

LINE OF SUCCESSION

LOGLINE:

A Manchu warlord, on a mission to return modern-day China to Dynastic rule, poisons the U.S. President and replaces him with one of his own, a dangerous extremist, as he attacks Taiwan, threatening nuclear Armageddon.

THEME:

LINE OF SUCCESSION involves political greed and how world domination leads to self-destruction. Its ethos brings into question the ascendancy of power in the U.S. presidency, or presidential line of succession, and how perilous ‘behind-the-door’ decisions regarding oval office replacement can be made to global security in the face of a serving president’s sudden death or removal. Congressman Gerald Ford, then serving House Minority Leader, rose to power under the 25TH Amendment, Section 2, to become vice president and ultimately take the presidency after vacancy, is case-in-point.

Congressman Dan Harbinger, the House minority whip, is a dangerous megalomaniac and stooge “owned” by the story’s Antagonist and villain, General Miano Ch’u, who ascends to take the job of vice president amid cabinet scandal and, ultimately, the hallowed throne in much the same way as Ford did. Only, Harbinger poisons an unwitting president to get what he wants.

THE SYNOPSIS:

LINE OF SUCCESSION is a political, military action drama centering on CALL REID, the story’s hero, a former Navy SEAL and Chinese military historian, and now ranking attaché at the Defense Department, specializing in U.S.-Sino relations. Inspired by Tom Clancy’s ‘Jack Ryan’ character, Call Reid is pulled out of a charity baseball match by an FBI agent

and rushed to the Situation Room nicknamed “The Tank” at the Pentagon. There, he learns that rebel marines of the revolutionary, secretive China Reunification Party, controlled by Party founder General Miano Ch’u, a dangerous military leader and descendant to the great Manchu chieftain, Nurhaci, Emperor of the Qing Dynasty and First Khan in the 15TH century, have taken the Dioyutai Islands, a tiny, seemingly insignificant atoll group 120 miles NNW of Taiwan. An unexplained ground-fired laser, emanating somewhere from the South China Sea, knocks out all military satellites over the Taiwan Strait, offering no further coverage.

Earlier at dawn, launched from the well-deck of a large, black and mysterious stealth-like ship riding low in the water, a squad of fast Zubr class troop hovercrafts (LCAC’s) punch through a dense curtain of fog enveloping the western edge of Diaoyu, the main atoll, and ride up onto its dark volcanic sand. Chu’s cutthroat raiders spill out onto the beachhead, firing their automatics and mortar shells at the enemy and destroy a garrison of ill-trained Japanese infantry stationed there against the will of the world, reclaiming their rightful sovereignty of a half century ago. A Jap destroyer steams into the area in retaliation but makes swift retreat after a Chinese attack sub, a modernized diesel Kilo-class under Ch’u’s command, floods its torpedo tubes, threatening to fire and sink her.

The atoll group secure, a squadron of Russia’s latest VTOL jet, the Yak-141 Freestyle, with its distinctive twin-boom tail mimicking that of an F-14A Tomcat but with vertical lift jets and swiveling nozzles, screams in low, hovers, and lands behind a high barrier of sand dunes near Ch’u’s command tent. Soldiers quickly roll barrels of av-gas from a hovercraft over to the jets winding down and commence refueling. The first ‘mach-buster’ in the world, the supersonic Yak is a superior weapons platform to anything else in its class, capable of vertical takeoff and landings, and armed with bio-warfare drop tanks containing a particularly heinous nerve agent, Sarin, which causes chronic neurological damage and, in some cases, death. There is also a variety of rockets and subsonic missiles with multiple warheads mounted under their wings. One jet carries long-range fuel tanks and a specially fitted N-22 Sunburn supersonic cruise missile under its belly for high value targets, a Russian anti-ship weapon the U.S. doesn’t have any defense against. A major question raised much later in the story by U.S. Joint Chiefs is how did Ch’u manage to fly under

their radar and obtain six operable 141's, a program long considered too expensive and scrapped by the Kremlin after several had crashed during air trials?

It is a quandary to Japanese naval intelligence who the aggressor is and what their intentions are. Fearful of escalating a situation into war, their decision to observe but not act is one of patience and calculation, founding principles of their ancient warrior civilization. The atoll group is indeed a valuable prize, for to control it affords not only a necessary outpost near Taiwan, but also ownership of a massive sea of oil beneath Diaoyu, something that interests the Chinese also. The world's courts, particularly the U.S., want them to have it. What they do not know is that Ch'u is on a strict timetable, and that the tiny islets provide him a forward military position with which to conquer Taiwan.

That August 8TH night, seven hours after the fall of the Diaoyutai Islands, Taiwan is attacked by Ch'u's forces. The General has tossed his fingers defiantly to the Taiwan Relations Act and America's pledge to defend her since Jimmy Carter signed it into law. Two EMP devices simultaneously detonate, knocking everything electronic out, one from a low-flying commercial airliner cleared to land in Taipei with a full compliment of passengers, the other in the island's south from an unmanned, remote controlled Cessna 150. A lightning aerial gas bombardment from his jump jets ensues, designed to quash rebellion, followed by a missile attack from loyalist generals on the mainland, taking out strategic locations and inflicting grave consequence on the island nation's population, leadership and military. Taiwan's navy, air and army forces decimated, Ch'u's army, at division strength and hidden in the holds of cargo ships, grain carriers and an oil tanker, quietly located at strategic ports around the island, storm out of cleverly hidden drawbridge style gates welded into the superstructure of each vessel and take control. Right out of a James Bond plot, it is an easy uprising for the fanatic's crack Manchu troops.

Two hundred miles away, Aegis radar aboard the diesel powered U.S.S. Kittyhawk, dispatched into the Taiwan Strait from Japan to intervene, picks up two incoming Chinese MiG-27 Flogger fighters. The aging carrier commander's orders are specific: Do not engage unless fired on. The jets buzz the deck and leave, full afterburners. Ship's command assumes they're taking photos and watch them disappear into the night beyond

radar range. Later, RADOPS again picks up a blimp, this time another type plane, something they don't have a signature recorded for, approaching at subsonic speed from an unidentified point in the Pacific. The unknown jet is in fact Ch'u's specially outfitted Yak-141, which has made a long flight out into the ocean east of Taiwan. Dropping its long-range tanks, it turns back to the northwest, towards the battle group, which is still a day's sail from the island nation, an unexpected ploy to confuse its target as to its origin. The plane's flight is tracked to within 50 miles. The radar "sees" the jet turn about and leave the area. Relief! However, radar never detects the pilot launch his weapon. The sea-skimming N-22 Sunburn cruise missile is packing over 500kg of explosives, its guidance system able to distinguish an aircraft carrier from her escorts. It comes smoking in under radar and is only sighted by human eyes moments before it rips into the command tower of Kittyhawk, crippling the carrier and killing 37 sailors. The sea runs red with American blood. Though luckily not a nuclear strike, it is a preemptive one, but from who? Fingers point to a recalcitrant China, others to Iran and *Al Queda*. Nothing can be proved. The attack brings the U.S. military to DEFCON 2, a state of force readiness not seen since the Cuban missile crisis. A second carrier group, the more modern, nuclear powered John Stennis and her battle squadron, ordered in by USPACOM to 'rescue and support, and not engage' is slogging it through a fierce, howling typhoon, the power of which has not seen in decades, off the coast of Cambodia, near Cam Ranh. Headed north through towering waves and gale force winds, it will be days before the Stennis can assist. The Kittyhawk, though badly damaged and listing five degrees to port can still launch and retrieve if ordered, but will be on its own.

Call Reid is called to the 'Tank Room,' a nuclear proof command chamber deep below the Pentagon to give a high-level briefing to the joint chiefs. There, he spells out his suspicions; that Ch'u is using Taiwan as a springboard to attack mainland China. His suspicions aren't without merit, having studied the General's military tactics and war campaigns extensively a year earlier while stationed at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing. What he discovers proves his fears. Intelligence confirms the General, twice decorated by Chairman Mao thirty years earlier and later disgraced at public trial for fueling an uprising against the government, has control of strategic missile batteries and select units of the Chinese navy and army

through loyal party insiders. Spies within the government also confirm the kidnapping of the Chinese president, held hostage at an unknown location. It is obvious now what General Ch'u intends: to overthrow the Beijing government. Call Reid knows the type of man his adversary is; a romantic, passionate warrior of the old ways. He compares him to the great Gen. George Patton, who similarly dreaded modernism of society and war practices. Call Reid, in his own way, admires him. He is not alone. China's impoverished see him a patriotic hero and savior from imprisonment of Western influences, which are poisoning their ancestry, ways and beliefs. Much of the people support him. Many believe he is the great Manchu chieftain Nurhaci reincarnate, whose organization of the Manchu people and first attack on the Ming Dynasty laid the framework for the conquest of China. Nurhaci carried the same aura with his people as Gengis Khan did with the Mongols.

China's Central Military Commission informs U.S. Naval Intel that Ch'u, as insurance, has placed a nuclear device, a dirty bomb, at a strategic location in Beijing in the event that his plans to overthrow the government are compromised. They receive the information after a brutal interrogation of a high-ranking Ch'u sympathizer, missile chief General Yang, commander of 2ND Artillery Corps, who had given the order to launch missiles on Taiwan. After he finds out there is a warrant issued for him, he tries to shoot himself but the gun is taken away after military police burst into his base office and arrest him. Immediately fired, he is transported to Beijing in chains and interrogated. Tough and resolute, conventional torture fails, but not a needle full of an experimental, brain-destroying truth serum, KWG, used by military intelligence, and he unwillingly tells his interrogators where his men are holding President Loong. The elderly Chinese leader is near death after repeated beatings, under heavy guard in a dank cell room deep beneath Xu Da Temple near Shanhaiguan Pass, a castle fortress at the Great Wall. Built in 583 A.D., near the Bohai Gulf, Shanhaiguan, translated Mountain and Sea Pass, is a pass stretching into the sea to the south, 20 miles away, and relying on the mountains to the north, which once served guardian to ancient China.

The Chinese want Navy SEAL assistance, but only if Lieutenant Fang, a crack Chinese counterinsurgency leader and sniper who had protected Venezuela's Hugo Chavez from C.I.A. assassination in 2005, will accompany them. Secretly, the Chinese want to learn

everything they can from the elite U.S. Special Forces unit to make their own unconventional warfare tactics more effective, stronger, and deadlier.

Reactivated to military duty, Call Reid is ordered to Beijing. His flight is not without mishap, the military Gulfstream G4 he travels in nearly brought down by a missile launched from a Ch'u missile battery on the mainland. His mission, to take command of his old unit, a band of shadow warriors he thought had been killed in Iraq during a hostage rescue at the latter part of the 2ND Persian Gulf War. The Defense Department cloaked their demise for reasons of mission security when the CIA employed his men to kill Chavez. With Fang's aid, he must free the Chinese president, find and disarm the nuclear weapon in Beijing, and assist in General Ch'u capture.

What no one suspects, nor will anyone until it is too late, is that General Ch'u's influence reaches into the most powerful institution on Earth, the oval office. Under the General's control, stooge President Dan Harbinger is a diabolical, crafty man. Raised secretly under Ch'u's wing at a Texas extremist camp in the mid-fifties, Harbinger rises quickly to power in Congress as Minority Leader. The General's political influence and connections are considerable. After the Vice President is mysteriously killed while riding his horse, Harbinger is nominated by the president to replace him and forgo the presidential line of succession afforded him under the 25TH Amendment, in light of scandal within his cabinet. In his mind, Harbinger, a close school friend at Yale, is the only one he can. Soon after, Harbinger is alone with the president in the oval office, slips him poison in his drink, and the president dies later in the evening in bed, an apparent heart attack. Harbinger, by his diabolical act, ascends the most powerful throne on Earth. His first presidential order is to all US naval forces, "Observe General Ch'u's buildup but do not engage under any circumstances, even if fired upon." This pisses off his Admirals and Generals, who want to take the fight to the Chinese, but quickly back down. They're not willing to commit career suicide. Hell, the head of a 'high-rank' has already rolled, a Rear Admiral commanding the Kittyhawk battle squadron, who was relieved of command after authorizing 'training' flights into Taiwan airspace. One of the three jets he had dispatched, an F-18 Hornet, was shot down by a rebel missile launched from one of Ch'u's mobile truck launchers in northern Taiwan. He has the island totally locked down. Sweepers he controls have laid a perimeter of mines in the northwestern most extent of Taiwan, a deterrent to any naval

force wanting to land marines and liberate the island. It is six hours since the Kittyhawk attack. Fire crews have extinguished the blazes. All that remain are embers glowing in the night. Casualties at a minimal, the big diesel powered carrier lists three degrees to port, a noticeable battle scar.

It appears the world's biggest superpower can do nothing. Harbinger, it seems, controls the fate of western civilization firmly in his hands. Nothing will stand in the way of his goal, which is to serve General Ch'u, his master. A crisis has befallen humanity. Political and military stabilization needs to be reestablished in the region. Many sensitive treaties and are at great risk. A nuclear exchange would be beyond catastrophic. It would be total annihilation, or Armageddon. It is his job, his duty, his destiny to save the day. The one obstacle that is an intangible; the one factor that can trip him up; the one detail that he is unaware of, is that his president, the most powerful man in the world, works for Ch'u.

THE STORY'S GOAL:

- Stop General Ch'u from achieving total control of mainland China,
- Locate a nuclear device that threatens to detonate in central Beijing and kill several million Chinese,
- Free President Loong, who has been kidnapped by General Ch'u's men and held in a secret chamber at Shanhaiguan Pass, a fortress at the Great Wall, which served as guardian to ancient China, and restore rightful, elected power to China,
- Avert a nuclear exchange between superpowers,
- Bring General Ch'u and his military henchmen to justice,
- Remove Harbinger from power.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

CALL REID, the Protagonist:

Tall, dark and handsome, Call Reid is well liked with his peers in naval intelligence and extremely competitive. Down-to-Earth and levelheaded, he is a man who cares more about

the well-being of others than himself. In his mid-forties, he has spent much of his life in China studying Dynastic rule up until the Japanese, before WWII, deposed the last Emperor. A Naval Intelligence Officer and a Joint Specialty Officer, he holds a master's degree from the Defense Intelligence College. Formerly Executive Assistant for CNO's Strategic Studies Group at the U.S. Naval War College, he was stationed at the U.S. embassy in China from 1988 to 1992 during the Tiananmen Square student uprising. Thereafter, he transferred to COMSIXTHFLT as Political-Military Officer, where he provided intelligence support during Operations "Attain Document" and "Prairie Fire." He speaks Cantonese and five other languages fluently. An absolute brilliant specialist in Joint and Strategic Intelligence, he is a qualified Surface Warfare Officer and an expert on Sino-Chinese affairs. Today, he is advisor to the Defense Department on matters of foreign intelligence. A year earlier, he joined Defense Secretary Brolland's staff to analyze General Ch'u's military build-up, reporting only and directly to the secretary himself. He is the only person in the world who knows the motivation, character and threat of General Ch'u, the story's "Antagonist."

However, he is torn emotionally after having lost his pregnant wife to a sniper bullet meant for him on the grounds of the U.S. Embassy in Beijing a year ago. All he has left is an empty home, an unused child's gym in the back yard still wrapped in plastic, and a loving red setter. This, coupled with him losing his SEAL team on an unrelated covert mission some years earlier through no fault of his own, has made him question his abilities to protect and lead. He, not surprisingly, is a lost soul, a doubt that has pushed him into military advising, something safer than leadership.

Now, he will have to muster all his abilities to overcome these doubts in order to become the hero and savior that U.S. military forces look to him for. He must do this, otherwise civilization as we know it will be destroyed in a post-Armageddon world.

GENERAL MIANO CH'U, the Antagonist:

The General, late seventies, is a sane, calculating and influential Chinese military leader, who has amassed a formidable force of renegade troops under the radar of western powers. Well bankrolled, having made his money trading oil, his intent is to overthrow the Chinese

government and return the country to ancient Dynastic rule. But first, he must conquer Taiwan and use the island nation as a springboard to the mainland with the help of key PLA military leaders loyal to him — one controls China's missiles pointed at Taiwan, while another holds considerable influence over the country's navy. However dangerous he might seem to western democracy and globalization, he is humble, well loved by much of the Chinese people, and an intellectual and educated romantic. He is a mellowed version of General Patton who, like Ch'u, studies the successes and failures of ancient battles. Though twice decorated by Mao and promoted to lead all P.L.A. army forces, he was humiliated at public trial on suspicion of killing party members and thrown in Sunjoi prison, breaking rocks at a quarry, after the Chairman's death in 1976. It was a witch-hunt perpetrated by new party leadership fearful of his power. He became bitter for it.

Many years earlier, at 17, he had earned the nickname "Young Marshal" after inheriting control of Manchuria and parts of northern China along with his dead father's 200,000-strong army. Japanese invasion forces assassinated his father in 1932. For this, he dislikes the Japanese immensely and rightly so. A real threat to Sino-Chinese relations, not to mention a half-dozen treaties and joint communiqués that America is signatory to in the region, Ch'u is thought by many Chinese to be the next Nurhaci. He feels betrayed and victimized by his own country for all the years of loyal service he provided.

Now, he has Harbinger, the acting U.S. president and loyal disciple to his movement, firmly in his pocket. Most importantly, he has a lock-down on all U.S. forces through presidential order.

Nothing, it seems, will hinder his plans for total conquest.

OTHER CHARACTERS:

DAN HARBINGER, the Contagonist:

Mid-fifties, as Minority Leader of the House, he will soon succeed the throne of power as Acting U.S. President through deception, murder and treason. He will get to office much like Gerald Ford did, bypassing the Line of Succession as laid out in 25TH Amendment.

However, that is where the similarity between the living memory of the great statesman Gerald Ford, who served this country well, and the lowly, cutthroat Dan Harbinger, a man who wants to destroy it, ends!

Though seductively charming, he is a hateful, insecure and brash man with a severe chip on his shoulder. Secretly raised a Clansman on a Texas panhandle extremist camp during his early childhood in the '60s when the South was in turmoil, he knows how to get what he wants. A crafty individual, he is someone you should treat with great care or be very sorry you ever met him. A true asshole, his mission is to deliver the free western world to General Ch'u, the story's "Antagonist," at any cost, even if it means sacrificing his own military forces to do so. Do not put anything past this son-of-a-bitch! HE WOULD!

Born and raised secretly on a militarist camp in Texas during the '50s, when he turned five the camp was raided by the F.B.I. who didn't, AND DOESN'T, know about him or his surreptitious past. In the company of loyalists to Ch'u, he witnessed the massacre from a distance, including his beloved grandfather, and swore revenge.

Today, he is a threat to national security and a political pawn for Ch'u and his daughter, Mila, who served as the boy's 'minder' at the camp and raised him herself. Acting covertly, her training, brainwashing abilities and connections in Washington ensured his meteoric rise to power to what he is now.

Dan Harbinger holds the fate of western civilization, and indeed the world, firmly in his hands! And nothing will stand in the way of his goal, which is to serve General Ch'u, his master.

DEF. SEC. BROLLAND, the Guardian:

Brolland, mid-fifties, holds the highest office in the defense department. Tall in stature with James Brolin looks, he comes across as very levelheaded who will take responsibility for his actions and make those under his command accountable. He is a truly great, well-liked international ambassador, who exudes power but in a humble way and respects a handshake to seal a promise. The boss of Call Reid, the story's "Protagonist," he is more

than a slimy career politician. He is a friend to those he likes and respects, and will bend over backwards to make life easier for them. Even cop it on the chin and fade the heat from his superiors for the mistakes and shortfalls of his subordinates.

After discovering startling events — Taiwan overrun by General Ch'u, the “Contagonist,” the carrier Kittyhawk attacked by Chinese missiles, the Chinese president’s abduction, a nuclear bomb hidden somewhere in Beijing, he looks to Call Reid to find the Chinese leader, and locate and disarm the weapon. For this, he has given the green light to reactivate his rank and navy SEAL unit once in China. It is up to Brolland to provide whatever resources and war-power necessary for Call Reid to come through and save the day.

ADMIRAL SPRUANCE, the Emotion:

Spruance, 60, is a tall, well respected, fifth generation navy man who commands Battleforce Seventh Fleet, the largest naval battle group the U.S. has. His flagship, the USS Kittyhawk, is the only diesel-powered attack carrier left in the U.S. arsenal, abiding with Japanese non-nuclear treaties where the carrier is based. Upon Ch'u’s military buildup and threat, President Chambers, the story’s “Reason” character, orders him into the Straits to police-and-contain. It is a long three-day sail to the south. Spruance is overjoyed. He would love nothing better than showcase his battle group’s might to the world and crush this uprising.

When Chambers mysteriously dies, Spruance is ordered to stand-down by acting President Harbinger, the story's “Contagonist,” who secretly poisoned by Harbinger. The news, though unsavory and confusing, does not override his respect for chain-of-command and he begrudgingly complies. Still a day’s sail from Taiwan, he learns the island nation has been attacked. Naval intelligence satellites show photos of the country’s decimation. Fires blaze everywhere after its military forces and electronic infrastructure are neutralized by two mammoth EMP blasts. The firepower of his group, something he would dearly love to unleash against the aggressors and display some good ol’ American kick-ass, is for naught. He is ordered to hold short a hundred miles to the north and tread water.

Suddenly a chain of threatening events, acts of war, occur — his carrier is buzzed by two Chinese MiG's as a stir, but Harbinger orders him not to engage — a squadron of his F-18's is attacked by enemy missiles, one jet destroyed, a pilot killed, but still Harbinger presses him not to retaliate. Arguing with the acting president, who is an unreasonable, self-serving bastard, proves pointless. Spruance takes matters into his own hands and orders a retaliatory strike against the missile launchers. When Harbinger finds out about the attack while aboard Airforce One, he quickly relieves Spruance of command. A short time later, the carrier comes under a full-scale attack by SAM missiles fired from the Chinese mainland and sustains damage. His hands tied, he awaits the arrival of the John Stennis Battle Group, which is still fighting a fierce typhoon off the coast of Singapore. Maybe their battle commander, a close friend of his since Annapolis, will take the fight to them.

SAMPLE OF DIALOGUE:

INT. PENTAGON/SITUATION ROOM - DAY

Super: The Tank, Pentagon

Establishing. We descend a stairway and go through an archway, which gives the impression of entering a tank. Inside the lavishly appointed, super-secure Joint Chiefs' briefing room known as "The Tank," TWO CIVILIANS, in rumpled shirts, nursing coffee and cigarettes, sit around a conference table locked in heated discussion with FOUR GENERALS.

The smoke-filled room falls quiet when DEF. SEC. BROLLAND (62), and REID, in a navy Lt. Commander's uniform, enter. Cigarettes are quickly doused.

On the wall, a large state-of-the-art tactical screen divulges the locations of a dozen Russian and US submarines at sea.

Brolland raises an eyebrow.

DEF. SEC. BROLLAND
Bring up recon 320 from sat KH-13 an hour ago.

His voice resonates throughout the room, powerful, smooth, not overbearing in the slightest, rather, hypnotic, just as the MASSIVE SCREEN on the wall shows a live satellite feed focused on a sleek, black and mysterious stealth-like SHIP shrouded by fog in the bay of an atoll island. FIVE TROOP HOVERCRAFTS exit her well deck and race for the beach under cover of shellfire from the mother ship.

The screen suddenly goes dead.

A TECHNICIAN fights with his bank of computers to retrieve the feed, but cannot.

DEF. SEC. BROLLAND (CONT'D)
What the Sam Hell is goin' on?

TECHNICIAN
We've lost feed, sir. There's nothing wrong with our equipment. Indicators on my panel say it's with the satellites.

DEF. SEC. BROLLAND
How long, man?

The technician shrugs.

DEF. SEC. BROLLAND (CONT'D)
Well, get General Marshall on the horn at SPACECOM.
(turns to the room, sighs)
An important piece of real estate was invaded today. The Diaoyutai Islands lie 120 miles northwest of Taipei. For years, Japan, China, and Taiwan have fought over their control. Beijing informs me that these forces belong to a rebel faction we don't know much about, the China Liberation Party.
(pauses, grim)
Gentlemen, a ground-fired laser knocked out our eyes immediately the attack went green. We have to assume this action is a precursor to an invasion of Taiwan.

Everyone in the room listens to him with rapt attention, his presence overshadowing the room, oracular.

ON SCREEN: a b/w photo of General Ch'u in a highly decorated P.L.A. army uniform.

DEF. SEC. BROLLAND (CONT'D)
Their leader is General Ch'u, a warlord the world has to start taking notice of.
(turns to Reid)
This is Call Reid. He's with my office and knows the General.

Reid walks from the shadows, aloof and takes a seat behind Brolland, an act which gets his boss's attention.

DEF. SEC. BROLLAND (CONT'D)
No, come in closer, Call.

He moves his chair forward, opens a dossier and clears his throat, intimidated at the caliber of top brass in the room. All the medals are enough to sink a ship!

CALL REID

Th-thanks.. a year ago I joined Defense Secretary Brolland's staff to analyze General Ch'u's military build-up.

The lights in the room are dimmed. Ch'u face evolves through the various stages of his career onto a tactical screen upon the wall.

MONTAGE (EARLY CH'U PHOTOS):

- a 1935 photo of a young pimply Ch'u as a rebel freedom fighter, no uniform, leading a rag-tag army of peasants in a charge against superior Japanese forces..

CALL REID (CONT'D) (V.O.)

At the age of 17, Miano Ch'u inherited control of Manchuria and parts of northern China along with his father's 200,000-strong army, earning him the nickname "Young Marshal.."

- a photo of an old STEAM TRAIN blowing up after running over dynamite laid on the tracks..

- a photo of young Ch'u, now in uniform, ejected from the train by the blast..

- a photo of Ch'u, lying in the grass with broken ribs and leg, who can only watch as his horses and men die tragically in the disastrous inferno.

CALL REID (CONT'D) (V.O.)

..the Japanese assassinated his father by bombing his train because he refused to collaborate with them.

- a 1966 photo of an older Ch'u, now a Colonel in the Communist Army, shaking hands with an elated CHAIRMAN MAO.

CALL REID (CONT'D) (V.O.)

..and here, the General's rise to power..

- a 1974 photo of Ch'u, now promoted to General, salutes hundreds of missile trucks and armored vehicles parading the nation's might at Tiananmen Square.

- a photo of Ch'u being awarded the Country's highest honor by Chairman Mao, "Hero of the People's Republic."

CALL REID (CONT'D) (V.O.)

..then his fall from grace.

- a 1988 photo of Ch'u, disgraced at a public trial and stripped of rank after suspicion of murdering key People's Liberation Army party members..

CALL REID (CONT'D) (V.O.)

..many believe he was wrongly convicted, that he

was set up.

- a photo of him thrown into Sunjoi Prison, left to rot.
- a photo of him busting rocks in deplorable conditions with an ax-pick, surrounded by other malnourished prisoners and mean armed soldiers standing guard.
- a photo showing Party officials dragging a screaming CHINESE WOMAN with long hair away in chains from a country home.

CALL REID (CONT'D) (V.O.)

Here, the brutal execution of his wife, Gia..

- a photo of her killed by firing squad.
- a photo of a SQUAD OF COMMANDOS, well-armed, busting into Ch'u's prison..

CALL REID (CONT'D) (V.O.)

..then, the General's breakout.

THE PHOTO MORPHS.. TO LIVE SCREEN ACTION..

.. of machine gun fire around the cells, and prison guards lying dead..

.. of Ch'u, near death, being escorted out by friendlies..

.. to the safety of the mountains.

BACK TO SCENE - Reid sighs and looks about the room.

CALL REID (CONT'D)

General Ch'u is descendent to the great Manchu chieftain, Nurhaci, Emperor of the Qing Dynasty. Nurhaci's organization of the Manchu people and first attack on the Ming Dynasty laid the framework for the conquest of China by the Qing. He's well bankrolled, has the firepower, and controls two divisions of loyal troops that we know.

(pauses)

Don't underestimate his power with the Chinese people. Many think of him a patriotic hero and the next Nurhaci.

FOUR STAR GENERAL

(laughs)

Nurhaci? Never heard of him.

The man's beetle-browed and arrogant, the archetypal Cold War general. Yet there is something about him, his intelligence perhaps, that suggests he's playing a role he knows and believes in.

CALL REID

Nurhaci founded the Manchu State. He carried the same aura with his people as Gengis Khan did with the Mongols.

FOUR STAR GENERAL

Don't be so melodramatic!

CALL REID

General, it is my opinion that Ch'u not only seeks revenge against the Japanese for his father's death, but also wants to overthrow the Chinese government.

FOUR STAR GENERAL

Is he mad? I mean, taking on Japan AND his own government?

CALL REID (CONT'D)

No, General, quite the opposite. He is sane, calculating, and influential, not only with governments, but also with his following. That said, he is a very real threat to Sino-China

CALL REID (CONT'D)

relations, not to mention a half-dozen treaties and joint communiqués we're signatory to in the region.

FOUR STAR GENERAL

(reads a dossier)

Your background is impressive. A masters degree from the Defense Intelligence College.. a former Navy S.E.A.L... Exec Assistant for CNO's Strategic Studies Group at the US Naval War College. You were stationed at our embassy in China from 1988 to 1992, during Tiananmen. Then, you went over to COMSIXTHFLT as Political-Military Officer where you provided intelligence support during Operations Attain Document and Prairie Fire. You speak Cantonese and five other languages fluently. You're a Naval Intelligence Officer, a Joint Specialty Officer, a specialist in Joint and Strategic Intelligence, and a qualified Surface Warfare Officer. Now you're advising to the Defense Department on matters of foreign intelligence.

CALL REID

Thank you, General.

The General stands and walks over to the wall. He flicks a SWITCH, which cuts the circuit and the one-way glass defogs, divulging...

GENERAL'S POV: A COMMAND CENTER with large tactical screens, banks of computers, and radar and intelligence gathering equipment manned by TECHNICIANS.

The General presses the switch again, concealing the center. Troubled, he stares at the glass as if there's an answer in its shiny surface somewhere. But, all he can see is the reflection of his own face.

He looks up at the tactical screen displaying a live satellite feed of Chu's atoll assault.

FOUR STAR GENERAL

Apart from us, who else has eyes in the sky over the Taiwan Straits?

An AIRFORCE GENERAL snaps his fingers to his ADJUTANT, who opens a briefcase and presents him a file.

TWO STAR GENERAL

(from file)

Taiwan has ROCSAT-2, a geo-synchronous bird. Launched from Vandy, it's a low earth orbit sat, does two sweeps over Taiwan a day.

(looks at his watch)

..it won't be over the area for another nine hours. Frankly, it's not a certainty they'll even spot them without SAR technology.

FOUR STAR GENERAL

What about China and Japan?

TWO STAR GENERAL

China has Jianbing-3. It's more sophisticated, but grossly inferior to the radar sats we use. As for Japan, well, their focus is on North Korea and not the Taiwan Straits.

The General returns to his chair and shifts around uncomfortably.

FOUR STAR GENERAL

Are we to assume the rest of the world is blind to General Ch'u's movements?

TWO STAR GENERAL

Basically, General.

FOUR STAR GENERAL

It would seem the General has done his homework.
(to Brolland)

Do we inform Taiwan of his movements, or take a neutral stance?

DEF. SEC. BROLLAND

That's a call for the President to make.

FOUR STAR GENERAL

Has he been briefed?

DEF. SEC. BROLLAND

Yes, General.

(looks at his watch)

He's with the Chinese Ambassador at this very moment.

END SCENE