



# CHAPTER 5

Laurel Eisenhower, a brisk woman with sharp mind, wasn't considered one of the department's hot prodigies, but she had gained respect for her ability to put seemingly unrelated facts together into a coherent narrative. She had spent her first couple of years at State working the wacko pile. She'd finally managed to get off that detail and into a field unit once, but ended up transferring back after only a few months. Office rumor had that her first and last serious field op went sour, something about somebody killing an ambassador's aide somewhere. The most vicious whispers suggested that *her* casefile ended up in the wacko pile, and this was Eisenhower's punishment for screwing the pooch in a way the bosses couldn't understand.

This, as it turned out, wasn't too far from the truth. The case Laurel had worked on ended in spectacularly bad fashion, and she *did* see something that, as far as she knew, shouldn't be possible. Her encounter with the unusual convinced Laurel that, in the end, she ought to go back to desk work; less chance of seeing things there.

Laurel sighed faintly, pushing back unpleasant memories, and picked up the next file to check. Something interesting stuck out at her. There were lots of interesting things in the files down here, especially if you were of an extremely open mind, but this was interesting in the manner of not belonging.

"This shouldn't be here..." she mused.

"This" was a satellite image from one of the CIA's fleet of spysats. Orbital imagery was one of the most highly-prized things in the intelligence community, so why was this photo sitting here in the middle of the nut files? The picture showed a convoy of ships, including an aircraft carrier, leaving San Francisco Bay. Maybe someone took a picture of Fleet Week? The next item in the file was another photo, this time a more conventional surface shot of what looked like the same ships anchored in San Francisco, although the mooring didn't appear to be near any of the Navy ports, or even the shore. The third photo in the stack showed the fleet approaching a small island with a single port city. Smoke rose from places on the island as if they were on fire, especially around the city. A battle? Laurel tried to recall what islands the United States had invaded in the time these satellites had been around. It wasn't Grenada; the island's overall shape was similar, but there was a difference in scale and no sign of settlement beyond the harbour. The final photo in the file was another surface shot of the moored fleet in San Francisco, dated two months after the original picture according to the stamp on the back. The fleet wasn't all there, and the ships that were seemed to have suffered a fair amount of damage.

The files' content was by all appearances totally unrelated to the photos. It was as if someone had dropped the pictures into random files. Interesting. Laurel added a new category to the database for these pictures using the only written notation on any of the photographs, that word someone had hastily scribbled on the one picture: PACIFICA.

## OBLIVIOUS SPECTATORS





## STAYING IN THE DARK

The war remains in the dark because that's the best place for it. For B'harne's forces, the reason for staying covert is obvious; the deeds they do in the dark would not be willingly borne in the light. Brainwashing the masses is something best left to the shadows, after all. The old saying that "the devil's greatest trick was convincing the world he doesn't exist" applies very strongly to B'harne.

For the Jihad, the reasons for staying covert are a bit less obvious. While having the mundane population on their side would be a big push towards ending the war, the Jihad fears what might happen if the secret was revealed. Putting aside the issue of mass hysteria and the likelihood of panic in the streets, almost everything the Jihad does to further the war effort is illegal, immoral or at the least highly questionable. If mundane authorities knew what was happening could result in overregulation of the Jihad's activities (bad), freezes on Jihad activity (worse) or potentially legal or military action against the Jihad as terrorists, the real fight be damned (apocalyptically bad).

## KEEPING THE SECRET

Since both sides believe that they have something to lose by taking the war public, they work to keep the war hidden from prying mundane eyes. The main way they do this is by simply covering their tracks.

## HOW NOT TO BE SEEN

For the Jihad, this involves careful selection of when and where they go to battle, and then taking as many precautions as they can to avoid being seen by

mundane witnesses. Cleaning up after a large, public battle is the nightmare every Jihaddi officer dreads, because it often involves trying to convince several hundred people that they didn't see what they thought they saw.

Much of this type of cleanup duty is taken care of by carefully abusing "Men In Black" folklore. If things go wrong in a public area, specialists from a JAO cleanup detachment like TRES Corps Chi Squad will arrive dressed in identical black suits, and proceed to be subtly menacing to everybody in the area who's been speaking out about strange goings-on. While effective, this brute-force intimidation method isn't

popular with the Jihad, which prefers a more subtle approach to taking care of problems.

The subtle approach is to use the Jihad's network of liaisons to spread stories about the area. For example, if a JPV mage uses a powerful spell to swat aside a Purple Forces strike team, whoever the local liaison in the media is will spread a story about a gas leak causing either an explosion or hallucinations, depending on what's appropriate. This method of dealing with the evidence takes more time, as it relies on mundane media organs to spread the word, but preliminary studies by Chi Squadron suggest that it's more effec-

## The State of the Earth

Earth in the year 1999 is, on the surface, very much like Earth was in 1999 in the "real" world. The Cold War has finally stopped being a daily reality and is rapidly becoming something taught in history classes. The world on the whole is enjoying a state of relative peace and prosperity for the first time in decades. The Internet boom is in full swing throughout the West, as investors begin looking to computers and communications as the future of humanity.

This doesn't mean things are perfect, by any means. Low-level wars are being waged throughout the Third World, and the spate of ethnic violence in the former Yugoslavia has suddenly flared up. Politicians in the most powerful nation on Earth have gone strange with media overexposure en masse. The environment is on the wrong side of a desperate holding action, poor people are getting poorer while the rich get richer almost everywhere you go, and above it all terrorist groups are starting to make a big comeback in the Middle East.

Everybody's waiting for the next shoe to drop, or the hammer to fall. The Millennium is less than a year away (never mind the pundits who are complaining about the correct date being 2001, not 2000) and everybody's expecting something Big to happen when the clock strikes midnight. Whether it's Hell or Heaven on Earth, everybody in the world is waiting to see what happens next. It's a time of great atrocities and great acts of grace, a time of incredible turmoil as the world prepares for the next century.

In short, it's the perfect time for the Hidden War to be fought. The mundanes are all full of their own problems, leaving the Jihad and the Purple Forces a perfect opening to work in. As long as the mundanes don't know about the war, both groups can operate with impunity, so it's in their best interests to keep the war well away from the mundanes. They may be mundane, but they still outnumber the combatants by millions to one.



tive at keeping rumors from spreading than the brute-force approach.

B'harne's most effective method of concealing his true nature closely follows another old saying, he hides it in plain sight: Barney and Friends. Even the majority of the public that doesn't like B'harne's TV show consider it harmless, just another saccharine kids' show to be mostly ignored. With *Barney and Friends*, he not only manages to reach a large number of the most vulnerable and impressionable minds available, but instantly created for himself the most innocuous of all possible images with those he didn't immediately reach. The end result is that the vast majority of all humans would consider the idea of Barney as any sort of real and threatening or malevolent being laughable at best.

Television is B'harne's primary means of concealment, but not his only. Realizing that Earth's major religions and secular communities often dismiss or even ostracize smaller religions of differing beliefs, Barney used his influence and began to create several smaller religions early on in his campaign against Earth. When bits of the truth about Barney's nature crop up through incidents that can't be otherwise explained, there are various occult or alternative religious groups who identify the incident with whatever their mythos happens to be and latch onto it with religious fervor, gaining its immediate dismissal along with whatever group is trying its hardest to keep it from being dismissed by the majority of the public. Barney has a multitude of these groups ready and willing to help him keep his secret, and they don't even know the secret they're helping to keep. And these

groups, with a constant supply of what they perceive as proof of their beliefs, never question any of it.

### THE LOST

Sponge-minions present a major problem for Jihaddi cleanup operations. They may seem to come from nowhere — and for the Purple Forces they're merely inexhaustible cannon fodder — but they're really missing people. For every sponge minion, there's probably a family searching for them. This isn't 100% accurate (B'harne's minions often recruit from runaways and other desperate people on

the fringes of mundane society) but it is a depressingly common event.

With this in mind, the benefits of the Jihad's attempts to emphasize desponification over killing are obvious; if you kill a sponge, you have a dead missing person, and the investigations resulting from this may not shine favorably on the Jihad. With a desponged minion, though, you have a missing person who's probably going home, which means one less mundane search team. Fewer mundane search teams means fewer Jihaddi who have to work cleanup and more Jihaddi who are ready for active duty.

### BOUGHT AND SOLD

Sometimes, localized cleanup operations or hiding in plain sight just aren't enough to prevent the eyes of those in power from swinging in the war's direction. When this happens, the Jihad and the Purple Forces turn to directly influencing the centers of mundane power.

Both sides have a number of infiltrators in most levels of the American government. Most of them are well blended in, and to the outside observer would be nothing more than the same sort of pleasantly bland middle-management bureaucrats who inhabit government centers all over the world, utterly unnoticed but managing to see all, and who stop reports of purple dinosaur-related violence before they can get any higher. Many of the Jihad's liaisons are government workers of one type or another, and many of the wyrm-minions under the command of Liaison Winston do much the same thing. In these areas, it's not totally unusual to find Jihaddi and wyrm-minions working together to bury a particularly egregious incident.

When infiltration becomes impossible, then both sides turn to the other time-tested method of influencing government officials: bribery. The Jihad bribes government officials from behind the screens of false organizations; the officials aren't exactly sure of the organization's motives, but that's not really important. What's important is that the Jihad has lines of control on a number of politicians across the United States, but especially in Colorado (where the Jihad has a number of important bases); each of them is under the impression that there's a different corporation paying the bills, but they all know what to do. With their help, most of the higher levels of the government never learn anything about the Jihad, even that which slips through the fingers of the other operatives.

In contrast, the bribes B'harne pays out are often very centralized; the politicians in question know that they're getting kickbacks from a particular subsidiary of a particular corporation, and they know that they're being paid to look the other way. They don't know that their benefactor is planning on en-

### RUMORS...

*Certain McDonalds restaurants - not all of them, just some - have secret access tunnels to underground empires hidden in their walk-in freezers. One even has a huge underground cathedral devoted to Ronald McDonald. You can tell by the way the indoor play-rooms are arranged.*



slaving humanity, but then it's possible that they wouldn't really care as long as they keep jobs in their districts. Since most of B'harne's bribe money goes to ensuring that the *Barney & Friends* show remains on the air no matter what, that doesn't seem to be a problem.

## WHAT MAKES THE WORLD GO ROUND

Keeping the war running goes beyond having the most guns or spells; there's also the question of money and raw materiel.

The Jihad makes most of its money off of mundane investments and assets. New recruits will occasionally have significant assets to bring to the Jihad, but this is not accounted for in budgets. Other assets include actual corporations that the Jihad has set up for specific purposes (see box). One of those purposes is, of course, to add funds to the Jihad's treasury — struggle of good versus evil or not, the troops still like to be paid. Another is to provide an extra layer of safe areas for Jihaddi looking to stage attacks or hide out from enemy or mundane prying eyes.

The Jihad also has a series of investments in some of the less-legal parts of the global economy. Jihaddi operatives are actively involved in smuggling operations, most often gunrunning and "soft" drugs like marijuana, hashish or assorted psychedelics. The money involved in these activities is actually relatively minimal (the Jihad makes more on a daily basis playing the markets, anyway), but the connections made in the underworld are far more valuable than the money involved. The Jihad's underworld connections provide extra safe areas and other resources for field operatives caught out in the open; mention the right names and you've got a bed for the night, anonymous transportation, false ID, or any number of other things readily available in such circles, no questions asked. There has been some considerable debate in the Jihad's upper ranks about the morality of the Jihad's illegal activities. Some Jihaddi have taken a stance that the group should be as upright as possible, while others have taken a more pragmatic stance. Currently, the Triumvirate has leaned towards the pragmatic stance; this may change as its membership changes, however.

The Purple Forces make their money off of merchandising, PBS fees, revenues redirected from other divi-

## Sample Shell Operations

*ETI Technosystems:* ETI is a producer of specialized electronics and software for the consumer and industrial market. In truth, ETI is one of several Jihad-held companies that trades (less-advanced) Jihad technology for cash. The company is based out of Alamosa, CO, previously a sleepy ranching town that is slowly becoming a model of post-industrial prosperity.

*IJT, Inc.:* The International Jihad Treasury holds many of the Jihad's mundane financial assets. Based out of Halifax, Nova Scotia, IJT is a "black box" investment firm which acquires funds for the Jihad and distributes them under the guise of charity work and other non-profit outlays.

*Verthandi Import/Export:* This New Mexico-based company does a modest business transporting exotic goods around the Americas, but more importantly it provides covert transport for Jihaddi equipment and operatives, as well as maintaining supply caches and boltholes for Jihaddi caught out in the open.

*Templar Mining, Inc.:* Based in San Francisco, the Templar Deep Sea Mining Corporation is a publicly-owned operation, with the JAOs as majority shareholders. Templar Mining provides 10% of its daily production to the Jihad to maintain the resource base for the production of war materiel.

*The Church of Barney:* The primary enemy face to the public, the Church presents itself as a stereotypically dippy New Age religion, while insinuating into everything it possibly can. The Church's proper headquarters are in Washington, DC, but "temples" can be found in almost every major city in the United States. Also, the Church has a compound in the swamps on the Texas-Louisiana border near the town of Port Neches. The place, known by the locals as "the Loony Bin," is being cautiously investigated by the police, fearing another Waco.

*FunCo Toys:* This company produces most of the toys, dolls, playsets and all the other many types of merchandising available based on the *Barney & Friends* TV show. The vast majority of the enemy's legitimate funds come from FunCo products. The Chicago company has, as such, been completely taken over by wyrm-minions.

*Happy Time Studios:* The "official" production studio of the *Barney* show, Happy Time also does a brisk business renting out sets to television shopping channels, televangelists, direct-to-video movie producers and other similar members of the bottom rung of entertainment society. The studio's main stages outside Dallas have plenty of clients, as well as plenty of Barney episodes to film.



sions of the Lyons Group, and black market sales of looted and stolen goods from battlefields and sponged people's possessions. Also, there is a public (if weird) "Church" of B'harnii, which solicits donations and usually takes as much of new members' money as possible. The mastermind and organizer behind the cult, Winston, keeps his role as such secret. The cult encourages donations and support from causes. They do certainly get kids and troublemakers off the streets — it's just that they don't keep them out of trouble afterward.

## TURNING ON THE LIGHTS

For all that the Jihad and the Purple Forces do to keep the war out of the public eye, they can't be sure of everything. Though nothing truly catastrophic has leaked out — yet — small things occasionally slip through the cracks and into the public consciousness.

## IN DAYS OF YORE

The Jihad's battle is only a decade old, barely enough time for it to be proper history, much less mythology. But elements of the war have existed for hundreds of years prior to the High Prophet's revelation and the call to arms.

The Lyrans have had a sporadic presence on Earth since the third century BC. Most of this time was spent researching humanity and devising new and better ways of eliminating them. Remnants of western European and northern African folklore from this time period about masked faeries, cloaked demons, djinn and strange monsters suggest a pattern of Lyran involvement in that general area. Similar patterns show up along the fringes

of Qin Dynasty China and in stories from aboriginal Australia. (Interestingly enough, the Australian stories say that the masked demons were rather soundly defeated, then they never show up again.) In more recent history, stories of alien abduction and experimentation have a definite feel of Lyran activity, although most abductees blame the Greys for their encounter.

Maenads, or Maenadesque creatures, appear again and again through old legends. Obviously the name "Maenads" has a Greek connection to the old Dionysian mystery cults and their often

violent behavior, but there's no real evidence one way or the other whether or not the Maenads were active in Greece around that time. The stories of the Benandanti — shape-changing Italian witches who fought with the Devil (see p.STii61) — suggest the possibility of active Maeand conflict in the area during the Renaissance. Shapeshifting nature spirits who, if they aren't friendly to humanity are at least neutral, appear in the folklore of just about every culture on the planet. How many of these were actual Maenads, and how many were just stories, not even the Maenads

## The Jihad Files

The pop-culture TV phenomenon *The X-Files*, launched shortly after the Jihad began, has tackled every single form of conspiracy theory known to Man, and made up a few of their own. So naturally there have been episodes involving the Jihad, though the name "Jihad" has thankfully been absent.

Early in the second-season mythology, the show aired an episode titled "Die Hand Die Verletzt," where Mulder and Scully track apparent "witch killings." The rituals shown on screen were amazingly similar to known Lyran rites, and a little investigation by a Jihad spin team learned that the episode was patterned on an incident which occurred in 1987 in upstate Wisconsin. Naturally, individuals on both sides were somewhat disturbed.

Jihad lore appears again during the fourth and fifth seasons, as Mulder and Scully cross paths with a group of "alien hunters" equipped with beyond-state-of-the-art weapons and tracking gear. Mulder's hunt for the Truth (with a capital T) was often stymied during those seasons by the "Hunters" wasting the alien/government conspirator before he could ask any questions. As television went, the Hunter arc varied between pretty bland to pretty godawful. Still, for some unknown reason the mysterious alien hunters became cult figures in the X-Phile fan community.

What Chris Carter knows (or doesn't know) has never been conclusively proven. Jihaddi telepaths have pronounced him free of Enemy influence, and have suggested that Carter has merely pieced together various bits of Jihad lore already in the conspiracy-theory mainstream. However, Psychic Research students at the JPV have suggested that some of the details of Jihad lore may have been left behind in Carter's brain by the telepathic scans, possibly indicating that the producer/writer is in fact a latent sensitive.

Whatever the rationale, references to Jihaddi technology or tactics have not appeared since the end of the fifth season, as *The X-Files* moved into trying to focus on alien invasions, men smoking cigarettes, and who's sleeping with whom. Overall quality and credibility has plummeted, and for everybody in the Hidden War, that's a good thing.



really know.

Stories of Atlantis and the Illuminati are quite common, especially since the Theosophical movement of the 19th century. Most of these stories are, of course, horribly wrong when it comes to the details, but this has never stopped a good story from being told. Many of the stories are popularized by the Bavarians who have a vested interest in keeping people chasing myth and not looking in their direction. Hints of what the Atlantean Illuminati has been up to through the time of recorded history can be found in Taoist legends, pre-Islamic folklore from West Africa and the story of Quetzalcoatl. Or at least, that's what *they* want you to think...

## THE BRAVE AND THE MAD

Because they're so close to the fringes where most of the war happens, conspiracy theorists are often the first ones to make contact with the detritus left behind by the Jihad's struggle. None of them actually *know* the origin of the artifacts collected — more often than not they're attributed to their pet cause, be it the Zionist One World Order, the UFOs, the Illuminati or the Invaders from Planet Q.

Artifacts loose on the fringe market range from the most basic personal weapons and communications equipment to the hulks of wrecked vehicles, samples of frozen (and extremely dangerous) Saetherian tissue, and even a complete prototype of a WEDJEE mecha. Many of the Jihad artifacts out there have fallen into the hands of the Planetary network which has noticed a common origin, if not an actual pattern.

As a result of all of these leaks, various aspects of Jihad procedure and activity have leaked into the canons of

conspiracy groups. Those Jihaddi who enjoy pop culture extrapolations of conspiracy theories may be surprised to see familiar weapons and technology featured in the arsenal of completely different foes! (see *The Jihad Files*, p.77)

The important part of this is that, for all of the tiny details that have leaked out, the big one is still firmly secret: the Jihad is the only organization that knows about B'harne and his plans. The idea has lurked into popular humor, which may or may not make the situation better; although it destroys any mainstream credibility the Jihad might have, were it to need such credibility, it does mean that most evidence about B'harne will be laughed off as a hoax by mundanes.

But not by all mundanes. Theories behind Jihaddi activity can be extrapolated into calls to action by groups otherwise unaffiliated with the war. MAUL, with their habit of disguising operations as US military maneuvers, is particularly vulnerable to this sort of misinterpretation. Several militia and neo-Nazi groups have video footage of MAUL operations, and are using it as "evidence" that the UN is making its move towards one-world government even as we speak. It's possible that the Jihad may be used as a pretext to start another round of militia-related violence in the US.

## BLOWBACK

Sometimes, despite all attempts to keep it quiet, an operation will explode completely out of control and land full in the public view. When this happens, the entire conflict will come screeching to a halt as everybody redirects their forces to try and contain the secret.

*The Studio Four and Montreal Incident:* The most well-known blowback incidents happened early in the Jihad's

career when overeager operatives managed to successfully raid a Purple Forces TV studio and then cause an international incident in Canada, respectively. These incidents led to a complete overhaul of the way the Jihad conducts operations in the public eye, as well as laying the groundwork for the first JAO command structures.

*Operation WORLDWALK:* This particularly nasty incident came close to lifting the veil on the war, but for reasons that nobody's entirely sure of, the veil slammed down immediately afterwards, more secure than before. Most Jihaddi put it up to dumb luck and continue on their merry way.

*Operation PHOENIX:* The X'hirq invasion by all rights *should* have blown the lid off the war once and for all. The X'hirq invaded in full force, attacking targets all over the planet. By some accounts, major *cities* in North America were nearly reduced to rubble by the ferocity of the X'hirq attack. Add to that the lightshow as the Jihad's orbital defenses slugged it out with the alien attack fleet, and there is no logical way that the secret could be kept.

And yet, it was kept. "How" is still something of a mystery, but apparently the X'hirq - as part of their "test" - decided to essentially reboot the entire planet, using a powerful magic working to repair all of the damage to mundane property and remove the memories of the invasion from mundane minds. This working, and the incredibly patronizing arrogance it showed, is just another reason among many that the X'hirq are quietly loathed by PHOENIX veterans.

*Operation HOMEFRONT:* While most of Operation HOMEFRONT was kept well under cover, there was one nasty blowback incident in Austin, Texas; part of the mass-spongification array was concealed in the University of Texas belltower, and was protected by a



wyrm-minion with a sniper rifle. The resulting firefight between the wyrm-minion, a local TRES Corps operative sent after the array element, and the police nearly ended up with the Jihaddi in jail and the top of the belltower sheared off by an exploding piece of Wyrmttech.

*The Milpitas Incident:* A smaller incident happened in late 1997 when a VRDET scout on weekend leave ran into an overeager spongin strike team, a vacationing TRES soldier, and a Lyran cone-of-power ritual, all inside the giant shopping mall in Milpitas, California. The resulting hilarity ended with the spongin eliminated, the Lyrans foiled and a large chunk of the mall in ruins. In the end, Jihaddi liaisons cast blame on shoddy construction in order to prevent the secret from getting out.

*Candlestick Park:* Not every blow-back incident is combat-related. Case in point: the command staff of VRDET Explorations decided to go Dutch to a San Francisco Giants home game. Unfortunately, a botched invisibility spell meant that their better-than-most seats (on top of the scoreboard) got them a bit more attention than they really wanted. The whole incident was resolved peacefully, although a bit flashier than most Jihaddi cover stories.

## THE ANOMALY

Not every person who notices Jihad activity is a madman, however, and not every government official is a dupe or a plant. Like it or not, the Jihad's movements across the planet make ripples that can be picked up and analyzed.

Officially, the pattern of odd movements and transactions left behind by the Jihad is called the Anomaly. The Anomaly represents a black hole in the modern intelligence community; they know *something* is going on in there, but they don't know *what*, and that worries

many people in high places. When the US Air Force finds a mole in Space Command that vanishes before they can make an arrest, or when a BATF investigation hits a wall when looking into gunrunning activities in Texas, these events go into the Anomaly file.

Anomaly activity is noticed worldwide, but the lack of active intelligence inside the Anomaly itself precludes any mundane agency from figuring out what the hell is going on. Occasionally intelligence operatives or special ops teams are tasked with following the Anomaly's trail back to the source and reporting on what they find. To date, none of these operatives have returned; they're usually written off as "casualties of war" or "training accidents" when convenient, and their spymasters start another ulcer.

Response to the Anomaly is something akin to controlled panic. Without a better estimate of how the Anomaly works, no mundane force has any real understanding of how to counter it. This leads to occasional bursts of rampant paranoia in the halls of power, as people who have only recently been given clearance find out about the Anomaly and try to Do Something about it. Doing something often leads to experienced people falling down the rabbit hole, which ultimately leads to the person who made the original demand to Do Something getting demoted or fired.

The complete lack of any data about the nature or motives of the Anomaly spawns numerous conspiracy theories within the intelligence community itself. While the theories are a bit more grounded in reality than most mundane speculation, they don't come as close to the capital-T Truth. The Jihad's fantastic nature is beyond the more pragmatic outlooks of mundane intelligence analysts, and as such any analysis that ignores the Anomaly's apparent super-

natural abilities will ultimately fail to get to the heart of the matter. Despite this lack, the mundane military-intelligence community has come to the conclusion that the Anomaly is one large group, probably terrorist in nature, working towards an unknown goal.

The situation is ultimately unstable, and something has to give. Eventually somebody on the mundane side of the equation will attempt to force the issue of the Anomaly in public, and what happens next, nobody knows. It's possible that the Anomaly will remain mostly-unbreakable by the intelligence community, or it's possible that the Jihad may finally end up with the secret compromised, and forcing the War onto a new footing in the glare of public opinion.

GMs with an interest in spy games can easily upset the status-quo by sending their players down the rabbit hole of the Anomaly to find the Jihad's war, and then give them the tough choice: go back, report on the Jihad and spark a new conflict with the mundanes, or vanish like all the others and join up with the War?