

aircraft carriers, the invention of a torpedo that would work in the shallow waters of Pearl Harbor, and the decision to attack on Sunday morning.

What I've tried to show in previous chapters is how the United States, Poland, Turkey, and Japan will get entangled in the next century, and why the Japanese and the Turks will feel so threatened that they will have no choice but to launch a preemptive war: This is a book about my perception of the events of the next hundred years, so I now want to talk about the war itself. To do that, however, I have to pretend to know more than I do. I have to pretend to know the times and dates of the battles and precisely how they would be executed. I do think I understand the military technology that will be used in this war. I think I have a rough idea of when in the century the war will take place, and I think I have a good grasp of how it will play out. But I don't think you can grasp the nature of war in the mid-twenty-first century unless I go further and tell a story that in some sense I have no right to. But if you will indulge me on this, I think I can give you a *feel* for the warfare of the twenty-first century—and this particular war—if I take some license and give it real specificity.

OPENING SHOTS

The destruction of the three Battle Stars will be planned for November 24, 2050, at 5 p.m. At this time on Thanksgiving Day most people in the United States would be watching football and napping after digesting a massive meal. Some people will be driving home. No one in Washington will be expecting a problem. That is the moment that the Japanese will intend to strike. Final course corrections of the missiles targeting the Battle Stars will begin to be executed at about noon, on the theory that even if they were detected, getting hold of the Washington national security team would eat up an hour or two, and that if the missiles were detected by 3 or 4 p.m. it would be impossible to react in time. In order to do this, launches from Japan's lunar base will have to take place at various times on November 21, depending on orbit. Hence, the November 20 alert will be Plan B cycling up—the aforementioned shot from the hip.

The launches from the moon will go unnoticed. Many of the missiles will actually be detected by automated systems on board the Battle Stars, but none will have trajectories that indicate impact with the stations or represent a significant threat to earth. They will all be fired at different times in eccentric orbits. The data will not be passed on to human monitors. One technician reading the daily summary on the second day will note that there appears to be a large number of meteors in the area, with several passing close to his station, but since this is not an extraordinary event, he will ignore it.

On November 24 around noon, the rockets will reignite as planned, shifting the missiles' orbit. The collision-tracking radar on Battle Star-Uganda will pick up a single warning at about 2 p.m. The computer will be asked to reconfirm the trajectory. In the next hour all three stations will pick up multiple projectiles on trajectory to strike each of them. The commanding general of the three platforms, on board Battle Star-Peru, will recognize at about 3:15 that his platforms are under organized attack. He will then notify Space Command Headquarters in Colorado Springs, which in turn will notify the Joint Chiefs and the National Security Council.

Meanwhile, the commanding general on Battle Star-Peru will, on his own authority, begin firing lasers and kinetic missiles at the targets, hoping to intercept them. But the number of incoming missiles will strain his capacity to engage, as the system won't be designed to cope with fifteen simultaneous incoming missiles. He will quickly realize that there will be leakage, and that some of the missiles will hit.

The president will be notified, but, it being Thanksgiving Day, he won't be able to immediately gather most of his advisors. The questions the president will ask are the crucial ones: Who launched the attack? Where was it launched from? No one will be able to answer the questions immediately. The assumption will be that it is the Turks, since they will have been engaged in the most recent crisis, but U.S. intelligence will be certain that they won't have the ability to launch such an attack. The Japanese will be quiet—and no one would have expected such a strike by Japan. As more advisors gather, two things will be apparent: no one knows who launched the attack, and the Battle Stars are about to be destroyed.