

The Japanese will inform the Turks as to what has happened at approximately 4:30 p.m. The Turks are Japan's allies, but the Japanese are not going to give them detailed information until the last moment, as they won't want the Turks to double-cross them. But the Turks will know that something is coming—the entire charade of early November will revolve around this, and they will be standing by to act as soon as the Japanese get around to alerting them.

Less than thirty minutes before impact, the president will authorize the evacuation of the Battle Stars. With so little time, the evacuation won't be able to be fully executed. Hundreds of people will be left behind. More important, even though no one will know who ordered the attack, the president's advisors will convince him to order a dispersal of all ground-based hypersonic aircraft from their primary bases to scattered locations. That order will go out at the same time the evacuation order goes out. There will be many glitches in the system. Controllers—skeleton staffs, really—will keep asking for confirmation. Some of the aircraft will disperse over the next hour. Most will not.

At 5 p.m., all three Battle Stars will explode, killing all of the remaining crew members and knocking out the rest of the U.S. space force—sensors and satellites that are mostly hooked into the Battle Star—Peru command center. They will be left uselessly orbiting in space. The Japanese will have launched satellites years earlier whose only job is to monitor the Battle Stars. They will note the disruption of communication from the stations, and Japanese radar will note the destruction of the stations themselves.

The Japanese will activate phase two as soon as destruction is confirmed. They will launch thousands of unmanned hypersonic aircraft—small, fast, and agile to evade interceptors—at the United States and its ships and bases in the Pacific. The targets will be U.S. hypersonic aircraft, ground-based anti-aircraft missiles, and command and control centers. They won't go after population centers. That would achieve nothing, plus the Japanese will want to negotiate a settlement, which would be inconceivable after massive civilian casualties. Nor will they want to destroy the president or his staff. They will need someone with whom to negotiate.

At the same time, the Turks will launch their own attacks against targets they will have been assigned in joint planning for war with the Japanese

over the years. Joint contingency plans will already have been developed between the two countries. Given that the Turks are aware something is coming, and are in near-crisis mode already, they won't need extensive preparation to execute the war plan. The Japanese will communicate what they have done—and Turkish sensors will observe the events in geosynchronous orbit. They will move to quickly take advantage of the situation. Many targets will be in the United States, east of the Mississippi, but the Turks will also launch a massive attack against the Polish bloc and against India, not a major power but allied with the United States. The intention of the Coalition will be to leave the United States and its allies militarily helpless.

Within a few minutes, the missiles from the unmanned aircraft will begin to hit U.S. forces in Europe and Asia, but those targeted at the United States proper will take nearly an hour to reach their targets. That hour will bring the United States some valuable time. Most of its space-based sensors will be off-line, but an old system, used to detect the heat of ICBM launches and too old to be linked into the Battle Star system, will still be downloading to Colorado Springs. It will pick up a vast array of launches out of Japan and Turkey, but little additional information will be provided. There will be no way to tell where the planes and missiles are going. But the fact that the two countries lit up with launches minutes after the Battle Stars are killed will be relayed to the president, who now, at least, will know where the attack is coming from.

The United States will maintain a database of military targets in Japan and Turkey. The Japanese and Turkish aircraft will already have been launched, and therefore hitting those targets will make no sense. But there will be fixed targets in both countries, primarily command and control centers, airfields, fuel bunkers, and so on, that could be attacked. Plus the president will want his hypersonic fleet in the air and not on the tarmac. He will order a preset war plan to be activated. However, by the time the orders are transmitted and flight controllers are in place, there will be less than fifteen minutes until Japan and Turkey hit their targets. Some flights will take off and strike those two countries, but much of the force will be destroyed on the ground.

The devastation to the Polish bloc will be even more intense. The bloc command center in Warsaw won't be aware of the destruction of the Battle