

The Black Stars Chronicles is the title of the setting that we will be playing in. Derived from *The Red Star Chronicles*, the stories of 'the Operative', the campaign takes place in the universe and setting of his origin. Characters in this setting may be of various nationalities, but all of them will be in one way or another citizens of the HHPP— Narodnyy Novaya Respublika Rossii, or People's New Republic of Russia —that have either joined into the People's Red Army and worked their way into the Special Operations Service underneath Colonel Anton Narakov's command, or have been recruited by him directly. Colonel Narakov oversees the units within the S.O.S. known as the Strakhznakov— translates as Dreadmarks —which are their elite. The unit that everyone knows exists, but no one knows who are; a military ghost story used to frighten the enemies of the HHPP.

The geopolitical face of the globe has changed a great deal. In the last four hundred years, America has fallen as a superpower. A lengthy chain of events lead to the ultimate downfall; poor economic decisions focusing on external production for used goods left the country near bankruptcy and without any allies willing to provide financial support. Without any industrial base remaining, the U.S. had no choice but to cut their military spending back, and without any sign of sustainability in sight, the cuts kept coming. Large portions of the Navy, Army, and Air Force were decommissioned; equipment either broken down for resources or sold off— much of it to the United Nations —before the Coast Guard was privatized, and what remained of the National Guard and Army was absorbed into the Marines.

While the United Nations was able to take up many of the disenfranchised soldiers and equipment of the American Military, the lack of clear leadership at the start created a power vacuum in much of the world, destabilizing many regions. What had been diplomatic spats between nations began to grow into full blown conflicts, and soon the world was on the brink of war again. The U.N. did what it could, but without a clear superpower, there was no threat of true response. Alliances broke down and uncoordinated terrorist attacks, each inspired by the previous, began to break down global stability.

Plagued by constant economic troubles of their own the European Union rapidly lost cohesion as the infighting continued, and soon nations began to abandon the notion of a uniformed alliance. Nations fell like dominoes, each having relied on another that could no longer support them. Attempting to focus on their own issues, and supported by the mass exportation of agriculture from the already crippled United States, few countries were prepared for the disasters to come.

During these conflicts, the U.N.'s functionality was strengthened, using the purchased and donated equipment from across the world to create the United Nations Police Force. Treating international conflicts as disputes between neighbors where they could, many nations became withdrawn and experienced internal power changes. Australia's focus turned to technological improvement. China rapidly improved their space program and joined the interplanetary community. Spain turned to the waters, looking to reap the benefits of the ocean floors.

But in the late 23<sup>rd</sup> Century, a previously unnoticed rogue comet of significant size collided with the binary system of Pluto and Charon. Obliterating the dwarf planet and flinging its satellite out of a stable orbit, debris filled the solar system, much of which could not be tracked. Large shards of the debris were catapulted out of a planar orbit 'over' the solar system, and with a trajectory altered by the gas giants, it was brought into a collision course with earth's orbit with very little time to prepare. Massive fragments rained down onto the middle of the United States in the early 24<sup>th</sup> Century, obliterating nearly 85% of the struggling nation's grain production. Widespread famine caused mass emigration as the last tenuous hold on the hope that America might ever re-emerge as a world power was destroyed. Those that remained in the country flocked to the coasts where population centers remained somewhat stable and mostly self-sufficient.

Russia's own resurgence came in the form of massive revolution. After years of failure of the Russian leadership to bring stability to the nation, a slow growing rebellion movement was able to overtake the remnants of the Russian Military. Already spread thin, the UNPF was unable to assist in what was a brilliant coup lead by the People, leading to what was called the Great Reinvention. With the instability of the global economy, and learning from the pitfalls of other nations, the People's New Republic of Russia vowed to focus on the internal strife of the nation, doing what it could to bring up the whole of the nation. Focusing on education and science, industry followed quickly. The HHPP remained strong, and for the first time in modern history, Russia was a land of opportunity.

New developments in clean energy helped Russia emerge as a global industry leader, and international jealousy lead to threats to the HHPP. The first attacks instated the Red Army, and while clean energy production remained their focus, a national industry base was able to quickly mount a defense. However poor availability to resources sparked conflict. The People's Liberation Force of China began to attempt a land war on the Eastern border of Russia, and while the Red Army fought off the advance, insurgent movements within the rest of Europe began attacking the Russian borders in the hopes of raiding its resources. Attacks also came from the Middle East in the hopes of removing the threat to their fading grasp on the energy market.

War on all fronts began again. Hoping to weaken the hold of Russia's economic superpower, America aided the attacks, leading to destruction across Europe as a result. Soon nations that would have otherwise been unrelated found themselves as the battleground for these skirmishes, and in the interest of the greater good the Red Army offered protection in the places the UNPF could not. With further damage to the global economy, only Russia and the nations that remained outside of the fight seemed to weather the storm.

Europe was in tatters, much of it turning to the HHPP for assistance, becoming Protectorates while requesting the UNPF keep a presence to quell concerns that they might be hoping to expand their land holdings. On the mainland of the European continent only seven countries remained self-sufficient and autonomous; France, Germany, Greece, Greenland, Iceland, Italy, and Spain.

With the end of what became known as World War III in the middle of the 24<sup>th</sup> Century, Russia began to make reparations across Europe where it could; co-operating with the U.N. in an attempt to provide stability through economic, industrial, and diplomatic assistance. In the hopes of a world-wide distraction and an attempt to motivate the war-torn nations, Australia, Russia, and the U.N. began to drive for the stars. Taking control of the facilities that China had left in Low-Earth Orbit and on the moon, exploration and expansion blossomed rapidly. Colonies were established on the moon and Mars, industrial programs were established on the larger asteroids on the belt, and moons of Jupiter.

Specific questions not covered by general detail:

**What year is it?**

It is 2487 C.E., forty years after the Strakhznakov were first funded under the command of Colonel Nikolai Dostevi.

**What is the state of Poland?**

France, Germany, Greece, Greenland, Iceland, Italy, and Spain are the only remaining European countries that govern themselves at the moment. The remaining countries, while not officially part of Russia, have either

become Protectorates, or wastelands. Poland, Switzerland, most of the Netherlands... all Protectorates. Poland has good parts and bad parts, like every country does today, but there's not a whole lot of middle ground.

The HHPP has done a lot to try and bring up the infrastructure, but it is slow going. Rebellion isn't really an issue, the HHPP isn't a dictatorship. They're absolutely doing everything they can to make sure the territory under their control is brought out of the slag, and they're doing it peacefully where they can. But, this does mean that there's definitely a Red Army presence, and because of how much territory they have, progress can be slow in areas.

Poland's current government is roughly equivalent to the sort of Governorship of the colonization age. There's a guy, he's in 'charge' of public works, he's Polish, he reports to Russia. People who take up security work for the government of Protectorates are in the Red Army, or on loan from the UNPF [ though that's rare ].

### **What about England?**

England is a Protectorate, as is the rest of the United Kingdom. During World War III, what remained of the Royal Family vanished without a trace. Most of England is trying to remain civil, and only able to do so because of the presence of the Red Army. Ireland remained intact, but Scotland is... a burn. What was once lush and a populous area became practically barren. As such, Scotch is *exceptionally* rare. The Japanese produce a similar product with their whisky, but it's nowhere near as prestigious.

### **Are all the characters Spec Ops soldiers?**

In a sense. Think of the Strakhznakov as the equivalence of Delta Force, Seal Team Six, Pagoda Troop of the SAS, so on. This doesn't mean you have to be murder-face bullet-storm rifle god, just for the record. The Strakhznakov have a great deal of talent and uses, not all of them are super soldiers, and each unit has its specific purposes. Narakov scouts his talent carefully, and designs his units because of their talents. This means that each unit won't need to follow the archetypical face/tech/soldier/medic format.

There are lots of ways that characters may find themselves as a part of the Special Operations Service as well. It's possible that they joined the Red Army to be a productive member of the HHPP, or perhaps their skill was noticed in any number of ways by Colonel Narakov himself.