



## ESPIONAGE AND THE SHADOWS

by Specter

Captain Chaos recently published an item describing the global intelligence community in the most recent **State of the Art** download. But what does it mean to those of us unwashed masses who aren't working for God and country or corp in "The Great Game?" Perhaps you scanned it, found some interesting things to talk about or gear that you might want, but you may not have seen how it affects your life. We have information on the global intelligence community. So what, right?

Wrong.

- Well, it was a good primer on groups that runners may or may not want to run into, especially under the following circumstances.
- Number 6

Where do you think Mr. Johnson comes from? It's not like there's a "Mr. Johnsons 'R Us" where corps can buy them by the dozen. Most suits don't want the job. That's the whole point. They're businessmen. Businessmen don't get their hands dirty with deniable assets like us. So, where did Mr. Johnson come from? In many cases, he probably came from one of those intelligence agencies that Spavin listed in the **State of the Art** download. After all, spies are drawn to the shadows. It's their world, and many of them continue to work alongside us or pull our strings; whether or not we know it.

- Wow. I never thought of it like that before. Makes sense, I guess.
- Jemmy

The shadows provide a realm of protection through secrecy and plausible deniability. Like Spavin mentioned, espionage is a criminal activity in virtually every country and all extraterritorial megacorporations. However, the demand for intelligence requires that espionage continue in spite of the risks. Today, virtually every government, all of the Big Ten, and several AA megacorps constantly engage in intelligence gathering, and specifically in espionage. Corporations such as Aegis Cognito and Argus even hire their services out.

With information at a premium, and false identities at risk to exposure by deckers, advanced sensors and magic, it has become even more imperative for the agencies to use people who invisible and expendable. It was the birth of the SINless, "shadow" population of people who don't officially exist that brought them to out doorsteps. We provide what intelligence agencies cherish: Plausible deniability.

SINless shadowrunners serve as a pool that handlers (Mr. Johnsons of the spy community) could draw from to commit espionage. They had a community of trained, armed, and invisible operatives that they could use for all but the most sensitive assignments: People who cannot be traced back to them; who cannot be turned; who will not be missed by the public; and whose faces will not be seen on the trid, or

whose captures won't be reported in the news. Above all, we are also easily replaced. Why wouldn't they use us rather than put the life of some formerly upright SINner in danger to make a handoff?

Below, I will address the various faces of espionage as they relate to the shadow: who they are, what they do, and how you might encounter them. Following that, I am going to come closer to home and expound upon life in the shadows for those of us who come from the community.

### THE GAME PIECES

The intelligence agencies of the world are all comprised of various organizational capabilities, as was described in the *Games of State* materials. This article will specifically address the individuals that you are most likely to encounter in the shadows, whether they are officers with official credentials or concealed beneath intricate non-official covers, covert action or collection specialists, or even counterintelligence agents. Each type of asset has their reasons for getting their hands dirty in the shadows, but rest assured they are all out there if you know where to look.

#### Intelligence Officers

The CIA calls them Clandestine Service Officers. In MI6, they are Intelligence Officers. Aztechnology refers to them as *Oficiales de Operaciones* ("Operations Officers"). Regardless of their titles, they are the individuals who come to minds when people hear the word, 'spy,' and they comprise the heart and soul of Human Intelligence. In effect, each is a professional Mr. Johnson, fixer, and company man rolled into one deniable asset; each one is trained in interrogation, deception, and social engineering; taught to blend into their surroundings and disappear; to survive; to infiltrate even the most hostile war zones; and they are trained to kill. Their primary roles are as "handlers," tasked with recruiting and maintaining networks of spies, "agents," in the field and collect intelligence on their targets provided by the spies. Intelligence officers are foremost manipulators, existing to draw more people into their spheres of influence and convince them to betray everything they know and are for the benefit of a foreign power. They pay off, blackmail, threaten or otherwise manipulate their agents to continue to risk their lives for another's interests.

Their lives are in constant danger, operating in their areas of expertise without regard for the law of the land or moral quandaries. Their only concern is the bottom line. In other words, they are familiar creatures to the shadowrunner community. Amongst these individuals, there are two distinct groupings, those with Official and Non-Official Covers.

#### Official Cover

The distinction between official and non-official covers often rests on a single factor: Diplomatic Immunity. Spies working under Official Cover are attached to some form of diplomatic mission, usually an embassy or consulate, and possess official credentials as a member of the mission staff, and afforded the protections of diplomatic immunity under the Vienna Convention, and The London Accords of 2045



which extended the protections with regard to diplomatic relations involving extraterritorial megacorporations and the Corporate Court. This extends beyond the rights to employee repatriation accorded by the Business Recognition Accords. If they are caught, their credentialed status protects them from prosecution and punishment, as was discussed in *Games of State*.

However, that doesn't mean that they go around flaunting their role as a spy with diplomatic immunity. No one at an embassy is officially a spy, but usually operate under some benign cover while they search for agents to recruit or handle "walk-in" spies. While they seek to gain high-value agents in the upper echelons of power, their abilities to do so have become greatly diminished over time. It has become much easier for counterintelligence agents to identify and track spies operating under official cover through magic and technology, and they have resorted to utilizing more deniable assets to perform the fieldwork that spies used to perform themselves. They have, in effect, become professional Mr. Johnsons for their home agencies as a secondary role.

- There is also an interesting dynamic at work in Seattle due to the fact that Seattle has been authorized by Congress to establish its own diplomatic missions overseas. Like virtually every other country and corporation in the world, Seattle has established their own spy operations complete with clandestine officers and contracted intelligence assets. There was even a recent dustup after one of the personal staffers to Seattle's ambassador to China was "outed" as a spy for Seattle, and was quickly but silently PNG'ed; a situation made worse after the CIA was accused of blowing her cover.

- Novak

- There are plenty of people in the State Department who would pay dearly to get their hands on hard data identifying which corp holds the intelligence contract. They've been trying to get Seattle's foreign relation powers repealed for decades, and this could go a long way to making it happen.

- ASINR

One of the more relevant aspects of their game is how many spies have come to operate in the Puyallup or Redmond Barrens. When Mr. Johnson wants to hire runners, they often come to the Barrens. When Mr. Spy Runner wants to hire runners, he hits the same locations, and reaches out to the same people when they need to discretely hire couriers, or send messages, or to provide especially secure or dangerous information, and if we're caught, so what? We're runners, and we're SINless. In most cases, we're as good as or better than recruiting one high-value agent at a cocktail party on Embassy Row. We can recruit multiple agents for them, agents some of the more pretentious spies might not even consider touching regardless of access or knowledge, and we can do it without the spook being exposed and kicked out of the country. In effect, some shadowrunners become handlers

themselves. A spy could use runners as intermediaries to handle agents and collect direct intelligence across the 'Plex, and the runners might never know for whom they're really working. After all, when was the last time Mr. Johnson told you who he worked for, or was honest if he did?

In many cases, these spies aren't just going to recruit a runner team and have at it. That would put them in just as vulnerable a spot as if they were doing it themselves after a while. Instead, they recruit and manage numerous agents and contacts. That is their job. In some cases, their career advancement rests on how many agents they have under their control. So, if they're going to recruit agents, and recruit shadowrunners to further those activities, they might feel compelled to use their agents the same way your fixer would. The benefit official cover spies have is easier access to their government through direct channels to provide runners with gear and intelligence from the home office, much like a professional Johnson can provide you with gear and intelligence from their home corp. When that's not possible, they turn to Fixer mode and reach out to get the tools they need.

- Above all, they are tools for their ends, not yours. Like any Johnson, they shouldn't be trusted. They are trained to lie to a person's face and convince them that everything's on the level.

- Jay

#### Non-Official Cover

If the spies operating under official cover are not to be trusted, then NOCs are just dangerous. NOCs operate under the same basic premise as those officers with official covers as diplomatic personnel. The recruit and handle foreign agents, and they conduct direct action intelligence gathering on their own, and may be called upon to conduct other covert operations (more about them later). Unlike their official cover counterparts who can rely on the protection of international law in the event that their covers are blown, NOCs have no legal protection. Their very presence in a country or corporate property is almost always illegal, and in most cases punishable by death (usually preceded by various form of interrogation and torture). Many of them take rather innocuous covers behind shell or front companies, while others have covers identifying them as arms dealers, mercenaries, gangsters, or other criminals.

- I once had a Mr. Johnson contract me for a run against a certain Russian megacorp, and in the course of the run it turned out that while he had worked his way into his corp's Resource Adjustment Department for another mega, he was a NOC for a Middle Eastern intelligence agency. When this fact came to light, his RAD co-workers hired runners to kill him, and I ended up getting paid by the agency to extract him.

- Stiles

Often times, they are new spies, people who have no background that could have identified them as a spy or gov-



ernment official. Nevertheless, just because they are new spies doesn't mean that they are new to the game. Intelligence agencies recruit from everywhere. Indeed, some of them were trainees recruited fresh off the campus of an Ivy League (an old bias the CIA has yet to completely eradicate), but you can't rely on a legion of 22 year-olds for all of your most covert activities. They don't carry certain reps or possess backgrounds that allow them to operate in certain environments. Others are recruited in mid-career, trained in espionage, and sent back into the workforce with a cover story for the period. Some personnel come from the military, but anymore with NOCs often working under identities in the private sector, sometimes that means recruiting mercenaries. Sometimes, it also means recruiting runners.

- And some of those runners fit all of the criteria. Employers don't trust just any runners to become company men, nor do they do so when it comes to being a NOC. It usually takes a long-term relationship or some stupendous accomplishment on their behalf to even get an agency's attention.

- Brighid

- So which applied to you?

- Stiles

- None.

- Brighid

- I served in the UCAS military for eight years distinguishing myself in operations that never officially occurred. In that time I also accumulated various contacts in the mercenary community, especially Russian mercenaries. A recruiter from an intelligence agency approached me with an offer to work for them. They trained me, gave me a new identity and erased my old one, and placed me amongst those same merc contacts to infiltrate the mercenary community. The UCAS hires mercenaries all of the time, but they don't trust them. Instead, they spy on those they hire, and the ones they don't. MET2000 and the other large firms are of special interest.

I became a mercenary and operated in eastern Asia, even starting my own shop, contracting to clients or working as subcontractors for the big merc firms. None of my employers knew I was still working for the UCAS. Even my own crew was in the dark. My handler was a dead drop on Shadowland Seattle. In the mid-'50s, I left for Seattle after a harrowing failure. I went to Seattle to lick my wounds and because I was to look into the growing number of mercs and ex-military runners showing up in Seattle. In the shadows, I was a soldier turned mercenary turned shadowrunner. Novel, I'm sure. I infiltrated a community within a community, and told my handler everything I knew. I worked with them, and the last time I saw any of them was when I joined several of these mercs on a mission in Europe. In the middle of that mission, something happened. My first memory after that was waking up in South Amer-

ica. I am the only one of the team who didn't completely disappear, while the rest of the mercs and runners took off on their own.

- Specter

- Ah... So that's where I recognized you from (as opposed to every other runner whose nickname is Specter). There was always something about you I didn't like, always too quiet around the mercs and the wannabes at The Briefing Room. Now I know what it was.

- Grey Knight

The ones who are assured to be found in the shadows are the few undercover officers who are "turned SINless" (except maybe for some secure offline database back home), and who blend into the shadows. The SINless NOC is a rare creature, exposed to the shadows for various, but usually very specific purposes. Some of them are green officers who just graduated from the Farm, and have been dumped into the streets with combat training, untraceable gear, and a handler that could take the form of anyone from an official cover officer to a dead-drop in the form of a mini-drone or vanishing, teleporting SAN.

- Some of those SINless NOCs don't always start their careers SINless. There are very few people who are, "ex-intelligence." Some leave and are never called upon again. However, there has been more than one spy that fled into the shadows only to find himself, "repatriated" and sequestered in a secure facility. If they're lucky, they're released as one of these "company men."

- Number 6

- And of course, that wouldn't include yourself, would it?

- Telnet

The more common SINless NOCs are those runners who were recruited, trained in the tradecraft, and returned to the shadows. In many cases, they serve as Company Men, shadowrunners, fixers, and Mr. Johnsons. Combining the duties of a NOC spy runner with the skills of deniable covert operations specialists, shadowrunner NOCs can earn reputations as professionals in the shadows, and recruit other runners and maintain contacts to engage in covert espionage. Often times, they also gather information directly in their work as shadowrunners by becoming double agents, working for a potential enemy or competitor and reporting back to their handlers.

- To that extent, they act most effectively as team leaders, where they can manage their agents, including their teammates, and operate in their natural element as case managers.

- Number 6

#### Collection Specialists

This is another group that crosses the spectrum of run-



ner types, from deckers and riggers to physical infiltration specialists and magicians. Agencies like the MIFD or NSA rely on collection specialists for those occasions when they can't just sit in an office listening to all of the broadcast and Matrix transmissions that come directly to them. In those instances, they employ personnel to conduct covert operations by planting bugs, setting up illegal wiretaps, manning listening posts, or deploying drones or spirits for reconnaissance. Sometimes they use official government assets, civilian or military personnel trained in carrying out such activity. Other times, they contract the work to mercenaries, and sometimes to shadowrunners.

- Shadowrunner teams are especially useful because they can combine several specialties for maximum efficiency and utility. Warded drones are especially useful tools that runners often times have more ready access to than most intelligence agencies, especially agencies whose governments don't regard magicians very highly.
- Telnet

After all, many of us have expertise in the very skills which they seek to exploit for their own purposes: Be it decking into a secure system, rigging an army of surveillance drones, infiltrating a location to insert bugs or replace items with disloyal counterfeits, or using magic and spirits to follow targets and report back. Most importantly, our work often requires us to do these kinds of jobs as teams. Given the circumstances, which do you think might be more a valuable investment, a highly-trained team of commandos which cost them hundreds of thousands of nuyen to train, arm, and deploy and who can be tied back to them or a covert runner team they can hire for a fraction of that? It's not an everyday occurrence, for sure, but often times that can happen. In that case, you might run into Mr. Clandestine Officer, you may be one of their company men, or you may just happen to know and work with said company man. Maybe it's not even a completely SINless company man, but someone who hires you on the side using a discretionary Red Seas Trading Company slush fund account.

- Often times the most covert collections operations are run by people who will hire you just to carve out a secure niche in the Matrix to serve as a dead drop, or to create a secure slush fund that only two or three people on Earth know exists.
- Rache
- Don't forget that "collections" aren't always limited to just data. People can be collected, as well, although I guess those count as "covert actions".
- DH

At the time that Dunkelzahn's network of Watchers was exposed to the shadows, many even in the shadows reacted with incredulity upon learning that there are individuals who surreptitiously collect massive amounts of information, both

legitimate public information and news, and clandestine intelligence from illegal datastores, Shadowland nodes, and from runners they hired directly or through affiliated fixers. There are individuals who collect massive amounts of information, filter it, analyze it, and produce reports on it for their masters. Many government intelligence agencies consist mainly of analysts just like this, often focused on a specific type of intelligence and area of expertise.

In collecting Matrix Intelligence, one might encounter a spook decker on Shadowland reading the same files, or in a random datastore swiping the same data you came for. Some deckers are based in the field, or work someplace where a Trace IC isn't going to compromise the rest of an agency's work. Other times, deckers being deckers can be found on Shadowland discussing them same topics as we do.

- There are quite a few of us who are sufficiently paranoid to suspect anyone who isn't clearly identifiable as a local, even on Shadowland.
- Rache
- That also includes the international talent. Even groups like The Smokers' Club aren't to be trusted by many of us in the shadows; even compared to known former company men.
- Jay
- That's because most of us know better than to believe in fairy tales, like the one about the company man who was able to cut all of his ties to his sponsor corp.
- Connor

**Covert Action/Special Operations**

Like the NOCs whose cover identities are as runners and other shadowy types, and who often times are effectively company men, there are also people in every intelligence agency who are tasked to perform covert action. They are usually recruited from amongst operations officers, collection specialists, or former military personnel. They go beyond the scope of the average officers' combat and survival training. While there are moments in the life of a spy where he may have to perform a HALO drop into a hostile region or fight alongside a friendly warlord and his forces, and carrying his own weight by fighting alongside them or else getting left behind for the buzzards, covert operations specialize in the aggressive collection of intelligence or in eliminating "threats to national security."

- You aren't a real shadowrunner if you can't perform a HALO jump without hurting yourself.
- Connor
- These are the folks who directly or indirectly engaged in such activities as the various CIA operations against Cuba, from the Bay of Pigs to their many failed assassination attempts.
- Number 6



In the history of covert action by intelligence agencies, these are the people who did the dirty work, the “wet work,” even earning such pejorative nicknames as “wet boys” or “ghouls.” Such individuals or groups of individuals often arose out of a compulsive need for compartmentalized secrecy where an agency like the CIA couldn’t even acknowledge a mission to the military or to the President. In other cases, it also arose from the same jurisdictional posturing that led to the creation of the Lone Star’s Fast Response Teams when SWAT already existed; sometimes an agency would rather use its own people to kidnap a terrorist instead of sending in Delta, which might require them to dial an outside line between the DSI headquarters in Marietta and Fort Bragg. Today, one of the most pressing reasons for covert action to remain in-house is because there is no military that possesses an effective global reach, even amongst the megacorps, but the larger intelligence agencies do have personnel around the globe. Those personnel can be operatives, or trained in covert action, or can do what Mr. Johnson does, and hire someone to carry out a mission.

For those agencies that can afford them, there are few places better than the shadows of your local Barrens where they can stage operations in secret. This is especially true for covert action teams operating far from home. For an agency like the UGB it is often easier to have a team in place in Redmond, ready to fight and capable of surviving on their own. Other times, smaller outfits like Aegis train officers to conduct limited covert action for the sake of efficiency. Sometimes, however, it’s more convenient to hire a local team with roots on a contract basis, either one-time or on retainer. Regardless, in cities like Seattle all of these people exist in the shadows side-by-side with the rest of the freelancers and company men.

- Most of the times I’ve encountered individual wet boys or other operatives. Given their specialization in wet work and their obsessive secrecy in being sufficiently covert for their bosses to maintain plausible deniability, it’s not entirely surprising. Imagine whole groups of them.

- Jay

- It’s not like dealing with a pack of ghouls, though. These teams often seem pretty normal even compared to most runners. In fact it probably makes them even worse. At least with real ghouls you know what you’re dealing with.

- Trev

### Counterintelligence Agents

I said earlier that some spies see the Barrens as useful because most cops won’t venture in. However, there is an exception with regards to counterintelligence (CI) agents. In their case, they are often quite willing to immerse themselves into the shadows. They don’t usually seem like most cops, but they are, or are indistinguishable from, law enforcement. They are investigators looking for evidence to prosecute criminals. However, for us they are more likely to be undercover, playing the same games as the spies they’re investigat-

ing. MI5 agents have no arrest powers, even if they stumble upon a spy ring meeting right in front of them. They are going to be working with various other organizations, and have developed a fearsome reputation for their undercover operations. On the other hand, the FBI and DDI are law enforcement agencies that conduct counterintelligence and counterterrorism activities. Most of their CI agents are cops first, and are more likely to engage in remote surveillance or utilize underworld and shadow contacts to gather evidence. They are also averse to working with others unless they have to, especially in the UCAS where each agency fights for scraps of funding. Even then, there are strange alliances in the government, especially through the CIA’s Counter Intelligence Center, which utilizes assets from even the most respected agencies to do decidedly dishonorable tasks.

- Watch your mouth.

- Brighid

- Afraid I’ll blow your cover, dear? Does the Company really have the stomach to go after me again, especially now that I know all of your little secrets?

- Specter

- Someone once said, “the sum total of what you *don’t* know could about stun a herd of buffalo in its tracks.” You should heed those words.

- Brighid

- Perhaps, but I know enough for Shadowland to realize that it counts a Secret Service agent amongst its ranks. It was a genius move on Clark’s part to have you be the point woman on covert action against those same dignitaries. How many runners have you hired to do your dirty work over the years?

- Specter

- What a rather contrived and pointless exchange.

- Connor

However, that doesn’t rule out an undercover operation to infiltrate and expose a spy ring, but they are looking for evidence. For the governments of these countries, it is most important that they gather enough evidence, leaving them in a position to permit activities until the evidence is sufficient to make the arrest. Contrast that with the tactics of the OMI or the Information Secretariat, which are more likely to kill or disappear suspicious individuals without regard for whether the target violated a law following a policy that favors pre-emptive action. Even the British or Americans have their limits though, and the OOO and DDI have been known to make certain individuals disappear “indefinitely.”

- Come on. It’s not like that happens *every day*.

- Ewan

- That explains a lot, actually.



● Race

CIA agents' tactics can consist of performing surveillance and collection activities, tapping into their own networks of contacts and snitches, paying off squatters, gangers, and all the same people we pay off, befriend, or who are indebted to us, they roam Shadowland and hang out in runner, decker, merc, or other shadowy haunts. They go undercover to infiltrate spy rings and networks, immersing themselves into the same world as the most clandestine spies in order to catch them, and sometimes they might just be Mr. Johnson. Often times they are just as savvy, if not more so, as spies when recruiting runners and using us for their own purposes. After all, many of them are trained in the tradecraft of espionage to hunt spies and their agents. They know what to look for, and can employ those same skills to engage in the same practice of recruiting agents secretly for their own purposes. Indeed, some of history's most damaging agents were counterintelligence spooks that flipped, and then used their access to provide information for years while remaining undetected. Likewise, as it is their turf they probably know the shadow community and popular shadowrunner haunts better than foreign spies do. They can act as fixers and contacts, because if they know something then it might be in your best interests to know them.

● Going back to the discussion about covert operations and the comment about OOO, it seems that there are a fair number of these agents who will hire runners to kidnap or whack a suspect rather than get their hands dirty and look unprofessional if it backfires.

● Italy

On the flip side, like any professional Johnson they can use the same methods as spies and other Johnsons to hire runners. Money, untraceable gear, and blackmail and intimidation work just as well for them. However, one incentive that many other Johnsons might offer is to have criminal investigations into prior runs disappear. For some of us, money is money, even if it means working for The Man sometimes. I can't say it's a safer bet than running against them, since your rep could get pissed away once you turn rat, but some might be willing to work for The Man rather than spend the rest of their lives in a small cell in the middle of nowhere. And like spies, maybe you become one of their pet runners—company men hunting down spies and their agents, terrorists, insurgents, or other undesirables the government feels like scapegoating and hunting down this week.

● A runner could do worse.

● Brighid

**SPYING FOR THE HIGHEST BIDDER**

The intelligence world has grown tremendously. The end of the Cold War led to the commercialization of intelligence collection and analysis services by former intelligence specialists into the Competitive or Market Intelligence, gathering

public information and analyzing for any paying customer. At the same time, the rush to privatize large parts of the U.S. government created unprecedented commercial opportunities for the private sector as intelligence professionals who has previously served began to re-enter the intelligence community as private contractors performing the same jobs that they had once performed as government employees, while others served as technical consultants on specialized areas about which an agency might suddenly need a consultant's high-priced expertise. Many of these privatized jobs were conducted within the boundaries of the law, but that was not always the case as contractors operated under government protection or without any oversight.

● Ah, the good old days, when being a private spook meant being above the law, and there was never a bottom line to be seen under piles of fat stacks of untraceable cash.

● Mosquito Incognito

● Yes, nothing like the days of the private contractors who were paid to have three martini lunches in Third World countries while telling the clients everything was fine, and to send more money to the Cayman Islands account. It's no wonder you were canned when management restructured.

● Spider

As the years went on, megacorporations which are richer, larger, and more powerful than most countries extended those protections to intelligence specialists when they realized an imperative existed to protect their assets and market position using intelligence, and that more proactive intelligence gathering could help them gain an upper hand on their competitors. Even smaller corporations have found the necessity to engage in intelligence and counterintelligence activities to remain competitive.

The CIA long contracted mercenaries to engage in field operations and analysis in Southeast Asia, South America, the U.S.-Mexico border, the Indian Wars, the Middle East, the NAN, and within their own borders. One excuse was brain drain, while another was that it would be more cost-effective to use contract workers on a temporary basis. Therefore, when it comes to getting a specialist in the Caucasus region drug trade, the CIA can hire some green PhD who just cleared the security screening, or they can contract with a world-renowned expert who speaks four regional languages and has information feeds that the CIA never bothered to create. There are information brokers all over the world, and many of them live in the shadows. They are analysts and collectors who buy and sell information to the highest bidder. People who "consult" for governments, work for them in secret, or buy and sell information from them like any other client. Sometimes the client is the government. Sometimes... We're the clients.

With government spies being let go due to budget cutbacks and a growing field of mercenary contractors who specialize in the recruiting and management of agents and deni-



able assets, the corporations with interests to protect and money to spend had access to individuals whose jobs were to gather information and perform tasks which officially never occurred. In many cases, corporations such as Ares, ORO, or Keruba had them on their payrolls decades ago. They were contracted to the same intelligence agencies with which they currently compete with, provide services to, or both.

- Damien Knight made a genius decision in expanding Knight Errant services to include counterintelligence and military security services. With the second major round of layoffs in the American intelligence and military communities following the Crash, KE grabbed a lot of top-shelf talent cheaply and then turned around and sold their services back to the remnants of the U.S. and Canada at a premium which the governments were more than happy to pay once they realized they were defenseless against states which were now possibly hostile foreign powers.

- Vasquez

#### INTO THE SHADOWS

There is a famous saying that, “there is no such thing as ex-intelligence.” Like the Mafia, once you’re in, you’re in for life. While generally true, things have become slightly more complicated in the Sixth World where anyone can disappear, and where allegiances are negotiable. The privatization of intelligence never ceased, but some people have gone to great lengths to escape their past and start a new life with old skills.

#### Mr. Johnson

As I said at the beginning, it is remarkable how similar intelligence officers and professional Johnsons are to each other. It is in part a result of the expansion of clandestine activities beyond those affecting national security to include economic and other commercial interests in clandestine operations against competitors and other impediments to the bottom line. I won’t belabor the similarities, but I should point out that while many Johnsons come to the shadows with a background in espionage coming from a previous career as a spy runner, not all do.

Sometimes, Mr. Johnson may not be tied directly to the intelligence community, but they may have received some specialized training on behalf of corporate sponsors. Large mercenary corporations such as Knight Errant or MET 2000 dominate the private security and intelligence field, but smaller organizations also provide services and training to corporate, government and other “resource adjustment personnel.” Some private intelligence corporations such as Knight Errant and SIS began by providing experienced and readily accessible personnel to the DSI after the Treaty of Richmond, and have expanded since then beyond governments. What makes them important to the shadow community is that it is mostly SIS contractors who train DSI recruits on SIS property. They do not limit their services to the DSI, and many corporate Johnsons have passed through the Harvey Point training facility before entering the shadows.

- Does anyone else find it disturbing that there a school for Mr. Johnsons in the middle of the CAS? It would almost be doing the world a favor to firebomb the hell out of that place.

- DH

- Most runners will never have access to enough FAE in their lifetimes to destroy a compound that large.

- Italy

- “Most”?

- DH

#### Fixers

Like Mr. Johnson, both professional and freelance fixers can live and die by the contacts they make and maintain. While intelligence-related fixers in the shadows are usually intelligence officers engaging in a part of their overall activities, the more entrepreneurial have walked away from that life to use their skills for their own interests. Some become professional fixers for a single client or sponsor, which can be anything from a corporation to a crime syndicate, and for whom the fixers can provide plausible deniability between the client and the shadows. Others take the more dangerous, but potentially more lucrative route by becoming freelance fixers.

To be a freelance fixer and survive for any length of time requires a certain amount of skill, and those fixers who came from the intelligence community are expected to possess those skills. A freelance fixer has to build all of those up themselves; to recruit new contacts, customers and suppliers from amongst the skeptical, the curious, or the desperate; to maintain those contacts to satisfy their customers; to protect the secrecy of the relationship with said contacts and clients; and to cover their own assets, often while dealing with the peculiarities of the law, the competition, their clients, and their various suppliers. In other words, they have to engage in recruiting activities in the same manner, and under similar conditions, as spies have done for centuries. They can’t rely on the name of a sponsor or resource contact to protect their interests and livelihood, and must survive on their own. As it stands, the most effective intelligence personnel who turn to freelance fixing are the NOCs, especially the SINless NOCs, who have already spent years operating under those very conditions.

- Here’s the million-nuyen question, then. It’s been said twice that there’s no such thing as ex-intelligence, even though many of these intelligence personnel seem to be contractors, and others disappear into the private sector or the shadows. How do those facts reconcile? Wouldn’t the spy agencies want to retain control over their personnel, or eliminate them before they become threats?

- Jemmy

- It depends. In most cases the idea of no ex-spies denotes a special relationship where spies can be recalled to perform in the service of their country or corp. For the private



contractors and mercs, there are in effect doing so. For those who end up in the shadows, if the agency can find them and requires their services then they can be hired or coerced just like any of us can be.

Traitors, on the other hand, usually face certain difficulties. As with most things, covert action can be taken against them, but if they are protected by another power it becomes all the more difficult.

● Specter

### **Shadowrunners**

We are two sides of the same coin, and many former spies find themselves working in the shadows as runners. The broad range of experience in conducting espionage and covert operations fits in well with the various activities which shadowrunners are often hired to perform on a freelance basis. Indeed, as some of spies operate to various extents as company men, making the transition from company man to shadowrunner is usually not technically difficult. They already possess weapons and close combat training, possess skills in infiltration, and have strong interpersonal and leadership skills, as well as tactical training, and experience in all of these fields. Meanwhile, deckers and riggers have found their own roles in the shadows. Spook riggers who have backgrounds in electronic warfare and commanding drones are especially prized in the mercenary field as you can imagine. Magicians, like elsewhere can command a price for their services.

● So, I guess I should ask the pressing question: Which runners are, or were, working for the intelligence agencies.

● Jemmy

● Well, sure, let's just ask in an open forum for the unmasking of people whose life work was to betray and kill people at the drop of a hat. Good idea. After that we can dig into the mysteries of the shadows and find out what really caused the Crash of '29.

● Connor

● If someone went so deep into the shadows that they managed to fall off their agency's radar, they aren't going to come up for air now and announce to the world that they were deep cover operatives who now ply their trades as freelancers. It's suicide for all but the rare few who have nothing to lose, or who managed to make themselves completely useless to their masters like Specter.

● Number 6