

CHAPTER ONE

UNREST

Chandler's documentary exposed the seedy underbelly of the country's efforts to suppress domestic unrest. After the release of the reorientation camp video and the revelation of the Elysium Protocol, the Jefferson administration faced great pressure to have his proposed panel give the American public something in which to believe. Civil liberty critics suggested the government targeted the underclass and the lower middle class for these camps. The president convened a panel with a heavy military footprint. The American public held the military in high esteem after 9/11. The military rose to be the most respected part of the federal government.

Some feared the public's adoration of the uniform could make them overlook their accountability. The increased use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and artificial intelligence limited the body bags seen on the nightly news. Eisenhower's warnings about the undue influence of the military-industrial complex were a distant memory. There was now the added concern of former military staffing positions in the president's cabinet and security apparatus, positions often held by civilians.

President Jefferson's security and intelligence leaders possessed vast military experience. These military men knew all along what occurred in the reorientation camps and the meaning of the Elysium Protocol. These men saw the country slipping away and felt they needed a way to bring order, albeit with what would be perceived to be more benign means — mental reprogramming using virtual reality. Army doctors involved with Cerebrum Technologies perfected the technology that sought to

make domestic detainees more patriotic, more submissive, and more compliant.

Littered among the president's top advisers were former military brass — Director of National Intelligence (DNI) Gerald Burkemper retired as an Air Force general. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Victor Haydon served in the Air Force as a general. The National Security Advisor (NSA), Trent Carter, had a brilliant career in the Marine Corps and retired as a general.

The Secretary of Defense had fallen ill in late November, which led to his replacement by Trent Carter. A former naval intelligence officer, Eric Greich, filled Carter's NSA role. The military-industrial connection extended to the Secretary of State, who'd served as CEO of the nation's largest defense contractor.

While the president's top advisers didn't comprise the investigatory panel, they had a heavy influence in deciding its composition. They advised against revealing too much for fear of giving domestic or foreign terror suspects information about U.S. counter-terror methods and procedures. They suggested delaying the panel's report. They reasoned that over time the American public would move on to other matters if they fed the media information about economic progress and economic slogans — the Plan for Prosperity and the We Are the Future campaign.

We Are the Future posters depicted a man, woman, and child standing in front of the Stars & Stripes looking upward and right. The Jefferson administration hoped to rally the public around family and flag. They bombarded the media with public service messages about the patriotic campaign. A visitor to the nation's capital couldn't escape the messaging in government buildings and public transportation. Sports leagues carried the messaging within their own apparel. Public universities began to offer

economics courses with case studies featuring the Plan for Prosperity.

The president's men thought it important to cheerlead these patriotic campaigns to maintain the nation's morale during the continued economic crisis. If that approach didn't work, they would distract the public with more attention on the War on Terror versus Islam and cyber hackers, with foreign hackers receiving an extra dose of venom.

For some in the foreign hacking community, it became a matter of sport to break into U.S. companies or the government. The FBI had uncovered a sophisticated malware scheme that robbed U.S. banks of some \$300 million. The same Russian hacker was allegedly responsible for a ransomware attack that disabled thousands of computers in the United States. The government offered a \$10 million bounty, though there was never any expectation of his extradition, not with the protection offered by the Russian government who hired the same hacker for espionage against Georgia and Ukraine. He was simply part of a larger band of hackers who saw it as their patriotic duty to hack the United States whether the Russian government paid them or not. As long as they didn't disturb domestic networks in Russia, the local authorities left them alone.

On the political front, the Supreme Court had given the president until the end of 2021 to resume the undecided election of 2020 in the House and Senate. In early December of 2021, the president had made plans for Congress to proceed. Then the bond market crashed sending interest rates soaring to levels not seen since 1980. Since the U.S. Treasury had shifted the maturity of most debt to shorter terms, new debt obligations were immediately impacted by higher interest rates, skyrocketing financing costs. Businesses also felt the pinch with soaring rates

on short-term paper. The stock market took a dive and other world markets moved in sympathy. The Global Settlement Bank, an organization responsible for U.S. economic policy, called an emergency meeting in Geneva with the financial leaders of the developed countries. Financial Stability Board (FSB) Secretary Malcolm Holloway and the Treasury Secretary would represent the United States. World leaders agreed to put even tighter controls over their economies in order to stabilize the crisis.

Nameless, faceless hackers took advantage by wreaking havoc in the nation's capital. The government thought the hackers were state-sponsored. The hackers may have just been individuals seeking to harm the USA. Some may have been hired by nation-states on a contract basis to carry out the attacks. Unlike previous hack activity, neither Omni nor the Five Tribes claimed them. Attributing attacks in the cyber world had always been challenging. It came down to one of three scenarios for the authorities: identifying who did it, identifying who did it and convincing the hacker, or identifying who did it and convincing the world of the hacker's identity. The Jefferson administration struggled to do any of them.

Fearful Congressmen and women retreated to their districts despite President Jefferson's call for their appearance in the nation's capital to resolve the 2020 election. The president's staff encouraged him to let the Congress retreat. Congressmen didn't feel safe and neither D.C. nor Capitol police could guarantee their safety with increased lawlessness in the city. Protests became more violent and patriot groups had descended on the city to maintain their own version of law and order. It was unknown when Congress might reconvene.

The Secret Service felt wary about keeping the president safe in the White House or Camp David during the disruptions. The

disruptions included the city's power grid and its automated vehicle fleet. The airports of Reagan National and Dulles had also seen a curtailment of traffic.

Amid all the chaos, Senator Matt Geringer and Senator Alfonso Chancellor, both of the Independent American Party (IAP) had mustered enough support in the state legislatures to convene an Article Five convention. Though an Article Five movement had been in play for several years, the 2020 presidential election and Jefferson's executive action had been the catalyst to see it through to fruition, albeit with a great amount of coaxing by Senator Geringer. This convention would move forward in Colorado in early February of 2022.

As the president and his staff met in January of 2022, they would face a new crucible in their efforts to hold the nation together.

The Situation Room or Sit Room comprised a 5,500 square foot complex of rooms located in the West Wing of the White House. It had a relatively small conference area and an intelligence management center. The Sit Room housed National Security Council Watch Officers sitting on curved, dual-tiered rows of computer terminals where they received all manner of data worldwide. There were also five secure video rooms, a secure feed to Air Force One, and in a style befitting Get Smart, private phone booths resembling cones of silence.

The president normally sat at the end of a long, wooden conference table, forming a horseshoe, with six chairs on each side. On the wall opposite the president hung a large, ultra-high definition video monitor, with similar monitors flanking the walls on both sides of the room. The newly adorned Sit Room included still images on the side monitors of the We Are the Future