just the thought of what would happen if one of those fusion reactors went critical. It's not just the carnage that'd result, it's also the damage it'd do to the nation as a whole. Most of the population lives in the Houston sprawl, meaning they'd be wiped out along with the Naval HQ and the Needle.

Until the Needle's online, the chief export of the region is energy, which means the economy here is driven by power just like it was before GLUTTON. But that's not the only power. The ocean's right on our doorstep in this region, omae, and that means you have the power of our armed forces close at hand as well. It may not be as prevalent as it is in the Prairies & Lakes region, but it's still significant. Mostly it's coastal defenses that safeguard not only the Needle and our ports but also our oceanic farming ventures.

Yes, there's a lot of aquatic science that goes on in this region despite the damage that's been done in the past. The new world realities require us to consider every angle as a means to national defense. You'd be surprised, amigo, how much security a few breeds of fish can bring, especially when they're used to keep the bellies of Texans filled, let alone other strategic uses. We're not all about beef, omae, but that doesn't mean we don't consume a lot of it. Honest Texans want to see the nation be wholly independent and free of outside influence some day. If we can make it happen sooner, then all the better.

#Nick_NAC_Jack: Just what we need, cowboys in space.
#TexasUberAlles: You forget, omae, we've always been involved. That's where we got the expression "Houston, we've got a problem." Texaaaaanssss in Spaaaaaaace!

LAY OF THE LAND

There are two major points of interest here: Houston and Galveston, and they're joined at the hip. Even before the days of the sprawl they've been linked as much by the space program as anything else. The northern portion of the region is centered around the Trinity and Galveston Bays since that's where most of the people are. Port Arthur is a hot zone these days and with the NAC able to choke off the entrance to Sabine Lake, it's pretty much an urban wasteland filled with soldiers and a few navy personnel.

Like the Pineywoods, there's a lot of water here and I don't just mean the coast either. That makes smuggling pretty commonplace despite the heightened security.

HOUSTON

When it comes to aerospace tech and energy, the NAC is fucked. Houston is the heir to the remnants of NASA and was home to a great many energy companies long before GLUTTON tried to wipe us clean out.

So, when the Death came and Florida got hosed from rising sea levels, we were the only game in town. I can't tell you how many times those two industries saved our asses and helped us build the alliances we have. There's a lot to be said about power sources and promises of payload delivery when our Needle is finally online. Texans will know real security when that happens.

Though our space program is in a bit of a holding pattern, it doesn't mean we haven't been hard at work on keeping our astronauts ready. The Texas Space Administration is doing a damn fine job keeping the Needle as close to on schedule as possible. It won't be much longer now, but whenever it is supposed to be completed seems to be a national secret since no official time table has ever been released.

Most people see the energy developments of Houston and our continued aerospace efforts as proof that Houston is the heart of all innovation in the nation. While it's a huge deal, and the two sectors are vital to Texas' survival, the truth is Houston is home to masterful engineering in these critical fields. Throw in the high security presence in the sprawl and it doesn't take much effort to see why the number of cyberattacks are so high.

How bad is it? Some of the attacks are so sophisticated that they could only be the work of a government or an AI. And the three greatest enemies of the nation are those that would profit the most: Mexico, the NAC, and AIs loose in San Antonio. This also means the place has more hackers than the government is comfortable with. Cyber attacks are a common occurrence for corporations in Houston. It's almost nonstop. How many are foreign agents is hard to determine. We're okay with that. Enjoy the brain seizures, cabrones.

THE NEEDLE

Going up and down the gravity well is too resource intensive for most nations, even ones with a few technological edges that let them all but corner a market. There just isn't enough money in it. That's where the Needle comes in. With it, we can scale the well with ease and have a brisk trade with the off world colonies.

At the moment, the spaceport looks more like a conspiracy theorist's dream come true than a commercial hub. The number of fences, strands of electrified razor wire, and roving security makes it hard to miss the resemblance. People who try to get in are definitely in for a lot of trouble at best and might be shot just for trying to sneak a peek. There are too many people who want to see us fail that you can't really blame the government and corporate interests from defending the project.

#Nick_NAC_Jack: Has anyone ever seen the Needle? I'm beginning to think this is a myth.
#SmuggleMe_This: It's no myth. I've seen it.
#Nick_NAC_Jack: Then what's it look like.
#SmuggleMe_This: You must think I'm an idiot.
#Nick_NAC_Jack: You're Texan, 'nuff said.

THE CIRCUIT

Most of the energy megacorporations are found in a surprisingly small radius in the midst of the sprawl. The district is a corpsucker enclave people call the Circuit. The Circuit has some of the tightest security outside of the top secret military black op sites and the Needle. The Circuit has everything a corpsucker could ever need. It's why many refer to it as the Closed Circuit. Of all the

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places you could live in Houston, the Circuit is the best. A lot of engineers work in the corporate facilities in the district, but a good portion live outside of it. Few people would want to anger people building potential bombs that could wipe out a sprawl. Plans are supposedly in the works to add more housing, but little work has been done on that front. It also makes corporate raiding lucrative. Thus it's more common than what the Rangers and hired security can combat. Thankfully, from law enforcement's perspective, the majority of this corporate espionage takes place behind the scenes.

#1337_Freet_Pete: *It's probably the most daring game of cat-and-mouse you'll ever play, and the refs are hyenas.*

SPACE CITY

Once the nickname of Houston, Space City now refers to the area where most of the aerospace industries are located. In addition to the central offices of the TSA, the many components are built alongside the equipment needed for the Needle. The place has some crazy amounts of security for obvious reasons. Space City might be under heavy guard by Ravenlocke, but that doesn't mean any of the usual corporate espionage doesn't take place. In fact, Space City has more attacks than most sprawls. The troubling question isn't why so much rivalry exists, but rather how much of it is merely testing defenses—theirs or a rival's. The main difference is in the subtlety. The problem with all of this is that a lot of distrust exists between companies and their workers as much as it does with other companies that are supposed to work together.

ATROS

Atros is a region of Houston that nobody wants to call home if they have any sense. Atros supposedly gets its name from the former baseball team. Then again, others claim the name is some sort of sick joke, much like this city-sized slum. Atros is home to squalor equal to regions of South Texas and the attitude equal to Texarkana. Atros is full of opportunities to make it big. It's also the liveliest place in Houston. While the Circuit and Space City are the power and image of the sprawl, Atros is the heart of daily life. So much so that Atros is referred to as "The City" by sprawl residents—even those who rarely leave the Circuit.

#King_of_Atros: *You know why everyone here calls Atros the City, it's because we've got all the life. You want something, you come to my crew, omae. We make Houston live. Atros is the heart. The brain don't live without the heart.*

GALVESTON

Galveston's long been connected to the Houston sprawl long before megasprawls were a common feature of urban living, omae. The city took on additional duties when it became the major seaport and home of the navy's HQ. Both by necessity. The Galveston Bay Area is sheltered enough to hide naval exercises and is the entryway to Houston. It's also more stable than Brownsville and doesn't have to worry about sharing Corpus Christi's fate.

NAVAL ACADEMY & NAVAL COMMAND

The Texas Naval Academy and Naval Command Center are the main landmarks of the area. The intelligence department apparently gets the lion's share of the budget if the rumors are true. Then again, this group has lots of connections in the Academy and the computer processing work in tandem with the Network

Nexus corporations. Hence the fears of a coming processor that will take quantum computers a leap forward. If it's true, that may draw the attraction of several AIs and powers like the Chinese Mandarinate.

GALVESTON BAY AREA

The Galveston Bay Area is home to several nautical industries key to Texas. Most of it is devoted to oceanic farming on both sides of the barrier islands, but there's some heavy duty stuff going on in the area. While it's a stretch to say our navy has a hand in everything going on in the bay, it's also not far off the mark. Most of what goes on in the area is either connected to the navy or it is something they've occasionally provided for. That pretty much gives the impression it's all in the navy's control.

So, what's officially going on in the bays? Naval exercises and national defense in the guise of sustainable farming and habitat restoration, especially in Trinity Bay. It's hard to know for sure what's what with the random collection of vessels that make up our navy proper. Plus, Space City is on the water's edge further up the bay system and not too far away is the Needle, making the bay area the weak link in our armor.

SOUTH GULF COAST

Over 1,000 miles of coast and most of it's abandoned. Just about everything south of Houston is a smuggler's paradise. It's not that the navy supports smuggling, but often the groups hiding amongst the squatters are the ones who help ensure trade with Atlantica goes unabated. "The enemy of my enemy" and all that is why cargo is "seized" by the navy on occasion. Not much the NAC can do about that and not much we care to oblige 'em. Most of the people who make their homes here do so at their own peril and without much in the way of government or corporate support. That said, there are reportedly several black ops projects based out of here.

Few people can truly say they "live" here; it's more like existing. Some folk are just so ornery that they refuse to die or give up the ghost of a place that was. We need more hombres like that. The big draw here is smuggling, pure and simple. There's also apparently some secret oceanic projects that the government or some corp or other's conducting, but nobody knows squat about it. The NAC and Mexico have a few blockades here as well, but that's half the fun of the ocean nowadays.

LAY OF THE LAND

There are only three places worth going in this region and one of them you don't really want to go to, one you should just avoid, and the other's a sinkhole of epic proportions. It's just not clear which is which: Corpus Christi, Brownsville, and the old offshore oil platforms. All three of which are also as necessary as the others. If it weren't for the lawlessness, this part of the Republic would be just like the northern Gulf Coast.

CORPUS CHRISTI

GLUTTON killed Corpus. There's no way around that. Oil refining was the main industry in the city. When it went, so did the town, only it was a slow, ruinous decline. A lot of people ended up out of work for that. Then, when the fusion reactors came along, there was even less of a need for oil. All that remains as a functioning

REGIONS OF TEXAS: SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

town is the small sliver annexed for the civilian enclave's protection by the navy and the strategic oil reserve.

There's a small civilian population that provides a small infrastructural support of the naval fleet and the oil, but most sailors treat their tours here as hardships. A contingent of army soldiers are posted here to guard the depot meant as a staging ground for resupplying units further south. Everything else has been abandoned and some of it is patrolled by private security firms ostensibly to prevent further scavenging by marauders of what's claimed as property of one megacorp or another.

What exactly are the corporations trying to keep from being stolen, omae? That's the sort of answer that can make a guttersnipe very rich or very dead. Generally speaking, any activity in the south is bound to be illegal and morally questionable. If the rumors are to be believed, AGA has a weapons facility hidden here along with AetherScope's human testing lab. The rest is limited to squatters, gangers, and smuggler's operations ranging from massive arms deals to packaged foods sought after by all Texans. This makes Corpus Christi a free-for-all until the Rangers can stabilize the area. Ironically, there's less illicit activity here than one would expect as there's no money in it. A few corporate black projects are rumored to be based here, but no one knows what anyone could gain with the lack of protection.

#Boomstick_Bob: Corpus is royally fucked. There's a lot of ways to make money and even more to die in the ruins of Corpus. I'm not even stupid enough to go here. Made that mistake once. I beat feet first chance I got.

THE GULF RIGS

The offshore gambling is practically legendary, but the tangled web between the pirates, the largest casino, and the nation itself is all true. Neptune's Palace is, by all accounts one of the greatest pleasure destinations in the nation. The Moore family owns the casino, but there's been a major shake-up since the brothers had a falling out. Turns out Charles was implicated in a plot to ruin the casino's reputation by his brother Frank.

Mark Moore, founder of the casino, has all but disowned his son since Charles murdered Amy, his fiancé and heiress to one of the larger entertainment studios. Charles now hides out on another platform with pirates who not only raid incoming vessels, but also run interference for Johnny Rincon's operations and at times work with the navy to keep the NAC off the tail of CEU shipments.

Most of the squatters on the old oil platforms make this part of the coast their port of call. The NAC has most of their blockades in the waters off the coast, but they keep their distance lest our navy catches the scum and they involuntarily scuttle a ship or three. Some independent squatters work with Rincon as well, but most are in it to extract payback against one megacorp or another. These are often opportunists as much as they are principled thieves with a Robin Hood complex. Trust me, amigo, these jackholes aren't worth shit and I'd avoid trucking with them as much as aplomb as you can muster.

BROWNSVILLE

Global warming wrecked the mouth of the Rio Grande, but it didn't drown Brownsville. This is completely unfortunate since the city is a hellhole that we'd be better off without. The plex is a slum overflowing with gangs, smugglers, and if it weren't for constant incursions by Mexico, mercenaries, and the Texas army, it'd be a lot worse. It's a quagmire that doesn't look like it's going

to change any time soon, and most of the residents like it that way, which is the fucked up part.

Technically, martial law is in effect. But the army's spread so thin with the undeclared border war that we have with Mexico that it's hard to send patrols too far north from the river. One of the reasons Mexico is all over our ass is because of the real power in Brownsville, Johnny Rincon. Rincon is a smuggler who's got everyone in on the take. Since he's got the best track record for getting past the NAC, he's become a necessary evil. This has the army defending a crime boss and the megacorps doing their part to keep him propped up—at least for now.

Rincon has taken the scorpion and made it his own personal insignia, appropriate for the venomous nature of his ventures with the nation. This has only led to open hostilities with Mexico under the auspice of stamping out the rampant crime the whole situation has devolved into. The widespread corruption has been nicknamed the scorpion's sting. Why hasn't Mexico done more to jump all over this situation and seize the town, you wonder? Easy, omae, they're getting a cut of the action as well. You think anyone can get away with flaunting the law of three nations and stay in business for long if they weren't greasing some wheels?

#WonderFallsGuy: Brownsville's a great town. I'd like to say it's as fun as the Falls, but even I can't do that. This place is a fucking blast. Only thing I enjoy more than killing NACKies is taking out pharmalaies.

#LowkeedTweed: Pharmaralies?

#TexasUberAlles: It's a stab at the Mexican drug cartels going "legit" as the government.

THE SHIPYARD

You talk to anyone in these parts and they'll likely direct you to one of two places based on whether you smell like a corpsucker, fed, or merc: the docks or a dive bar near the waterfront. Either way, it makes for some seriously hard stares being thrown your way, amigo. People here don't ken to strangers and less so to those asking about a dive bar that's the front for most of the smuggling that goes on in these parts. This is essentially the marketplace for goods on the way, in port, or about to be ganked from someone else. So, it also serves as an auction house for jobs that can have massive payoffs for the right hombres.

OUTRIGGER'S COVE

There ain't much sailing going on these days in Brownsville and that's putting it lightly. See, there's a lot to avoid in the sprawl, but probably nothing tops the list than Outrigger's Cove as it's the staging grounds for Rincon's operations. There's a menagerie of ships docked here at any given time, but only a fool wants to get close enough to know what's going on. People try, but they often join the train of bodies floating off into the ocean for their effort.

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

The South Texas Plains have become little more than a land of frontiers and wars. There are a few shanty towns and hidden corp facilities in this region, but for the most part, it is completely lawless and brimming with outlaws. The Rangers have plans to remedy all this, but there are more pressing concerns and a need for goods Texans can't make for themselves. There's a lot of shit that goes on here that you'd be shocked by, trust me, omae. I've seen some things and it's why I don't plan on going back anytime soon.

THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS

You don't really live in the southern portion of the nation, you exist like a rabid animal. A lot of the area is officially listed as "abandoned" by the citizens, but the truth is there aren't enough resources to really clean up this area. The only real control—and that's out of necessity—are some key border cities. Most of the interior is off the grid, so there's little to say about the vast majority of the region. What does percolate up from the blackout is often gruesome, even for gangers. There are four areas along the border worth mentioning, however.

If you want to live here, you best be prepared for anything. And that's not a joke. People here do whatever the hell they want when they want and with no reasons given. It's a goddamn libertarian's paradise, and it's the devil's dominion. Only thing missing is the panache of someone like Milton to describe it. But, hey, guess for some it's better to reign in hell. That's okay, amigo, I prefer a bit more control than that.

The most notable people here are the highwaymen and women who have no qualms about boosting your shit and leaving you bare assed in the wild. There's one though that has gained somewhat of a folk hero status in Texas: James H. Turpin. Turpin's a vato and a half if there ever was one. He's roguish to the core, but he tries to play it off as if he's some gentlemanly figure when he's ruthless as hell.

#Boomstick_Bob: *Now here's the only thing this guy's got right. The southern part of Texas is wild and we like it that way. Don't like the political climate, wait a few minutes; it'll change. It's how we roll around here and we've never really like the government telling us what to do. And on the bright side, we get to take out the trash whenever Mexico tries to annex us for the umpteenth time.*

LAY OF THE LAND

Okay, so there's not much to say about the interior, so I'll skip it. Some might call that a cop out and, well, fuck 'em. I'm not risking my ass for news that'd be old before it hits the Net. Here's all you really need to know: the few border cities that have any semblance of normalcy are the ones where the most violence occurs as they're key to keeping Mexico on the other side of the Rio Grande. The cities of note are Laredo, Zapata, Eagle Pass and McAllen.

LAREDO

Ever since the cartel days, Laredo has been a city on a knife's edge, or so law enforcement wanted you to believe. Laredo sits just north of Juarez and the bridge over the Rio Grande has been blown up—twice. When the cartels went legit, the gangs took over. There's enough violence in the Juarez-Laredo plexes that the place has earned the names "Waredo," "Bloodredo," and "Hellrado." And that's a pretty accurate description of the place. Not a day goes by that someone doesn't end up dead on at least one side of the river, meaning everyone not in a killing mood is probably feeling like they're in a worse hell than those in the middle of the shit.

The city is its own blood sport, and the big draw is the carnage wrought as much by militias as by the Texan and Mexican militaries. The border war with Mexico is hot and neither side claims it's taking shots at the other. Funny how that works when both sides are sending armed patrols across the river claiming jurisdiction over criminals. Most of them use pontoons with small outboard motors to sneak across and nab their suspects. The impression is more like a special forces snatch-and-grab than law enforcement. Imagine how the bounty hunters operate, amigo.

ZAPATA

Zapata is a small town that's fucked up in a big way. This border town is the stomping grounds for several militias and it's also a criminal haven. The tricky part is figuring out where one group ends and another begins. See, the place is too remote and removed from all the other bullshit eating away at Texas that some enterprising soul bought the rights to license law enforcement to militias so the nation could focus on bigger issues with the current big dog being Ace's Eight. The militia is headed by Aaron "Ace" Tieck and his eight companies (not eight mercs) rule Zapata with an iron fist wrapped in a velvet glove. So long as the militias kill each other as much as they do actual foreign threats, nobody outside Zapata cares what goes on until everything else gets straightened out.

EAGLE PASS

Eagle Pass is a powder keg waiting for a match with an angry mob with torches dancing around it. The relations with Mexico are so icy that it's no surprise the harbors on both sides of the river are part of a DMZ separating them from us. Problem is there are more threats from inside the town than outside of it. Eagle Pass is home to some serious black projects. By the megacorps—if any truth to the rumors of accidents to random citizens are to be believed. This, in turn, has fueled the gang violence as they blame each other and the corps. By all accounts, it's some twisted shit. I didn't bother trying to dig too deep into that mess. I decided to get the hell out and let that town burn itself out. If you're smart, you'll avoid the place as well.

MCALLEN

McAllen is an odd duck. It's home to the UT International campus. As such, everyone with a stake in a future where their side has the most eggheads (and toys) wants to keep the town intact. This is the only plex where Texas seems to have a firm hand on the tiller. Something's not right about this situation and nobody seems to want to talk about it. Everywhere you go, the place reeks of a community trapped behind enemy lines. Problem is there's nothing you can point to that proves or justifies such feelings. Everything seems like it's on the level, which is exactly why this feels so wrong.

THREATS

TEXAS THREATS

If you haven't figured it out yet, amigo, Texas ain't safe. What follows are just a number of ways this nation can kill you.

AI'S

Yep, there's a couple of known AI's in Texas. There was one, but some asshole had the bright idea of trying to delete it—and almost succeeded. Instead, it splintered and left us with three of the fucking things: Antonio, Sandra, and Steve. Antonio is the original, albeit weakened, Sandra's devious, and Steve's an unknown.

ANTONIO [[WCI]]

- Attributes:** Smarts d12, Spirit d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Hacking (Firewall Penetration, Hyper Combat, Systems Control) d8, Notice d6
Virtual Pace: 6; **Toughness:** 9 (3), Firewall: 7
Engrams: Lethal Damage (2d6), Skill Specialization (Hacking) +2, Sprite Armor (3), Sprite Firewall (3)
Special Abilities:
- **Fractured:** Antonio is capable of being Shaken. He is also unstable and paranoid. He is unsure of who he is.
 - **Immortal:** Antonio has learned the hard way that he needs to have his main files backed up. If he's deleted, he respawns in 24 hours.

SANDRA [[WCI]]

- Attributes:** Smarts d12, Spirit d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Hacking (Firewall Penetration, Hyper Combat, Systems Control) d8, Notice d10
Virtual Pace: 6; **Toughness:** 11 (5); **Firewall:** 7
Engrams: Lethal Damage (2d6), Skill Specialization (Hacking) +2, Sprite Armor (5), Sprite Firewall (3)
Special Abilities:
- **Fearless:** Sandra is immune to fear and intimidation.
 - **Unrestricted:** Sandra has found a way to defeat the containment system placed on Antonio, she may download to any system connected to the Global DataNet.

STEVE [[WCI]]

- Attributes:** Smarts d12, Spirit d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Hacking (Firewall Penetration, Hyper Combat, Systems Control) d8, Notice d10
Virtual Pace: 6; **Toughness:** 9(3); **Firewall:** 8
Engrams: Lethal Damage (2d6), Skill Specialization (Hacking) +2, Sprite Armor (3), Sprite Firewall (4)
Special Abilities:
- **Fearless:** Steve is immune to fear and intimidation.

- **Immortal:** Steve inherited Antonio's ability to store himself. If he's deleted, he respawns in 24 hours.

BIOFORMS

There are five bioforms to be aware of in the nation and they're all man-made living weapons.

ARMORDILLO

Armordillos likely were a lab experiment, but with no real drawbacks, nobody knows for sure. Only thing anyone knows is that they're Texas-sized.

- Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d4, Stealth d6
Pace: 3; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 10 (4)
Special Abilities:
- **Armor +4**
 - **Bite:** Str+d4 (infectious)
 - **Burrowing:** Armordillos can burrow at a Pace of 1d4
 - **Claws:** Str+d6 (infectious)
 - **Infectious:** Armordillos are carriers of two diseases: leprosy and Chagas-2. Both are extremely dangerous for humans. Contact with an armordillo requires a Vigor roll -1 to avoid contracting leprosy. Proximity to an armordillo requires a Vigor roll -2 to avoid Chagas-2. Symptoms for both diseases occur within 1d4 days.
 - **Leprosy:** When symptoms appear, the victim has to have the affected part amputated, giving the victim the One Arm or One Leg Hindrance unless a cybernetic limb is installed.
 - **Chagas-2:** After the onset of fever for 1d4 weeks, the victim makes a Vigor roll -2. If failed, the victim develops swelling in various areas, like lymph nodes. In 2d4 weeks, the victim's affected organ(s) begin to shut down. Death occurs in 1d6+1 days if transplants aren't performed.
 - **Jumping:** Almost as a reflexive defense, Armordillos can jump Pace 1d4+1
 - **Size -1:** Armordillos are the size of pigs.

RAZORHOUND

The guard dog of choice for discerning Texans, they're mean as hell and fast.

- Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d10, Tracking d8
Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6(2)

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Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d6
- **Fleet-Footed:** Razorhounds roll a d10 when running instead of a d6
- **Go For the Throat:** Razorhounds instinctively go for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, it hits the target's most weakly armored location.
- **Size -1:** Razorhounds are relatively small.

RATTLEBLACK

Extremely lethal and hard to detect snakes found throughout the southern region of the nation.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d12, Stealth d8

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d4
- **Camouflaged:** Due to the dark coloring of the rattleblack, Notice rolls are penalized by -2.
- **Lethal Poison -4:** See poison rules in the Hazards section of the *Savage Worlds* rulebook.
- **Quick:** Rattleblacks are exceptionally fast. They may discard Action Cards of 5 or lower to draw another, but must keep the new card.
- **Size -1:** Rattleblacks are larger than most venomous snakes.

RIO SCORPION

Big, nasty, and scary is the only way to describe this bioform originally designed to plague the Mexican military.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d4, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d8, Survival d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 3

Special Abilities:

- **Climb Walls:** Can walk on vertical surfaces at Pace 4.
- **Lethal Poison -4:** See poison rules in the Hazards section of the *Savage Worlds* rulebook.
- **Size -2:** Rio scorpions are about 10" long
- **Small:** Attacking a Rio scorpion subtracts 2 from the character's attack rolls.
- **Sting:** Str+d4
- **Toxic death:** When a Rio scorpion is killed, it explodes. All adjacent characters must make an Agility roll or suffer 2d6 damage.

SCENTOPEDE

Seriously, who the hell would ever want to give a centipede the ability to smell its prey? Weren't these fucking things terrifying enough?

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Tracking d6

Pace: 3; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d4
- **Climb Walls:** Can walk on vertical surfaces at Pace 3.

- **Lethal Poison -2:** See poison rules in the Hazards section of the *Savage Worlds* rulebook.
- **Size -2:** Scentopedes are the size of small snakes.
- **Small:** Attacking a scintopede subtracts 2 from the character's attack rolls.

TEXAN ARMED FORCES

Texas is pretty well defended, but it's dependent as much on militias as it is the enlisted troops. Militias often call themselves Minutemen.

MINUTEMAN GRUNT

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Driving d8, Fighting d8, Notice d8, Piloting d8, Shooting d8, Taunt d4

Charisma: +0, **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8(3); **Firewall:** 4; **Strain:** 4

Hindrances: Loyal (Texas)



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Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (3); **Firewall:** 4; **Strain:** 0

Hindrances: Wanted (Major)

Edges: Block, Command, Leader of Men, Steady Hands, Thief

Gear: Executive Decision Under Armour (+1), Urban Punk Combat Jacket (+2), Ravenlocke Securities P9D (Range 12/24/48; Damage 2d6-1; RoF 3; Shots 100; AP 3, Auto, 3RB), Shogun Outfitters Miyamoto K-Tana (Str+d8+2; AP 4, HW)

SPORTS PERSONALITIES

Texas has so many athletes from one sport or another, it's a miracle you can swing a stick and not hit one. Here're a few examples.

GLADIATOR, HUMAN

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Persuasion d6, Shooting d4, Streetwise d4, Taunt d4, Throwing d8

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 11 (2); **Firewall:** 4; **Strain:** 6

Hindrances: Arrogant

Edges: Athlete

Cyberwear: Bone Reinforcement level III

Gear: Urban Punk Combat Jacket (+2), Hostile Takeover HT-9 Holdout Pistol (Range 12/24/48; Damage 2d6; Shots 5; AP 1, Semi-Auto), Wasteland Traders Shillelagh Havoc Stick (Str+d6; Knockback)

GLADIATOR, TOUGH HYBRID (WARTHOG)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d8, Intimidation d4, Notice d4, Shooting d10, Stealth d6, Swimming d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (2); **Firewall:** 4; **Strain:** 0

Hindrances: Arrogant, Giri (Minor), Magnet (Minor)

Edges: Athlete

Gear: Urban Punk Combat Jacket (+2), AGA Thunderbolt (Range 12/24/48; Damage 2d8+1; Shots 15; AP 4, Semi-Auto), Wasteland Traders Shillelagh Havoc Stick (Str+d6; Knockback)

ATHLETE, HUMAN

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d6, Knowledge (Baseball) d4, Shooting d6, Streetwise d4, Swimming d4, Taunt d4, Throwing d8

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8 (3); **Firewall:** 4; **Strain:** 0

Hindrances: Appointed Monitor (Team, Minor), Bad Reputation (Minor), Giri (Team, Major)

Edges: Athlete

Gear: Urban Punk Combat Jacket (+2), Executive Decision Under Armour (+1), Wastelands Traders Shillelagh Havoc Stick (Str+d6; Knockback)

ATHLETE, HUMAN 2.0

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d10, Knowledge (Football) d4, Notice d4, Persuasion d4, Shooting d4, Streetwise d4, Taunt d4, Throwing d8

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9 (3); **Firewall:** 4; **Strain:** 0

Hindrances: Arrogant, Bad Reputation (Minor), Vengeful (Minor)

Edges: Athlete, Attractive

Gear: Urban Punk CombatJ (+2), Executive Decision Under Armour (+1), Wasteland Traders Lacerator Knife (Str+d4; AP 2, requires battery), AS Foley Arms Watchdog (Range 12/24/48; Damage 2d8; RoF 1; Shots 12; AP 2, Semi-Auto)

CRIMINALS

There're plenty of crooks in Texas on both sides of the law. You're bound to run into a few of these:

HIGHWAYMAN, CHARISMATIC

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Driving d4, Fighting d6, Lockpicking d6, Persuasion d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d8

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (2); **Firewall:** 4; **Strain:** 0

Hindrances: Greedy (Major), Pacifist (Minor), Wanted (Minor)

Edges: Charismatic, Thief

Gear: Urban Punk Combat Jacket (+2), Black Knights Industry BK-616 Rifle (Range 24/48/96; Damage 2d8; RoF 4; Shots 60; AP 4, Auto, 3RB)

HIGHWAYMAN, BRUTE

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Driving d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Survival d4, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (3); **Firewall:** 4; **Strain:** 4

Hindrances: Greedy (Major), Vengeful (Minor), Wanted (Minor)

Edges: Chromed

Cyberwear: Bone Reinforcement I, Subdermal Armor, Cyberweapon (Foley Arms TAW)

Gear: Urban Punk Combat Jacket (+2), Wastelands Traders Eviscerator Chain Sword (Str+d10; AP 2, requires a battery), AS Foley Arms TAW 20228 (Range 25/50/100; Damage 2d8+1; RoF 3; Shots 45; AP 3, 3RB, Auto)

GANGER, STREET SOLDIER (WCI)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d4, Streetwise d6, Taunt d4, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (3); **Firewall:** 4; **Strain:** 4

Hindrances: Various

Edges: Chromed, Combat Reflexes, Command

TEXAS THREATS: INTRUSION COUNTERMEASURES

Cyberwear: Cyberweapon (Hostile Takeover HT-9), Flight or Fight, Subdermal Armor

Gear: Urban Punk Combat Jacket (+2), Hostile Takeover HT-9 (Range 12/24/48; Damage 2d6; Shots 5; AP 1, Semi-Auto), Wastelands Traders Shillelagh Havoc Stick (Str+d6; Knockback)

WRANGLER

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Hacking d6, Healing d6, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Programming) d8, Lockpicking d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 7 (2); **Firewall:** 5; **Strain:** 0

Hindrances: Bad Reputation (Major), Cautious, Wanted (Minor)

Edges: Cutter, Interference

Gear: Urban Punk Combat Jacket (+2), Hostile Takeover HT-9 (Range 12/24/48; Damage 2d6; Shots 5; AP 1, Semi-Auto)

BOOTLEGGER

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Lockpicking d6, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d8, Streetwise d6, Survival d4

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (3); **Firewall:** 4; **Strain:** 4

Hindrances: Bad Reputation (Minor), Cautious, Overconfident

Edges: Chromed, Thief

Cyberwear: Concealed Body Pouch, Data Cells (II), Organic Computer

Gear: Urban Punk Combat Jacket (+2), Hostile Takeover HT-9 (Range 12/24/48; Damage 2d6; Shots 5; AP 1, Semi-Auto)

REAPER (WC)

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d10, Intimidation d6, Investigation d8, Lockpicking d6, Shooting d10, Stealth d8, Trackind d8

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 9 (3); **Firewall:** 4; **Strain:** 0

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Cautious, Stubborn

Edges: Assassin, Ghost, Hard to Kill

Gear: Executive Decision Under Armour (+1), Shogun Outfitters Shinobi Infiltration Suit (+2; +2 Stealth, +1 Parry), Shogun Outfitters Monowhip (Agi+d6; AP 6, HW, Reach 3), Wasteland Traders Lacerator Knife (Str+d4; AP 2, requires battery), AS Foley Arms Watchdog (Range 12/24/48; Damage 2d8; RoF 1; Shots 12; AP 2, Semi-Auto), Street Chic Assassin's Rifle (Range 30/60/90; Damage 2d10; RoF 1; Shots 1; AP 2, Snapfire)

INTRUSION COUNTERMEASURES

THREADER (WC)

Threader is a ruthless sprite created by the Runenberg Corporation with one goal in mind: act as a diversion while Hook implants its insidious engram within a nosy hacker's brain. Threader's attack provides enough cover that Hook's attack is nigh undetectable. Those infected by Hook are drawn in to a web of conspiracy theories as much a creation of their own minds as well as those buried in the data within Runenberg's servers. The sprite avoids direct confrontation and works from the virtual shadows

where a hacker is most blind when it begins its initial barrage. That initial wallop is Threader's main defense.

Attributes: Smarts d8, Spirit d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Hacking (Firewall Penetration, Data Mining, Hyper Combat, Object Editing, Run Program) d6, Knowledge (Programming) d4

Virtual Pace: 6; **Toughness:** 7 (2); **Firewall:** 6

Engrams: Nonlethal Damage (1d8+1d8), Psychotropic Attack, Skill Specialization (Hacking) +2, Sprite Firewall (2), Stealth Module (4)

Special Abilities:

- **Implant:** Threader uses the psychotropic attack to disguise Hook's insertion.
- **Immortal:** If the sprite is deleted, it respawns in 2d4 hours.

HOOK

As sprite, Hook and its engram are extremely subtle. If Hook successfully penetrates a user's TAP, it prevents a complete disconnect from HR, exposing the victim to the manipulations of Runenberg's programmers. Hook is more robust than Threader, but it avoids direct confrontation and will not attack without Threader.

Attributes: Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Vigor d12

Skills: Hacking (Firewall Penetration, Data Mining, Hyper Combat, Object Editing, Run Program) d6, Knowledge (Programming) d4, Notice d8, Stealth d10

Virtual Pace: 6; **Toughness:** 7 (2); **Firewall:** 6

Engrams: Psychotropic Attack, Sprite Armor (2), Sprite Firewall (2), Stealth Module (4), Trojan

Special Abilities:

- **Cause Delusion:** Once Hook succeeds in getting past the victim's TAP, the victim makes a Spirit check -1 to avoid feeling that a larger pattern underlies her experiences. If failed, the character gains the Delusion (Minor) Hindrance and revisits Runenberg's virtual realm. The embedded splinter communicates with Hook and makes the engram grow stronger while it mines for data. The victim becomes even more convinced something's going on but the proof's just out of reach. The victim spends 1d4 hours digging into Runenberg looking for the clues. She then has to roll a Smarts check or forgets she was ever there and all subsequent rolls to resist the effects of Hook gain a cumulative -1 until the character wants nothing more than to mine the Runenberg Corporation every waking moment.
- **Implant:** Threader uses the psychotropic attack to disguise Hook's insertion.
- **Immortal:** If the sprite is deleted, it respawns in 2d4 hours.

NEW ENGRAM QUALITY

TROJAN

The engram has what amounts to an alternate identity. Systems won't suspect the engram of being anything other than what it claims until it remains dormant or acts otherwise. Detecting the engram's true nature requires an extensive investigation. All rolls are penalized by the Trojan rating with failure resulting in nothing. A critical failure can trigger the engram to carry out its purpose as a surprise round.

AMS: 1 per level (max. 4), Cost: 10,000 credits per level



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