

WAR STOPPERS

by

Tom Wade

A play in six acts

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War Stoppers character list

PETER: In his 50s, Chief of the Defence Force. Dressed in military uniform.

RICHARD: Secretary of the Defence Force. Similar to Peter, is Peter's best friend and offsider at work. Gets caught up on irreverent details.

LEAHY: Dressed in military camouflage. Lieutenant-General, Chief of Army. Loves the war and wants to get involved as much as possible. Very by the book and military like.

ROBERT: Minister of Defence, member of the Senate. Wears a suit, is a centrist politician in a conservative government, is in charge of the war but doesn't support it.

TAG LINE

No mission is worth dying for.

SYNOPSIS

War Stoppers is an examination of Australia's involvement in the War in Iraq from the perspective of its most senior military officials. The play is based on the report 'Australian Army and the War in Iraq' by Dr Albert Palazzo.

War Stoppers looks at some of the major 'War Stopper' level challenges faced by the Australian Defence Force in Operations Bastille, Falconer, and Catalyst. The play highlights the unnecessary nature of the war and Australia's reluctance to become fully invested in the war.

Each act is paced to feel like a self-contained episode of a sitcom from 2002-03, with the entire play giving the feel of binge watching a whole season in a single sitting on a streaming service.

Although the story is dramatised, the events each episode is based on are real. The point of this work is to highlight the wasteful nature of the Iraq War, and to draw attention to Australia's incompetence in handling many facets of the conflict.

ACT [1]

SCENE [1]

ROBERT IS SITTING AT THE HEAD OF A
LARGE BOARDROOM TABLE. AROUND HIM ARE
PETER, LEAHY, AND RICHARD. ROBERT IS
HOLDING A PIECE OF PAPER AND READING
FROM IT AS HE SPEAKS.

ROBERT: Alright, so you've probably heard Old Mate
Eyebrows doing the rounds on the media, 'If
terrorists get their hands on weapons of mass
destruction that will constitute a direct,
undeniable and lethal threat to Australia and
it's people.' A world in which WMDs are in the
hands of leaders of rogue states is 'the
ultimate nightmare' You know the whole deal.

RICHARD: Wait, aren't we already over there?

ROBERT: No- well, yes- but this is one's in... somewhere
else. Where are we already?

PETER: Afghanistan.

ROBERT: Yeah. This one's like... next to it. Look, the
main point is; we've agreed to invade another
country with them.

RICHARD: Wow, two wars. Things are getting pretty
serious.

ROBERT: I know, and I feel bad about this Peter. I know
you'd just started as the chief of the Defence
Force, I'm sorry for throwing you in the deep
end like this.

PETER: It's alright, I'll find a way to manage it.

ROBERT: Well, I mean, you've been around, haven't you?

PETER: Yes, I was here when Barrie was the Chief of The
Defence Force.

ROBERT: That's right. You've just inherited his hours and responsibilities now.

PETER: Yes... I'm looking forward to it.

ROBERT: Well look, I'm sorry about this whole war thing, I tried to get us out of it. Before you started, I said we agreed with the whole acting swiftly and driving threats out thing- in principle. Okay, that was meant to be our get out of jail free card: On principle. That if anything happened we could be all like, 'yeah, we agree with your war- on principle. Doesn't mean we're going to do it.'

RICHARD: So why are we even going over there then?

ROBERT: Couple of reasons. Big one though, is Eyebrows was over there on September 11. I mean, he was in Washington, nowhere near it, but he got caught up in the whole hysteria of it. Then there was Bali earlier this year. Tragedy- that was. If something like that happened here on Australian soil we'd never survive, politically. We would never be able to live down a domestic terror event.

RICHARD: So to prevent a domestic terror event, we're invading another country?

ROBERT: Another other country. We've already invaded one. But yeah- that seems to be the strategy. I'm Minister for Defence, I don't get to pick the wars, I just have to run them when they happen.

LEAHY: And we have two now.

ROBERT: That's the problem. I'm worried we may have over extended ourselves on this one. We need to make it look like we're giving it a serious go.

PETER: What do you propose?

ROBERT: Well, first of all, what resources do we have over there already?

PETER: Probably our biggest asset is Gillespie. He's already established the Australian National Command Element over there. Everything about this war will go through him.

ROBERT: He's going to fight this war all by himself, is he? Are there any military units we can sort of just shift one country over?

LEAHY: If we commit to a war we should go all out.

ROBERT: When we get the same level of military spending as they do, I'll let you start all the wars you want.

LEAHY: Doesn't matter. You talk about looking like we're taking this war seriously, we should just take it seriously.

ROBERT: Think of it like this; we're not participating in a war, this is the deployment of armed forces to maintain a given political diplomacy. There is no direct threat to us, but we want to participate so we may seek assistance should there ever be a threat.

RICHARD: But by participating we also increase the possibility of a threat that would require assistance.

ROBERT: I believe the industry term for that is a catch-22, am I right?

PETER: Something like that.

ROBERT: So how about you guys just go have a bit of a look in the cupboard and see what we have to give to this war. I want to give them a report that says 'we're thinking about you and we're taking this war seriously.' So that they

respond, 'thank you for being with us in this time.'

LEAHY: Then why don't we just give them everything?

ROBERT: Dear god, because they'll take it. Would you just give over all your units before a war's even started.

RICHARD: I don't think I'd be able to respect a nation if they were so willing to give their armed forces up like that.

LEAHY: What?

ROBERT: Exactly. Lets give them a bit of something now, a bit of a tease, and we'll see how things go from there.

PETER: Alright. Leahy, you're in charge of the army, so go see what they have. Richard, you're... whatever, so go talk to the navy. What does that leave? The air force- I guess I'll go talk to them. Everyone report back to me later and we'll see what we have.

ACT [1]

SCENE [2]

IN PETER'S OFFICE. THERE'S A DESK WITH A CRT COMPUTER MONITOR ON IT. PETER IS LEANING ON HIS DESK AND RICHARD IS STANDING.

PETER: So I spoke to the air force...

RICHARD: Yeah?

PETER: They said we've got some blackhawks and some chinooks.

RICHARD: Well, that's good.

PETER: But we can't use them. The blackhawks are in East Timor, and we can't deploy the chinooks.

RICHARD: What's up with the chinooks?

PETER: A couple of things. First of all, and this is more of a manpower thing, none of their pilots are trained to deal with combat situations, so-

RICHARD: Not trained for combat situations? Isn't that like, all we do? What are they trained for if not for combat?

PETER: I think all their combat guys are in Afghanistan. I guess they have people that do logistics and delivery as well.

RICHARD: Do you think it's like, they start you out in logistics and if you're any good, they train you up for combat situations? You know like, 'you're really good at dropping off supplies on a boat, how would you like to get shot at?'

PETER: I mean, can you imagine doing all that training and handling all that expensive equipment just to become a glorified delivery guy?

RICHARD: I could dig it. If someone asked me to do combat training, I'd be like 'nah man, I'm good just delivering these food sachets to this aircraft carrier. No one shooting at me here.'

PETER: That sort of goes on to the other problem with the chinooks, our air defence systems are so old they don't communicate with any allies' systems, they don't have the electronic protection systems for if we were going to put them in a hostile environment, and their IFF devices are incompatible with other recognition system- whatever they are.

RICHARD: So we've got pilots that can't fly in a combat zone, and helicopters that aren't combat ready

anyway?

PETER: Yeah, it's great, exactly what Robert was going for.

We can send them over, but the chinooks wouldn't be able to go within 5 miles of the coastline, in case of guided missiles or whatever. So all they'd be good for is dropping supplies off on the ships at sea. It's worked out pretty well, we only have delivery guys, and all they can do is deliver.

RICHARD: It's worked out even better than that. I just spoke to the navy and we don't even have boats that could get those helicopters over there-

LEAHY ENTERS PETER'S OFFICE

LEAHY: So I just got off the blower with the supply guys.

PETER: How's it looking?

LEAHY: I have good news and bad news.

PETER: What's the good news?

LEAHY: We have a bunch of Leopard I tanks we could deploy.

PETER: What's the bad news?

LEAHY: There are multiple 'war stoppers' related to the tanks- actually, not just the tanks, pretty much everything. The armour on the Leopards is so old there's no way it could stand up in combat now.

PETER: What, like it's rusted?

LEAHY: No, tanks have just gotten better. They've got T-72s over there, their guns would just -POW!- straight through our Leopards.

RICHARD: That's bad.

LEAHY: None of the Leopards are equip with thermal vision either, so that's a war stopper.

RICHARD: That's also bad.

LEAHY: And we hardly have any ammo for the tanks. We've been running minimal reserves for ages.

RICHARD: That's bad.

LEAHY: And the only place we'd be able to get some in time is Germany.

EVERYONE PAUSES FOR A BEAT AND LOOKS
AT RICHARD.

PETER: That is also potentially bad.

RICHARD: Why's that?

PETER: Well, Germany doesn't really want to get involved in this war, so they may not want to sell us ammunition to jump into a war they don't support.

RICHARD: Ah, I see, that is bad.

LEAHY: There is an upside though. We have (HOLDS UP FOUR FINGERS) four sets of night vision! Maybe. We have to check, but we might be able to get them installed on some tanks in time.

PETER: So really, these tanks are not ready to be deployed at all?

LEAHY: I guess not.

PETER: Anyway, no one else runs the Leopard I tank. If we deployed them, we'd also have to run maintenance and support crews, which adds to the numbers we'd have to send over. The point of this is to deploy as few resources as possible,

remember?

PETER: Well, you'll like this news then. We have so little ammunition, we can't even deploy a medium battery unit. Did you know we have like, two thousand rounds of 155mm ammunition, that's not even enough for basic training, let alone a war.

RICHARD: You know, as a civilian, I wouldn't feel comfortable knowing my army is so poorly prepared.

PETER: That's exactly why we don't tell them.

RICHARD: It's just that, if- like- Tomorrow When The War Began happened, everyone would be like 'Oh, help us army, they're taking over.' And we'd be like, 'What are we supposed to do? Our tanks don't even work'

PETER: Yeah, but who's going to invade us? What are they going to do, take Darwin?

RICHARD: They can have it.

LEAHY: Anyway, back to the supplies. Despite everything, I'd like to commit as many resources as possible- as soon as possible.

PETER: Hey now, that's coming on way too strong. You were just saying yourself we have nothing to throw at this war.

LEAHY: But I thought we wanted to help?

PETER: We do- is there anything we can actually deploy?

LEAHY: I mean, if you want something small that doesn't come on too strong, we could just send over some SAS to start with. They have a good reputation from Afghanistan, they know how to handle themselves, and we can get them just doing some early recon work or support, nothing in the line of fire.

PETER: I like that, SAS are good. I mean, one SAS guy is worth like, 4 normal guys- and that's our guys. Compare them to their marines and it's like- 10.

RICHARD: If I was playing a strategy game, and I had a tank and I came across a squad of our SAS guys, I'd turn around and get my tank out of there.

PETER: Yeah, they're like that last tier of troops that you can only get once your base is upgraded. They're damn expensive, but cheaper than a tank, and just as good as one.

LEAHY: Plus, they can go where tanks can't go.

PETER: Alright, so a squad of SAS guys up front. SAS is good, they're a nice gesture without over committing, or coming off too strong.

LEAHY: Then, can we send everything we have over?

PETER: Sure... eventually.

RICHARD: Aren't you forgetting something?

PETER: I mean, I could be. But if I had, then I wouldn't know I did and wouldn't know what it is.

RICHARD: I spoke to the navy.

PETER: That's right. How are they going?

RICHARD: Remember what I was saying when Leahy came in?

PETER: That's right, the navy doesn't have boats that could send over helicopters.

RICHARD: So it doesn't matter about the tanks. Even if they were combat ready, we couldn't get them into combat to start with.

LEAHY: So the navy doesn't have any sea lift capacity?

PETER: Is it boat or ship?

LEAHY: Does it make a difference?

PETER: I've never heard a navy guy use boat before. It's the sort of thing where you don't want to do a report or a speech and say boat, then have some navy guy ringing you up saying 'You need to write that report again, we say ship, not boat here.'

LEAHY: Is it like, after a certain size they become ships?

RICHARD: If that's the case then we're talking ships. We'd need a big... sea faring vessel to get tanks and helicopters over there.

LEAHY: So you're saying it is a ship then?

RICHARD: I don't know! I'll ask a navy guy next time I talk to one.

PETER: Actually, all of you put that in your diaries. Next person to talk to a navy guy, ask them what the difference is.

Anyway, this is great! So we give them a couple of SAS guys, technically worth like, 10 guys each to them. We have tanks we can't use, and helicopters that can't go into combat. We do have *some* ships we could give them, right?

RICHARD: Yeah, just nothing we could actually send stuff on.

PETER: Is the Kanimbla good to go?

RICHARD: Yes, your Kanimbla is fine.

PETER: Man, I love that boat. So we'll send some other boats over, and we'll be all like 'we'd send you some tanks too, but we don't have the ships to send them over with.'

RICHARD: We are going to look so committed.

PETER: 'Look' being the operative word.

ACT [1] SCENE [3]

ROBERT IS BACK IN THE BOARDROOM WITH EVERYONE AROUND HIM, HE'S LOOKING AT PAPERS WHICH ARE EVERYONES REPORTS ON WHAT RESOURCES THE ARMY HAS. PETER, LEAHY, AND RICHARD ARE SITTING AROUND THE BOARD TABLE, WAITING FOR HIS RESPONSE. ROBERT FLICKS THROUGH SOME PAGES BEFORE STARTING TO SPEAK

ROBERT: Is this all we have?

PETER: It's actually more than we thought. A lot of our resources are tied up in Afghanistan.

ROBERT: That's fine, it's just- I thought we'd have more than this. And the navy can't even get us over there?

LEAHY: We do have more, it's just not combat ready. You know, stuff breaks down or whatever, and there's no real motivation to get it fixed.

ROBERT: Well, I mean, it's not like anyone's going to invade us right?

RICHARD: We were actually talking about that before.

PETER: Were we?

RICHARD: Yeah, when we were talking about Tomorrow When the War Began. I reckon I'd be the Homer of the group if that happened.

ROBERT: I think I'd be the main girl, since she's smart and is the leader of the group.

PETER: I think Homer gets with the main girl in the series.

ROBERT: (SURPRISED) Does he?

PETER: Yeah, but it's like, further into the story. A good couple of books in.

LEAHY: Richard, does that mean you'd get with Robert if we ever got invaded?

RICHARD: Um...

ROBERT: (LOOKING BACK AT THE PAPER) So- we actually have a fair bit of stuff, but it either can't go into combat, or we don't have the resources to get it there. This is great.

PETER: I've put everything together and I can't see how we could deploy more than about two thousand people over there.

ROBERT: That still sounds like a lot of people.

PETER: That's everyone. Including administration people, sailors, engineers. A lot of these people won't be anywhere near the front lines.

ROBERT: Well that's good, because did you know we were asked for full cavalry support?

RICHARD: Like horses?

PETER: That's... a lot of people. And on the front lines too.

ROBERT: Yeah, (REFERRING TO PAPER) they want water purification troops, engineers; electrical, structural, bridging, railway, fire fighting, and HAZMAT, ground and air transport elements, medical and environment personnel, comms teams, and security forces.

RICHARD: Do they think this country is just made of people?

EVERYONE PAUSES A BEAT AND STARES AT

RICHARD

ROBERT: That is part of what makes up a country, yes.

But it was more like they said, 'aw, if you're serious about this war, you'll give us all this stuff because we're going into another country we've never been into before and we don't want to have to do it on our own.'

PETER: That's a massive commitment. We're already giving them two thousand personnel before we even go to war and they want a full cavalry division?

ROBERT: They're testing us. We give them this cavalry division and they'll know they can walk all over us. They'll be asking us for air strikes, ground troops, and... ringing us up after midnight to come over with McDonald's.

PETER: And we can't tell them we don't have the resources for a medium battery.

RICHARD: Do they just go around asking everyone for cavalry? They've got to realise that isn't normal.

LEAHY: I think we should do it.

PETER: Look- we're in the great situation that we almost have what they want, but we can't get it over there. We don't even have a means of transport for what we want to send, let alone the massive cavalry division they're asking for. We can say, 'We'd love to help, but we don't have a way to get over there.' We're able to stay committed, whilst shirking our obligations at the same time.

ROBERT: Exactly. What are they going to do, send a boat?

RICHARD: It's ship, actually.

PETER: Have you been in touch with one of the navy guys already?

RICHARD: No.. I just... I was going off what we said before.

ROBERT: Doesn't matter. I'll give them this piddly ultimatum, and they should come back with a bit of 'thanks, but no thanks.' Who knows? They might tell us not to bother with the war at all, and we can avoid this mess completely.

ACT [1] SCENE [4]

THE STAGE IS DARK. THE SOUND OF A TELEPHONE RINGS AND JUST THE VOICES OF ROBERT AND PETER CAN BE HEARD ON THE PHONE.

ROBERT: Peter! I just got off the blower with them.

PETER: What's up?

ROBERT: They're going to send a boat!

PETER: They're sending a boat?

ROBERT: They're sending a boat!

THE STAGE LIGHTS GO ON TO REVEAL RICHARD'S OFFICE, RICHARD IS AT HIS DESK. PETER RUSHES INTO HIS OFFICE IN A PANIC.

PETER: They're sending a boat!

RICHARD: What?

PETER: They're. Sending. A. Boat!

I was on the blower with Robert and he was just on the blower to them, said he said, 'we'd love to help out, but we don't have a way to get over there,' and they said, 'that's alright, we'll

send a boat.' They're going to be here in two weeks with a massive frigate to put everything on.

RICHARD: Why are they sending a boat?

PETER: We're on the way, they'll just pick us up they said.

RICHARD: We're not on the way.

PETER: I know!

RICHARD: God, they're really serious about this war.

PETER AND RICHARD START TALKING OVER
EACH OTHER AS IF THEY'RE HAVING
SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS WITH THEMSELVES

RICHARD: We're not on the way at all.

PETER: A whole cavalry division- I can't take that kind of responsibility-

RICHARD: I mean, (POINTING DOWN) we're all the way down here-

PETER: I didn't sign up for this war for people to get hurt-

RICHARD: (POINTING UP) They want to go all the way up there-

PETER: No mission is worth dying for, that's what Robert said.

RICHARD: Coming here would add two weeks to the trip, easy.

PETER: I mean, what did I expect?

RICHARD: They just- they're really serious about this war.

PETER: Who just offers to rock up in a boat and just

say, 'gather your best troops, we're going on an adventure'? It's not like that anymore, we could do that a year ago, when we were going to Afghanistan. But things are different. We're already involved in one war, we have responsibilities over there, we have lives here. We can't just take off, drop of a hat, a whole cavalry division in tow, whenever they feel like it.

RICHARD: You know what I don't appreciate? How they just expect this of us. They think they can just send a boat and we'll load our best troops on there with them. Who do they think they are?

PETER: I know, right? Who do they think we are?

BOTH STOP TALKING AND PETER PAUSES TO THINK.

PETER: Alright, we can't do this anymore. Tell Gillespie it's all off, that he can come back. Bring up an email, I need to dictate something to you.

RICHARD: Who do you me to send this to?

PETER: Send it to me so I'll can work on it more myself.

Thank you for letting us be involved in your war. However, asking for a full cavalry division, and sending a boat to pick them up, is going a bit too fast for us right now. We've already been to Afghanistan with you, and been through so much there, that I don't think we can commit to this war the way you want us to right now. We still want to support you in this war, as much as we can, but I don't know if we can do that in the way you need. It's not that we think your war is bad, it's just that we don't have the same resources as you to put towards it. I'm really sorry things didn't work out, we said

we'd get involved when we weren't ready yet, and we should have known better. It was our fault for over committing when we weren't ready. I wish you all the best-

LEAHY WALKS IN HOLDING A PIECE OF PAPER

LEAHY: I just ran the numbers on their request.

PETER: And what do the numbers say?

LEAHY: It's going to take us like, 30 days to get everything together. That's the cavalry division, getting everything for it working, and everything needed to support it.

RICHARD: Does that include bullets?

LEAHY: No... unfortunately that does not.

PETER: Thank god, that's longer than it will take the boat to arrive!

LEAHY: What boat?

PETER: They're sending a boat!

LEAHY: What?

PETER: In 14 days. They're sending a boat to pick us up. What's the longest time you think it will take us to get ready?

LEAHY: I mean, we always have problems. Communication problems, logistics problems, engineering problems. I'd like to see it blow out to no more than 45 days.

PETER: 45 days!

RICHARD: I mean, it'll already take double the time for them to get here for us to get ready.

PETER: Yeah, but they've already offered to send a

boat. It's only an extra 2 weeks, they could be like, 'it's ok, we'll wait.' Then what do we do?

RICHARD: Oh.

PETER: But 45 days? They can't wait that long. Even if they offer, we can be like, 'don't you have a war to get to?' They can't afford to sit around and wait.

LEAHY: Well, if they've offered to send a boat down here-

RICHARD: It's so out of the way.

PETER: And it's going to take us so long to get ready.

LEAHY: They might wait.

PETER: They better bloody not.

But god, that's great. Leahy, thank you!

LEAHY: But I want to send the cavalry, that's why I figured this all out.

ACT [1] SCENE [5]

EVERYONE IS BACK IN THE BOARDROOM WITH
ROBERT AGAIN

ROBERT: Brilliant work there everyone. We dodged a bullet with that whole boat thing.

PETER: Well I mean, it's logistics. You can't just spring a boat on people like that.

RICHARD: Can you believe they wanted so many specialists? What were some of the engineers they wanted again?

ROBERT: I can't remember. I think some of the positions they wanted weren't even real. I don't really

care.

LEAHY: Do you think they made up roles to test us?

ROBERT: It's a classic move. Send someone on an impossible task and see how hard they try to complete it. It's what you do to see how interested someone is in you. They were teasing us.

PETER: We totally called their bluff. Didn't phase us at all.

ROBERT: So... what are we sending over there?

LEAHY: Yeah, we've got a bit of stuff together we can send. It's all more support stuff though, (BITTER) nothing that's going to get deployed on the front lines.

PETER: Even then, it's not like it's going to get deployed immediately. They'll be set up there and have done most of the grunt work by the time we turn up.

ROBERT: (LAUGHS) You know how you told me it would take 45 days?

PETER: Yeah?

ROBERT: I told them 60, just to make sure.

I passed that on to them, and they said, 'fine, that's fine. We'll just go straight there then. It's alright, we can pick you up later.' I said we'll get ourselves over- thank you very much.

You can tell they were kind of annoyed, but they didn't want to admit it. We tried to accommodate their ridiculous demands, so I said, 'maybe, you shouldn't have just sprung a boat on us in such short notice.' I think that made them feel bad.

RICHARD: I like that, it's like, it was our problem and

you turned it around and made them think it was their problem. Now they feel bad.

PETER: We should probably do something to make it up to them. This war is more about diplomatic relations, and they'll feel like we've jagged them around a bit.

ROBERT: I like your thinking. Anything we can do to make it up to them- without actually doing anything?

PETER: I was thinking of going over our deployment figures and shuffling things around a bit. I could take some people off other divisions and we can send across a couple of divers to help with deep sea stuff.

ROBERT: I like it- send some divers over as a nice gesture. Can you imagine having 2000 troops on the ground day 1- and a full cavalry division? I don't want to have to be involved in all that. People already hate this war- I hate this war, and it hasn't even started.

Good work everyone, I'm proud of you.

ACT [2] SCENE [1]

PETER IS AT HIS COMPUTER WHEN LEAHY WALKS IN LOOKING AT A PIECE OF PAPER HE'S HOLDING.

LEAHY: Peter, I need to talk to you about something.

PETER: Need is a strong word. Should I be worried about where this is going?

LEAHY: Potentially, how concerned are you about our strategic sea lift capacity?

PETER: I... don't really know what that is?

LEAHY: Ok, so what it is- in this instance at least, is we have some helicopters we need to send over

there-

PETER: I thought we didn't want to send helicopters over.

LEAHY: Yeah, well, we may not want to- but I want to be more prepared. We missed the boat on sending them over by sea-

PETER: Is this the boat they were sending?

LEAHY: No. I was just using the turn of phrase. What I mean is it's too late to get the helicopters to the combat zone in a reasonable time by sea- so it's also actually literal. We have missed the deployment window to send our helicopters over there by boat. We'll need to look into other, more expense, measures.

PETER: Isn't that the whole point? We don't want to send those helicopters, and now transporting them by sea will take too long, transporting them any other way will be too expensive. We've backed ourselves into a wonderful corner and they'll have to stay here.

LEAHY: There is a way.

PETER: Leahy... don't do this to me.

LEAHY: But there is a catch!

PETER: Thank god.

LEAHY: We could transport the helicopters by air-

PETER: You mean just fly them over?

LEAHY: No... we can load them into transport planes and send them over. We have the helicopters, we have the planes- but we don't have the transport kits we need to secure them in the planes.

PETER: So we're going to load helicopters into planes,

and fly the helicopters in the planes over there?

LEAHY: Yes.

PETER: And we have the planes and the helicopters, but no way to move them around together?

LEAHY: No.

PETER: Hmmm. You'd think we'd have that. It would just make sense to have that.

LEAHY: I don't know why we don't already.

PETER: Maybe, it's because then we'd be able to load our helicopters onto planes and fly them into combat zones. And then certain members of the coalition would expect us to do so.

Which helicopters do you want to send over?

LEAHY: Well, since the blackhawks don't have the electronics to be deployed in combat, I was thinking we could send over the chinooks.

PETER: You realise the chinooks have all the same problems, right?

LEAHY: Do they?

PETER: Yes. That's probably part of the reason we haven't sent any over yet. There's no computers to identify incoming threats, and our communications systems are so outdated that they're not compatible with our allies systems. We try to talk to them over radio and they'll probably think it's an enemy transmission.

LEAHY: We should still send over some type of air support. I've found two options on how we could get these transport kits.

PETER: Please don't tell me.

LEAHY: The UK have some. They have the exact same helicopter transport kits we need and they're not using them.

PETER: So we could be like, (CONDESCENDING VOICE) 'Hi, the UK. Somehow still sovereign owners of us. On the off chance we maybe want to move some helicopters around, could we possibly pretty please borrow your transport kits? We'll give them back as soon as we're done.'

LEAHY: That's exactly what I was thinking.

PETER: And the other option?

LEAHY: We could get somewhere local to fabricate them. It will take longer, but then we'll own them. I've found a place in Townsville that has the capacity to make the kits.

PETER: You've put a lot of work into this. How about you let me take care of things from here. I'll contact this place in Townsville and look into it for you.

LEAHY: Sure. Thanks, Peter. You're so great. Let me know what you come back with.

ACT [2] SCENE [2]

EVERYONE IS SITTING AROUND ROBERT IN THE BOARD ROOM. THEY ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF DISCUSSING OTHER MATTERS.

ROBERT: So I told my publisher I wanted to figure out a way that when you hold the book upright, it says Minister for Attack, but when you hold it sideways, it says Minister for Defence.

RICHARD: That's really cool, how would you do that?

ROBERT: I'm thinking a cover kind of like those holographic tazos, you know the ones with the crinkly surface that makes you see different

stuff when you move it?

RICHARD: Like a lenticular cover.

PETER: Aren't they for side to side? You're talking about turning something 90 degrees.

ROBERT: I'm sure there's a way to figure it out.

LEAHY: Maybe if you had the crinkles going on a 45 degree angle, that might work.

ROBERT: (WRITING ON SOME PAPER) That's a good idea. This has been really constructive guys, I'm taking this to my publisher.

Alright, is there anything else we need to go over?

EVERYONE SITS IN SILENCE FOR A MOMENT,
TRYING TO THINK.

RICHARD: I just found out the other day, my wife has been saying I work in the 'Milinary' the whole time. I've been with her 20 years and I only just noticed.

LEAHY: So if she spoke to anyone about what you do, she says you're part of the 'Milinary'?

RICHARD: Yeah, no T. No one's corrected her before. And now I notice it every time and it's driving me mad.

ROBERT: I had a similar problem when my mum had a fall. They had her in the hospital on all these painkillers and stuff. She was acting a bit weird because of all the drugs, and my dad thought it was dementia.

Now, I didn't want my mum to have dementia, for- you know- regular reasons, but I really didn't want mum to have dementia because my dad was calling it 'Debentia'.

There is no way I'd be able to deal with my mum going through dementia and my dad mispronouncing it the whole time. Would have driven me mad.

PETER: Did it turn out to be dementia?

ROBERT: No, it was the drugs. Because what do you know, my dad isn't a doctor or a mental health expert. She started acting normal again after a few days in hospital. She's getting along fine now.

PETER: That's great. Tell your parents we say hi.

ROBERT: I will, mum loves hearing about what's going on here.

Alright, anything else?

LEAHY: Yes, I wanted to raise an issue with our strategic sea lift capacity.

PETER PUTS HIS HEAD IN HIS HANDS.

ROBERT: What's this?

PETER: Leahy wants to send some helicopters over there, we can't send them by boat, but we can send them by air.

LEAHY: We could, but we don't have the transport kits to send them by air.

ROBERT: Hold on, so we have helicopters that you want to send by air, but we can't for some reason? Wouldn't we be flying them over?

LEAHY: No, we need to fly them over by plane. Helicopters don't have the range of planes, so it's not practical to actually fly them over there.

EVERYONE STARTS TALKING OVER EACH OTHER TO EXPLAIN TO ROBERT HOW THE KITS WORK

PETER: So we need these kits-

LEAHY: To fix the helicopters to the planes-

RICHARD: Aren't the helicopters too big to fit in the planes-

ROBERT: Why would we want to put helicopters into planes-

LEAHY: We need the kits to hold the helicopters in place-

PETER: The rotors can fold up to fit in the planes-

RICHARD: Why don't we already have these kits-

ROBERT: So we're putting helicopters inside planes and flying the planes with the helicopters inside-

EVERYONE FINALLY STOPS TALKING

ROBERT: Alright, Alright. I think I understand now. But still, my question is, why do we even want to get these helicopters over there?

LEAHY: For greater military assistance.

ROBERT: Everyone always wants greater military assistance. Why do we have to transport them by plane?

PETER: Because we don't have a boat to transport them on, and even if we did, it would take too long. We had an ideal time frame to deploy units, that has passed, and a boat won't get there in time.

ROBERT: Alright, hold on, so we have helicopters, and we can't take them by boat, so we want to take them by plane?

LEAHY: Yes.

ROBERT: And that's because they can't fly there by themselves?

PETER: It's too far.

ROBERT: So how does the helicopter fit in the plane?
They have rotors, the rotors are massive.

LEAHY: They can fold up and then you just have the main fuselage of the helicopter to deal with.

ROBERT: We're talking the long, tube shaped helicopters, right?

LEAHY: Yeah, those ones. Chinooks.

ROBERT: Why do you want to send the chinooks?

LEAHY: Because the blackhawks have outdated comms and no threat detection-

PETER: Neither do the chinooks!

ROBERT: Then why are we sending them?

LEAHY: We need to send something!

ROBERT: You're not making a strong case for it.

LEAHY: Look, you know the movie Blackhawk Down?

RICHARD: That's an intense movie.

ROBERT: Has our own Eric Bana in it.

LEAHY: It was made because people shot down a blackhawk.

ROBERT: Well yeah, it's in the title-

RICAHRD: Really?

LEAHY: No one's going to shoot down a chinook. They're not interesting enough. No one would make a movie called Chinook Down.

PETER: I don't think our enemies will select targets based on movie rights.

LEAHY: What I'm saying is chinooks aren't cool. Sure, they've got the same problems as the blackhawks. But when you see a blackhawk, you say, 'hey, look- a blackhawk!' And if you're a bad guy you try to shoot it down. You see a chinook, you say, 'who cares?'

PETER: That... what?

ROBERT: So we have planes big enough to carry the chinooks?

LEAHY: But we can't carry them, because we need these special kits to hold them in place on the flight.

ROBERT: So we have the helicopters, and the planes, but not the kits?

PETER: Robert, you can't be considering this.

ROBERT: Leahy's logic is sound. Have you ever wanted to shoot down a chinook?

PETER: I've never been the one shooting at the chinooks.

RICHARD: I have never felt compelled to shoot a chinook.

ROBERT: Well, there you go.

LEAHY: To answer your question; yes, we have the helicopters, we have the planes, we just don't have the kits to transport the helicopters inside the planes.

ROBERT: You'd think we'd already have those. It would make sense to have those.

PETER: That's what I said.

ROBERT: Well, we don't have the kits. Can't we just leave it at that? We can't get them there by boat, we can't get them there by plane. Sounds

like the perfect excuse to me.

LEAHY: We do have options for getting the kits to send the helicopters over-

PETER: I got in touch with those guys in Townsville. Yeah, they could do it, but who knows how long it would take them? And with the Christmas break coming up it would take even longer.

LEAHY: Oh, so you spoke to them? That's great, I got in touch with the UK about using theirs.

PETER: Why would you do that?

LEAHY: You said you'd take care of asking the guys in Townsville, so I thought I'd take care of asking the UK.

PETER: No, I said I'd take care of the whole thing. Which was meant to be a polite way of saying it wouldn't get done.

LEAHY: Why would you do that?

PETER: Maybe because I don't want our helicopters near combat zones!

RICHARD: Well, what do we do now?

LEAHY: We can ask the UK to send their kits over.

PETER: Or we could not send them over at all.

RICHARD: And this place in Townsville?

PETER: They can make them, but it will take a while.

ROBERT: Alright, if anyone asks, we say we looked into the matter and that's where it stands. The UK are using their kits, these Townsville guys can't deliver the kits in a time frame we need. And that's our fault, we left it too late, so with short notice and the Christmas break coming

up, they couldn't possibly deliver in time. We clear?

PETER: That sounds reasonable. I can't see how this could become a big deal. We're always exploring our options.

ACT [2] SCENE [3]

PETER IS ON THE PHONE IN HIS OFFICE AT HIS COMPUTER WHEN RICHARD WALKS IN

PETER: (TALKING TO GILLESPIE) Gillespie, we need those basing rights if we're going to step up operations over there. You're going to have to step up negotiations with the provinces if we're going to have any Status of Force Agreements... Why can't I do it? Because you're over there. You're in the best position to talk to them-

RICHARD ENTERS

RICHARD: Hey, Peter...

PETER: I'm just on the phone with Gillespie. (TO PHONE) Richard has just walked in, get those SOFAs sorted out and I'll talk to you later.

RICHARD: You know how you said talk of the helicopter kits wouldn't get out?

PETER: I already hate where this is going.

RICHARD: Well... everyone in Townsville is talking about it.

PETER: What do you mean, everyone?

RICHARD: It's not that big a place. You talked to the engineering guys there, one of them mentioned it to someone else, that person talked to someone who works at the Bulletin, then that person from the Bulletin went back to the engineering guys.

PETER: They can't talk about that, it's super secret army stuff.

RICHARD: Did you tell them that?

PETER: Well, no. I mean, it was just some transport kits for some helicopters.

RICHARD: Well, they're all excited that Townsville is getting some military contracting, they think it's leading to some big money.

PETER: They watch too many movies. What do they think? We're going to contract to some private company to open a secret base there?

RICHARD: These kits must be a really big deal. Have you been getting calls from the UK following up on the kits too?

PETER: What are you talking about?

RICHARD: Oh, everyone's been getting calls from the UK. They're being incredibly polite, just asking and asking if we're sure we don't want to use their transport kits. They say they're done with them now and we're more than welcome to have them.

PETER: I have received no such calls.

RICHARD: Oh man, Gillespie hasn't told you? They're harassing him over there about them too.

PETER: Why are they asking Gillespie? He's just our National Command Element over there. Why is no one calling me? I'm the Chief of the Defence Force.

RICHARD: They said they know you're terribly busy and don't want to be a bother.

PETER: This is all Leahy's fault.

PETER PICKS UP THE PHONE ON HIS DESK

AND CALLS LEAHY TO TELL HIM TO GET IN HIS OFFICE. LEAHY ENTERS NOT LONG AFTER.

PETER: Leahy, do you know what you've done?

LEAHY: Do you mean something new, or the helicopter thing?

PETER: The helicopter thing, but new stuff on the helicopter thing. The Townsville Bulletin spoke to a guy that spoke to a guy that spoke to you about how we contacted them to make the kits.

LEAHY: That would explain why they keep calling us. They're worried about whether they'll be done on time.

PETER: Why don't I know about this? I'm the one that contacted them, why doesn't this go back to me?

LEAHY: I don't know. Someone said there was a call on line one from Townsville about helicopter kits, so I took it.

PETER: So they're worried they can't get things done in time? That's alright, if they can't get it done, we'll tell them not to worry about it.

LEAHY: It's not that they can't get them done in time, it's that they can get them done anytime. They want a deadline so they know when we want them by.

PETER: So if we give them a long finish date and they'll get them done?

RICHARD: We could give them a really short deadline. With Christmas coming up they'd never be able to hit it.

LEAHY: Part of the reason they want to know is they can just put people on over Christmas if we want the kits sooner, they just need to know in advance.

PETER: Jesus. They've already told everyone in Townsville we contacted them. We give them any deadline and they'll think we want the kits. And we can't pull an impossible deadline beyond their capability.

Why did you pick these people to take make the kits? I'm not used to dealing with such competent people.

RICHARD: Hey.

PETER: They're always meeting and exceeding your expectations, I can't take it.

LEAHY: I want to see the job get done.

PETER: The 'job' is to not get the job done, whilst keeping up all appearances it is getting done.

LEAHY: You're the one that spoke to Townsville. You should have told them this was secret army stuff if you didn't want it to get out.

RICHARD: That's a good point actually. We didn't call the kits secret army stuff because we didn't think it would get out. We thought it was just boring army stuff, so we didn't tell either Townsville it was secret army stuff or boring army stuff. If we told them it was secret army stuff, they wouldn't have told anyone out of respect. If we told them it was boring army stuff, they wouldn't have told anyone because it was boring. We didn't tell them what level of army stuff it was, so they all assumed it was important army stuff, and now here we are.

LEAHY: What?

RICHARD: Don't forget, there's the matter of the UK.

PETER: That's right, if you guys want to see a competent- and extremely polite defence force.

LEAHY: You mean the calls about borrowing the kits?

PETER: See? No one tells me anything here.

LEAHY: They know you're busy, so they don't want to be a bother.

PETER: People think I'm busy, so they don't want to be a bother. But then I don't get told anything, and I become busier trying to catch up.

RICHARD: The UK really want us to borrow their kits.

LEAHY: Alright! ...I realise that's a bad thing.

PETER: I'm not getting angry at you. I just want you to know what a mess we're in now.

LEAHY: What's wrong, we have to groups who are extremely forthcoming with their kits.

PETER: We have two groups extremely willing to give us kits we don't want.

LEAHY: Then why did we ask for them?

PETER: I did it so you'd stop asking about them

ACT [2] SCENE [4]

PETER IS IN HIS OFFICE AGAIN WHEN
LEAHY AND RICHARD ENTER. BOTH ARE
HOLDING SHEETS OF PAPER WITH WRITING
ON THEM, THEIR PLANS FOR THE
HELICOPTER KITS.

PETER: Alright, what do we have?

RICHARD: What did you come up with?

PETER: Alright, so, we'll take a 'when it's done' approach to the guys in Townsville. We won't give them a strict deadline, and we'll hope they'll just push it to the bottom of their priority pile.

LEAHY: What if people ask about timeframes?

PETER: Well, for that... uh, I don't know-

RICHARD: I know, I've got a real good political response to this. We say, 'we're considering our options.'

PETER: See, I love that. You can use that response for anything. It's like the Rosetta Stone of responses.

LEAHY: I had a solution to all this, but you didn't like it.

PETER: What was your solution?

LEAHY: If we considered our strategic sea lift capability earlier, we could have shipped our helicopters by boat and not be in this mess.

PETER: When we could have shipped our helicopters by boat, we weren't going to ship them at all. This all started because you started looking at other options since we couldn't ship them by boat.

LEAHY: It would have been a lot cheaper to ship them by boat instead of worrying about transport kits and doing it by air.

PETER: It would have been cheaper to not ship them at all, but here we are.

RICHARD: We deliberately missed the shipping deadline so we didn't have to send anything.

LEAHY: Then why are we going through all this to send them?

PETER: Because you wanted to send them, and then people heard you wanted to send them, so now we have to look like we want to send them.

LEAHY: So that's it? We just react to everything trying

to keep up appearances, until what?

PETER: No, the point is to contain this and operate with no expectations.

LEAHY: It's a bit hard to have no expectations when there's a war on.

RICHARD: Actually, a war is perfect for us. It justifies the Defence Force's existence, and people don't question a well run war.

PETER: Then we better start running this one properly.

LEAHY: We're already in one war, it was going fine. So why do we even need to be in this one?

PETER: I didn't choose that. I don't choose the wars we're in, I've just got to make them work.

LEAHY: This one's not working.

RICHARD: Because you made it not work.

PETER: So that's why we're doing this. We need to make this boring so people leave us alone. So, what do we say if anyone asks about the kits?

RICHARD: We're considering our options.

LEAHY: And what should we say if people ask why we went to both Townsville and the UK?

PETER: Um...

RICHARD: We say we like to support Australian business first, but we want to have a contingency plan.

PETER: That's great, but what do we do about the UK? They keep asking about sending the kits.

RICHARD: Let's say... we'll let you know when we need them. Something's come up, and we'll contact you when we need them.

PETER: That works. The old 'don't call us, we'll call you' move. When they follow up- which they will- we can give other excuses until this just fades away.

LEAHY: We should either just get the kits off Townsville or tell them we're not looking to use the kits.

PETER: God, the worst thing we could tell anyone right now is the truth. Best we just bury this.

ROBERT ENTERS PETER'S OFFICE

ROBERT: Knock knock. Working hard I see.

PETER: Robert, great. Just the guy I need to see. Richard, Leahy, see if you can figure out anything more for this, I need to have a meeting with Robert.

RICHARD AND LEAHY GET UP TO LEAVE

RICHARD: How's it going Robert?

ROBERT: What's up boys?

LEAHY: Catch you around.

RICHARD AND LEAHY LEAVE, ROBERT SITS
AT PETER'S DESK

ROBERT: What's been going on?

PETER: Well, I've been trying to sort out these SOFAs with Gillespie-

ROBERT: What, like furniture?

PETER: No, some land agreement stuff for setting up bases-

ROBERT: I don't want to know about that stuff. What were you working on with the guys just then?

PETER: Oh, that. You might be able to help me with that actually. You know those helicopter transport kits?

ROBERT: The ones to put the helicopters on the planes?

PETER: Yeah, those ones. The UK keep asking us if we want to borrow them, and the engineers in Townsville want to know when we want them made. But I don't want them made at all. How do I get them to leave us alone?

ROBERT: Get the engineers to make them.

PETER: What, why?

ROBERT: You borrow them from the UK and you'll have to give them back, and it will get back to them that you haven't used them. Get them from the engineers and that's case closed. Makes no difference to them whether you use them or not.

PETER: That makes sense. We get them made, and they can just sit up the back of a hangar somewhere, end of discussion. You are good at this Robert.

ROBERT: Simple strategy. It's the least bad of two undesirable outcomes.

PETER: I'm going to get on the phone straight away and tell them to make those kits as soon as they can manage.

ACT [2] SCENE [5]

PETER IS IN HIS OFFICE ON THE PHONE TO
GILLESPIE

PETER: None, no progress yet? Gillespie, we need those SOFAs so we can set up bases. I know I don't want them, but you need to put in more effort so it looks like we tried. Well, what's the minimum they're willing to trade for, we don't want to lose an arm and a leg over this.

LEAHY ENTERS PETER'S OFFICE LOOKING
EXTREMELY HAPPY

PETER: Hold on, I've got to go Gillespie, Leahy's here.
Just try harder getting us some land- alright. I
want you to try and fail as hard as possible.

PETER HANGS UP

PETER: Leahy, what's up, you look extremely happy.
Should I be worried?

LEAHY: I just wanted to thank you Peter. I didn't think
you'd come around, but I'm so glad you did.

PETER: Come around to what? I'm getting more worried
now.

LEAHY: About the kits. I didn't think we were going to
do anything about them.

PETER: Well, you know, the only way to make this mess
blow over was to get them in some shape or form.
Once they're here they can just take up space
in a hangar and no one will ask about them.

LEAHY: They're not going to waste at all. I heard they
were coming in so I got those helicopters
arranged and loaded on planes without a moment
to lose.

PETER: I'm sorry, what?

LEAHY: I was told about the kits, so I arranged to have
the helicopters delivered.

PETER: What? No, I just ordered those kits so everyone
would leave us alone. We weren't supposed to use
them.

LEAHY: If we weren't supposed to use them then why did
we get them?

PETER: So Townsville and the UK would stop calling us.

LEAHY: Well, they're fulfilling their true purpose now. Those chinooks are already on their way to Gillespie.

PETER: How did you hear about the kits and I've heard nothing?

LEAHY: Remember when I said there was that call from Townsville and I took it?

PETER: Yeah...

LEAHY: Well I pretty much became their primary contact after that. I also insisted they call me whenever they needed anything.

PETER: So you heard everything about these kits and once again I'm the last one to know.

LEAHY: It's delegating. You didn't have to worry about the kits until it was too late. And they're already on their way, nothing more for you to do.

PETER: Why does this defence force run efficiently when I don't want it to?

LEAHY: Well, look, I thought you'd be all proud that I sorted out those kits for you- but now I don't know what to feel.

PETER: Did you at least use the Kanimbla?

LEAHY: Yes. I mean, I had to, it's one of the only boats we have. Why are you so mad at me?

PETER: No, it's alright Leahy. You were doing what you thought was right. Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to make a call.

LEAHY LEAVES PETER'S OFFICE. PETER
MAKES A CALL AGAIN

PETER: Hi, Gillespie, me again. I just heard about the

helicopters. How many people are going over to operate the helicopters? Alright, I want you to pick that many people to send back over here. I want deployment figures to stay the same. Yes-- the same amount. I don't know, I'm not bothered which departments they come from.

ACT [3]

SCENE [1]

EVERYONE IS AROUND THE BOARD TABLE
WITH ROBERT AT THE CENTRE. ROBERT IS
HOLDING A PIECE OF PAPER LOOKING AT IT
WITH CONCERN. RICHARD IS WRITING,
TAKING NOTES AS EVERYONE TALKS

ROBERT: Alright, do you know what we have to deal with
this time?

RICHARD: Guided missiles?

LEAHY: More ground troops.

PETER: IEDs?

RICHARD: Zombie Nazis?

ROBERT: What? No. Although, zombie Nazis is probably the
closest guess.

RICHARD: Are we talking reanimated Nazi corpses, or when
people turn into zombies they also turn into
Nazis?

ROBERT: You know what, it was dumb of me to say that.
No, old mate eyebrows is worried about
biological warfare, because, you know- WMDs and
stuff. We need to do something about it before
everyone catches a weaponised disease and dies.

(LOOKING AT RICHARD) How could someone turn into
a Nazi *after* they die? You lose all your higher
brain function, I've never seen a zombie with
politics.

PETER: Don't you work in parliament?

ROBERT: What was that?

PETER: So we're talking something like an inoculation
program?

ROBERT: Yeah, something like that I guess.

PETER: You don't seem too enthusiastic.

ROBERT: I don't know, call this treason, I'm starting to get the feeling there are no WMDs over there.

RICHARD: I bet that would be treason... in certain circles-

LEAHY: In the more than likely chance there are WMDs, we need to be prepared. I'm willing to spearhead this program so we can get our troops on the ground.

ROBERT: You'd spearhead a dead rat to get more troops on the ground.

LEAHY: What?

ROBERT: If you're putting your hand up for this Leahy, go right ahead.

LEAHY: Alright, what are we dealing with over there?

ROBERT: That's the thing, we don't know. But everyone reckons it's either smallpox or anthrax. Smallpox- I mean, who gets smallpox these days? Since smallpox isn't really a thing anymore we need to make sure everyone is vaccinated against it. But anthrax? Anthrax is the killer-

RICHARD: Return of the Killer A's!

ROBERT: Yes, they are a sick band. Anthrax normally isn't that bad, it's when you turn it into an aerosol that it becomes a real fistful of metal. Kills anything it touches, in a couple of days at least.

PETER: See, that's why I've never thought biological warfare would work. You want to kill people straight away, who has got the time for anthrax to work?

RICHARD: You want like, the express postage of death.

PETER: No, you want instant death. Express post still takes a couple of days... and things get lost in the mail.

LEAHY: If a bunch of people got hit with anthrax, they'd still have a chance for a final charge. You could just give them a big speech, William Wallace style, and get them to charge down the other guys. (RAISES HIS HAND LIKE HE'S HOLDING A SWORD) "We're already dead men, lets see how many we can take with us!"

ROBERT: Exactly. You can't say 'I'll give you anthrax today if you promise to die next Tuesday'. So are we clear on what needs to be done?

PETER: Um, so it's Leahy's going to take care of the inoculation program?

ROBERT: I don't know. Frankly, I don't care. This will probably be all for show, a real who cares wins approach. Has anyone been taking minutes?

RICHARD: I have been. (FLIPS THROUGH NOTE BOOK) So, zombie Nazis, WMDs, smallpox, anthrax, sick band, express postage of death, William Wallace, kill you Tuesday for a hamburger today.

ROBERT: That tells me nothing. What the hell do we talk about in these meetings?

LEAHY: I am the law on the inoculation program.

ROBERT: You know what, I actually like these meetings, it's like we get to just hang out here. This is a real chill place, everyone else is so serious. No one else knows who Anthrax are.

ACT [3] SCENE [2]

LEAHY IS IN PETER'S OFFICE WITH PETER.
LEAHY IS EXCITEDLY GOING THROUGH THE
DETAILS OF THE VACCINATION PLAN.

LEAHY: So I was reading about it, and you can actually treat against both anthrax and smallpox after infection.

PETER: The wonders of modern medicine.

LEAHY: For smallpox, you can just vaccinate someone up to a week after first contact, and with anthrax, you can give them a powerful dose of antibiotics. Or so they say, since there haven't been a whole lot of trials.

PETER: So you're telling me not a lot of people have been spreading the disease of weaponised aerosol anthrax?

LEAHY: No.

PETER: Would you imagine that? Why use anthrax if it's so preventable? We're a real army, we can afford all the vaccinations and whatever. It might be able to work if you were fighting some rebels in some cave- not us.

And why use smallpox anyway? They've been treating smallpox for centuries. You chuck a bunch of smallpox into a crowd and they won't even notice.

LEAHY: Does getting chickenpox inoculate you against smallpox?

PETER: I don't know. All I know is you can only catch chickenpox once.

LEAHY: I ask because they inoculated against smallpox in the 16th century by giving people cowpox, which was a harmless strain. It was the first successful example of a vaccine, especially because it didn't have to involve exposure to tiny amounts of the actual disease, which was much harder to control back then.

PETER: Aren't you just a wealth of knowledge on the subject? See, why use a disease we vaccinated

against 500 years ago? Cows are the least threatening animal out there, just so big and dumb. They were just made to be eaten.

LEAHY: Well I've got the cow pox for our troops. Remember the vaccinations we used in Afghanistan last year?

PETER: The ones that made a bunch of people sick?

LEAHY: Yes... I'm going to use them.

PETER: What? The exact same ones?

LEAHY: No, not the same batches. I wouldn't give people those same vaccines. I mean the same company from the UK that made them. They said there's no reason why people should get sick from them again.

PETER: Why, what have they done differently to current batches?

LEAHY: Nothing.

PETER: Leahy, don't make me laugh.

LEAHY: They said the people who got sick off the last batch were a statistical anomaly. They don't see why anyone should have gotten sick in the first place, so it shouldn't happen again.

PETER: That doesn't make me feel better. You'd think they'd look into it if people got sick.

LEAHY: I have a backup. We still have some vaccines from the Olympics.

PETER: The Olympics were 2 years ago, it will be closer to 3 years once people are actually deployed. Are those vaccines still good?

LEAHY: Yes- well, mostly. They're still current. They're about to expire is all, so we might as well use them. They've been stored safely for...

most of the time. I think they were in a regular fridge for a while, instead of deep cold storage. Should be fine though.

PETER: You want to use almost out of date vaccines from the Olympics and batches from a company that made people sick?

LEAHY: It's not like anyone died- or had any other long term side effects. You've got to think, it's a military grade vaccination. We can't have people coming in every couple of weeks to get a new vaccination. We have to give them everything at once to save time. Of course not everyone's going to be in a state of euphoria after a potent dose.

But then they're immune to weaponised smallpox and aerosol anthrax, they'll be armed and dangerous super soldiers.

PETER: Only if they come across some smallpox or anthrax. Otherwise they're just regular soldiers.

LEAHY: Then they better pray they come across some anthrax. If I came across some anthrax I'd spray it in my pits like deodorant to show how invulnerable I am.

PETER: Get that fresh anthrax smell.

LEAHY: Look, I've got an announcement to write up, a form to draft for people to sign, and a whole shipment of super soldier serum to get over here.

PETER: Alright, whatever you have to do to keep our people among the living.

ACT [3] SCENE [3]

MAYBE PLAY BUSH'S SPEECH DECLARING WAR

ON IRAQ TO INDICATE A PASSAGE OF TIME.

PETER IS IN HIS OFFICE AGAIN AS
RICHARD BARGES IN WAVING AROUND PAPERS
THAT ARE LEAHY'S FORM AND
ANNOUNCEMENT.

RICHARD: Peter! It's spreading everywhere! Anthrax,
smallpox, it's a madhouse!

PETER: What, anthrax, where?

RICHARD: On the boats, the ground, the air force. Oh god,
even here in the office. We're in the belly of
the beast now.

PETER: What? How did it spread?

RICHARD: The announcement and the form Leahy sent out.
Everyone's talking about it.

PETER: Hold on, so not actual anthrax?

RICHARD: No, but everyone thinks they're going to get it.
Leahy's announcement made it sound like people
were going to be sent gung-ho into a field of
smallpox. That they spray themselves with Lynx
Anthrax over there.

PETER: What did that announcement bloody say?

RICHARD: Where do I start? (POINTING AT PAPER) First of
all, the announcement says the vaccine is
unregistered. It doesn't explain that it's
unregistered to the Therapeutic Goods
Association, which is non-binding, and consumer
based.

PETER: Then why did he even mention it?

RICHARD: I guess because vaccines usually are, but that's
regular vaccines, not military ones. Everyone
thinks they're getting some dodgy batch unfit
for use.

PETER: Oh Jesus.

RICHARD: And the form says you either give consent and receive the vaccination, or don't give consent- and other consequences might follow.

PETER: What consequences?

RICHARD: Discharge? Reassignment? It doesn't say. It makes it sound like people will be kicked out of the defence force if they refuse. I've got it here. (READING FROM PAPER) 'I understand that I may refuse to accept the anthrax vaccine without prejudicing my medical care but that I may not be eligible for specific operational deployments.'

Specific, it just says specific deployments, not which deployments.

PETER: That's not very specific.

RICHARD: Yeah, everyone thinks they'll get deployed into an Anthrax hole no matter what.

PETER: That's bad.

RICHARD: All this comes after people were told they wouldn't be deployed if they chose not to give consent to the vaccination. We are caught in a mosh with this Peter.

The form says people can still be deployed elsewhere if they turn down the vaccination, but our website says turning down the vaccination could jeopardise their deployment status.

PETER: These specific vaccinations?

RICHARD: The website doesn't state which ones.

And then, the rest of this form, a 24 page document, is pretty much a Q&A on the history of anthrax and what it does to people.

PETER: Bloody hell. Leahy just couldn't help himself.

RICHARD: Like, read this; 'It is not a new disease, having been recorded from around 1500BC. During the 1930s, extensive research was conducted-' it just keeps going on like that. And not to mention the rumours about the batches of vaccines they think we're planning to use.

PETER: You mean the UK company and the Olympic vaccines?

RICHARD: Yes, perhaps the two worst options for vaccines we could have gone with.

PETER: Leahy said he was going to use them.

RICHARD: This sounds bad. We know the vaccines are good... usable, they haven't expired yet. This makes them sound bad.

And then there are the storage concerns too.

PETER: I knew that would come back to bite us.

RICHARD: Gillespie said people are saying the Olympic vaccines have been kept in a normal fridge this whole time and lost their potency.

PETER: We shouldn't use them.

RICHARD: They're still good, it would be too expensive to chuck them out.

PETER: Is there any way we can change people's minds on this?

RICHARD: Well, they won't make people sick, since they've lost their potency. But then people will be less resistant to anthrax, because they've lost their potency.

PETER: We probably won't come across any Anthrax, but people think we will and won't feel safe until we do something about it.

RICHARD: And on top of that, people think we aren't doing

our jobs right.

PETER: We aren't doing our jobs right!

RICHARD: Yeah, but not in the way people think. People are worried about biological warfare, we know it's not a big deal, so we appear to do something about biological warfare. The problem isn't what we're doing, but how we look like we're doing what we're doing.

PETER: This has just been a complete balls up. How could it get any worse?

THE PHONE STARTS RINGING. PETER ANSWERS, GIVES SOME YES AND NO ANSWERS BEFORE HANGING UP.

PETER: That was Robert. Things have gotten worse.

ACT [3] SCENE [4]

EVERYONE IS BACK IN THE BOARD ROOM AGAIN. ROBERT IS IN THE CENTRE AND IS QUITE AGITATED WITH EVERYONE.

ROBERT: I've got people coming at me from all sides, questions in parliament, questions from the media. I've got a press conference to do after this.

What the hell is going on with this whole vaccination thing?

LEAHY: We've encountered some un-addressed concerns from our forces with the program.

ROBERT: (POINTING AT LEAHY) You've ballsed this up, is what this is. We just had to roll out a vaccination program so people could stop worrying about catching a bit of anthrax or smallpox. Now they think they're being injected with some experimental super soldier serum that'll make them puke their intestines. Or be

deployed and catch Anthrax regardless if they refuse.

RICHARD: The feedback we've been getting is-

ROBERT: Good point. The other side of it is people think they're getting some home brew dose that's been sitting in some bath since the Olympics. Not a good look either.

Did you know I got jumped about this in the senate? The god-damned senate. Nothing matters in the senate, we just vote yes or no on stuff the other guys do. I was sitting up the back with my GBA, making some serious Ruby Red progress, and Senator Lundy starts interrogating me on this whole vaccination thing. He was going for some real political points scoring, like he's trying to become prime minister.

PETER: We've figured out how to contain the rumours and the concern over the vaccinations.

ROBERT: See, this is what I want. What's the plan?

PETER: We're going to issue some corrections to the original notice and re-release a much less volatile version of the information sheet to the people. We'll add in new points of information to counteract some symptoms and add extra conditions that will make people more receptive to the vaccine.

ROBERT: A more benign strain of the notice, to make people more resistant to the misinformation and fear being spread by the original.

PETER: Exactly. We may not be able to do anything about the people who received exposure to the original notice, we're calling them bulletin 0. But we should be able to build up resistance to those with secondary exposure to the host group.

RICHARD: We're getting Gillespie to try and round up all the people in bulletin 0 and keep them from interacting with anyone until we can get this new information sheet out.

ROBERT: Tell him to reduce direct contact with them however possible. If he- or anyone- comes into direct contact with someone from bulletin 0- they could become one of them as well.

LEAHY: Are you sure it will work? Bulletin 0 had such an adverse reaction to the notice, do you think exposing people to a smaller, more refined version will help them?

ROBERT: You wouldn't know because you cobbled together the 'fact sheet' that put us in this mess to start with. Your opinion doesn't matter here.

RICHARD: If we can control the conversation around the vaccine then we can alleviate people's concerns.

LEAHY: What about the people that have already been exposed to the original notice?

RICHARD: We just might be able to help some of them. More the point of this is to build resistance in the wider population. We can't risk more people being exposed to the original fact sheet, or bulletin 0- the mis-information carriers- before we get a chance to talk to them.

ROBERT: (STANDING UP) Alright then, (POINTING TO RICHARD) I want you to send out a correction and make sure that gets to the rest of the defence force. (POINTING AT LEAHY) And you, just don't do anything for the foreseeable future.

Peter, you come with me. I need you to help me with this press conference. If we don't handle this press conference right... this hysteria around vaccinations could spread to the entire population.

EVERYONE GASPS.

PETER: (STANDING UP) Oh god, I hope this works out.

PETER AND ROBERT WALK OFF STAGE

ROBERT: (TO PETER) That reminds me, can I trade a Clamperl with you to get a Gorebyss?

PETER: Why not a Huntail?

STAGE FADES TO BLACK AND AUDIO FROM PETER AND ROBERT'S PRESS CONFERENCE STARTS PLAYING, IF WE CAN FIND IT.

ACT [3] SCENE [5]

PETER WALKS INTO HIS OFFICE LOOKING DOWN AFTER THE PRESS CONFERENCE. RICHARD IS SITTING AT ONE OF THE CHAIRS ACROSS FROM HIS DESK WAITING FOR HIM.

RICHARD: How did the press conference go?

PETER: It was a right balls up. There's going to be a senate hearing about this.

Please tell me you've come up with something to help settle this mess.

RICHARD: Don't worry, it won't be the be all to end all. I've got something, but it's a bit of a left of centre approach.

PETER: What is it? I'm open to anything at the moment.

RICHARD: I've been tidying up the Condition of Combat section of the update.

PETER: The part around deployment and the vaccine? People are worried about the wording around the vaccine itself.

RICHARD: No. People are worried they'd still be deployed

if they refused the vaccine.

PETER: Of course they'd still serve, just not over there.

RICHARD: Exactly! That's what we didn't make clear. We created a no-win situation where people thought they'd have to take a vaccine that will make them sick, refuse the vaccine and get deployed anyway, or get kicked out of the army.

PETER: What did you change?

RICHARD: I've made it abundantly clear that refusing the vaccine means you will stay in the defence force, but won't get deployed over there, as the circumstances of the conflict require the vaccine. It's great really, the more people refuse, the less we can send over.

PETER: Which is what we're going for with this whole war anyway.

RICHARD: Now, people don't need to be informed- because they have a choice. I figured it was easier to fix the wording around the problem than the problem itself.

None of us have the skills to make vaccines that won't make people sick, and we're not going to buy new ones either. We can't fix either of those problems, but we can give people the ability to say no without any repercussions.

PETER: I feel like this isn't the resolution we should have reached.

RICHARD: After everything, we're lucky to have this one.

PETER: This whole thing has been a balls up from start to finish, hasn't it?

RICHARD: On paper, yes. No one has died, no one's been fired.

PETER: That's the only consolation I have. There's going to be a senate hearing on this, everything they do is on paper.

RICHARD: You'll have Robert with you. He's good at this stuff- and he's in the senate.

PETER: Richard, you've done some good work on this, but I have to tell you something.

RICHARD: What is it Peter?

PETER: I'm more of an Exodus fan.

RICHARD: What?

PETER: I just think that Baloff's funny.

RICHARD: You mother-

ACT [4] SCENE [1]

EVERYONE IS IN THE MEETING ROOM, ROBERT, PETER, LEAHY, AND RICHARD. ROBERT HAS SOME LARGE CUE CARDS WITH HIM, WHICH WILL BE USED TO HOLD UP A GRAPH LATER. AT THE MOMENT, ROBERT IS READING A NEWSPAPER TO THE REST OF THE GROUP, LOOKING DISTRESSED AT WHAT'S BEEN WRITTEN.

ROBERT: So get this, 'What does he bring to the defence portfolio? "I would have no idea," says one defence analyst.' This whole article is a hit piece.

Ms. Simons keeps questioning what I have to add to the war. You can tell she's against the war, doesn't she realise I am too? Maybe that's what I have to add.

This war was going to happen, someone had to be in charge of it. Who do you want? The rational guy that hates it as much as you, or some blood thirsty nutter that gets a bonk on at the thought of bloodshed?

RICHARD: I'd pick-

ROBERT: Simons goes on to talk about how I'm one of the few centrist guys to survive the eyebrows years, and then she questions how I got put in charge of defence? C'mon, that just shows I'm a master negotiator.

You know what the problem is? Wars are never judged on what didn't happen. They're never about how bad things could have been. I'm here, trying to keep a lid on things, and I'm getting accosted for not doing anything. (TO THE NEWSPAPER) Hello!? That's exactly what you want!

What I need is some news from the front. Something to make me look good so I can spin this war back in my favour. So... what's news?

LEAHY STANDS UP.

LEAHY: I have an important Battlefield update.

ROBERT: Alright, what is it?

LEAHY SITS DOWN.

LEAHY: I've been in discussions with EA for months, negotiating deals, infrastructure, implementation, and integration with Gillespie's end over there. It's done- I've secured us a commercial quantity of Battlefield 1942 CD keys.

RICHARD: Yes!

LEAHY: Our IT guys just finished installing it on our intranet so we can play in the office, the guys over there can play against each other, and we

can all play together when times line up.

ROBERT: We running our own servers?

LEAHY: Dedicated.

RICHARD: I'm going to kick Gillespie's arse.

ROBERT: What's latency going to be like, between here and over there?

LEAHY: We're using military grade bandwidth-satellites, cable, fibre. Everything will be instant, even against the guys over there.

ROBERT: Nice, I need that ping so I can snipe. Headshots are hard enough without needing to factor in connection speeds.

LEAHY: I'm going to play tanks. Engineer class all the way.

RICHARD: Not me, I'm going to get in the planes, become a master dogfighter.

LEAHY: See, I've never been able to get my head around planes. I'm happy on the ground, that extra dimension of movement throws me right off.

RICHARD: I mean, it'll be great for the guys over there too, give them something to do.

ROBERT: Now you've mentioned that, how are our guys over there doing?

LEAHY: Good- they're good. A little bit bored sometimes, but they don't have anything real to complain about.

ROBERT: You see, that's part of the problem I've been dealing with. I've got the media on me like, 'What are you guys doing over there?' then I've got Them over there saying, 'you agreed to be in this war with us, it would be great if you

picked up the slack some more.'

LEAHY: Why don't we do more?

ROBERT: Because *I* don't want to. Look, all I need is something to keep the media and our 'coalition partners' happy for a while. Are there any actual battlefield updates we can use?

LEAHY: Yes. We recently executed a joint manoeuvre against an airfield. We had intelligence saying there were weapons of mass destruction on SCUD missile launchers aimed at the border and ready to fire.

ROBERT: And how did it go?

LEAHY: We were able to secure the airfield.

ROBERT: Well that's great.

LEAHY: It was, uh, largely undefended.

ROBERT: We can work around that. What about the WMDs?

LEAHY: We didn't recover any WMDs from the site.

ROBERT: What sort of missiles were on the SCUD launchers then?

LEAHY: There, uh... weren't any SCUD launchers either.

ROBERT: (FRUSTRATED) No wonder you didn't tell me sooner.

PETER: We believe there was no resistance on the airfield because there was nothing to defend.

ROBERT: I get that. My problem is, I can't go out and tell people we took over an empty airfield. I need something a lot more interesting to make me look good.

RICHARD: Then why are we even over there if we can't find a reason?

ROBERT: It wasn't up to me. Old mate eyebrows thought it would be a way to get into everyone's good books. But our own people hate the war because we have no reason to get involved, They're getting angry at us for not getting more involved, and the media are saying we should pull out. We're in no one's good books, it's all bad books. An empty airfield isn't going to cut it.

PETER: We don't really have any major operations coming up on the calendar.

ROBERT: Then we'll need to think of something. Let me show you how They're measuring our involvement.

ROBERT LIFTS UP ONE OF THE CUE CARDS TO SHOW A GRAPH. THERE IS ONE LARGE RED BAR AND AN EMPTY SPACE ON THE GRAPH WHERE A BLUE BAR SHOULD GO. ROBERT POINTS TO THE RED BAR.

ROBERT: You see the big red bar? That's Them. (ROBERT MOVES HIS FINGER TO THE EMPTY PART OF THE GRAPH) And do you see the blue bar that measures our involvement? No! There is no blue bar, because we haven't done anything.

RICHARD: Sorry, Robert, what is this graph measuring?

ROBERT: Casualties.

LEAHY: Well that's easy. We just need to get involved with more engagements with the enemy.

ROBERT: No, this is our own casualties. Unless you want to direct some of our boys to catch stray bullets with their faces, you can see the problem here.

PETER: Is that the only way they're measuring things over there?

ROBERT: It's the metric they measure everything in. Just chuck a wave of money and people at a problem and record the splash back. If we do something big they might forget about it for a while.

PETER: That's a terrible metric to measure things by.

ROBERT: I know. You guys know what needs to be done, I look forward to seeing what you come up with. But remember, while we need something big, no mission is worth dying for.

ACT [4] SCENE [2]

PETER AND RICHARD ARE IN PETERS
OFFICE. RICHARD IS SITTING DOWN
THINKING WHILE PETER PACES NERVOUSLY.

PETER: Oh god, this is bad.

RICHARD: It's a terrible way to measure involvement in a war.

PETER: I don't want people to die in this war.

RICHARD: It's complete vanity metrics.

PETER: What am I supposed to say if anything happens? People have families-

RICHARD: It's like places that think you're working hard if you stay back later.

PETER: So we need something big, but not worth dying for, and where no one is at risk of dying.

RICHARD: Doesn't matter what you're doing, but you're back after hours so you must be a good worker.

PETER: Having people die in a war is like the opposite of doing well. Every friendly casualty is a failure.

RICHARD: Its the other guys you want to kill.

PETER: What if we don't need to kill anyone? Trying to kill other people puts our guys at risk of dying.

RICHARD: How do we get media attention in a war without killing people?

PETER: What Robert needs is a publicity stunt. Something big that will make us look good and make everyone forget about things for a while.

RICHARD: So we need to stop thinking like military guys and start thinking like... like Richard Branson or somebody.

PETER: That's good. What would Richard Branson do in a war?

RICHARD: He'd like, parachute out of a plane to something.

PETER: That's good- but our guys already do that.

RICHARD: Alright, so we can't just jump out of a plane. We need to jump out of a plane... for a reason. But what?

LEAHY WALKS IN HOLDING THE NEWSPAPER

LEAHY: I've been reading about the situation over there for ideas. I haven't been able to find anything good, but I can read out some stuff if you'd like?

PETER: Alright, sure. It might give us a bit of a launching off point.

LEAHY: I was reading about a bunch of insurgents hiding in the hillside near-

PETER: Too hard. You can never get them in the hills, they always run off and hide.

LEAHY: There have been a spate of suicide bombings in-

PETER: No way, too unpredictable. I'm not going to send our guys after suicide bombers. That's just asking for trouble.

LEAHY: Well, damn. The only other thing is this piece about some looted hospitals.

PETER: Looted hospitals, who's going to care?

RICHARD: Hold on, I think we could have something with this hospital thing. Think about it, these poor hospitals have been looted, we can roll in there and resupply them. Who doesn't love a warm and fuzzy resupply story like that?

PETER: It's a pretty safe bet too. We're not attacking anyone, it's all very... humanitarian.

RICHARD: Leahy, where are these hospitals

LEAHY: Baghdad. It's saying here around 39 of the 40 hospitals in the city have been looted and are out of supplies.

PETER: We're not going to Baghdad, it's a mess.

RICHARD: It's nothing we couldn't handle. We're military, we can look after ourselves. And what's more dog than attacking people resupplying hospitals?

LEAHY: There's the risk Robert was going for, we could make Baghdad sound more dangerous than it is.

PETER: It's already dangerous. But would the insurgents be dog enough to attack people resupplying hospitals? It's an essential service!

RICHARD: Everyone needs a hospital.

LEAHY: Most people are born in hospitals.

PETER: This is good. This has legs. It makes us look like we're doing something without being put in the line of fire. And yeah, we play up the

Baghdad risk, but the insurgents won't attack us because of the gentlemen's agreement of not being dog. I mean, hospitals aren't sexy, but they're essential.

RICHARD: Like sports bras.

PETER: Exactly! I'll let Robert know we've got something for him.

ACT [4] SCENE [3]

ROBERT, PETER, AND RICHARD ARE IN PETER'S OFFICE. PETER IS ON THE PHONE AT THE START OF THE SCENE. HE IS NERVOUS WHILST ROBERT EXUDES A COOL CALM.

PETER: (ON PHONE) Gillespie, sorry, did I wake you? I always forget about the time difference. Look, you need to start organising some medical supplies from here to be sent over there, a whole bunch of them. We're going to be resupplying some hospitals in Baghdad. I decided this the other day- why? Because I said so. Look, you need to start getting this organised because I'm about to go out to a press conference and announce it.

PETER HANGS UP

PETER: Oh god, what if they don't like it?

ROBERT: Don't worry, what you guys picked is perfect. Look at that turnout, people actually care. I've done press conferences where it's just been the other politicians and their wives.

The reason this is so good- what have you called this thing again, by the way?

PETER: Operation Baghdad Assist.

ROBERT: Really? Sounds like something a 12 year old came

up with.

RICHARD: Hey!

ROBERT: No, it's good. We don't have any room for subtly here. This is good because it's newsworthy, but not massive. This won't make the front page, but it will get some inches in the war section.

RICHARD: There's a war section of the paper?

ROBERT: Don't you read the paper? They have one sometimes, when there's war stuff worth talking about. Operation Baghdad Assist has the perfect balance; I don't want us to do anything big, but I need some column inches to prove I'm doing a good job and shut people up.

This needs to be a nice little war happening off to the side, that we just call people's attention to when we want them to look at it.

PETER: Oh god, what if I blow this up and make this a big deal?

ROBERT: Make the right kind of mistake and people will be talking about you instead of what you said. Just don't make it sound like we're doing more than we are.

PETER: Oh god!

ROBERT WALKS OVER TO PETER AND PUTS A HAND ON HIS SHOULDER, LEANS CLOSE INTO HIM.

ROBERT: Look, let me give you some media training. First, the media are the slipperiest, most devious bunch you'll ever have to deal with. This isn't like the army where you just blow the heads off people you don't like and play with their insides.

PETER: Ew.

ROBERT: No, the media will come to you for a scoop one day, then will be trying to dig up dirt on you the next. They'll publish a hit job on you and then you'll have to send that journalist a release for an exclusive.

ROBERT LEADS PETER OVER TO THE EDGE OF THE STAGE, WHERE HE WILL GO OUT FOR THE PRESS CONFERENCE

ROBERT: Now look at that turnout, these people want to hear what you have to say. In regular show business that means putting on the biggest display possible and them talking about it for days. That's not the case here. These people have come to see you, they're already invested in what you have to say. So now you need to make Operation Baghdad Assist sound as boring as possible. Play down as many elements of this whole thing as you can.

PETER: But we want it to sound big.

ROBERT: They've already turned up, they've already put the effort into being here. That means it's big enough. No matter what you say out there, they've already spent half a day out here at the press conference and have to turn some copy around to their editors by the end of the day. They will take whatever you give them.

RICHARD: And like you said Peter, this story has legs.

ROBERT: Exactly. This has some real scope to stretch. Whatever you say to them, they're going to add a little more on to make it sound interesting, then their editors will add a little more. By the time the story hits the stands it will be unrecognisable. They'll blow up anything you say, so you just want to give them the foundations.

PETER: Yeah, I give them as little as possible, knowing

they're going to make anything I say bigger.

ROBERT: Now you've got it. So what are you going to tell them?

PETER: As little as possible!

ROBERT: And how are you going to make it sound?

PETER: As boring as possible!

ROBERT: Now you've got the idea. Let's go out there and nail it.

SCENE FADES TO BLACK WITH AUDIO OF
PETER'S ORIGINAL PRESS CONFERENCE
ABOUT OPERATION BAGHDAD ASSIST.

ACT [4] SCENE [4]

PETER IS SITTING AT HIS COMPUTER WHEN
RICHARD COMES RUSHING IN LOOKING
CONCERNED.

RICHARD: Peter! They need your help, it's a mess.

PETER: What? What's going on?

RICHARD: We thought we were secure but they've rushed the airfield, we're going to lose it!

PETER: I thought the airfield was secure.

RICHARD: It was, but then a tank spawned, and I was bored. I know I was meant to guard it but I wanted some kills. Russ is killing me on the leaderboard.

PETER: What?

RICHARD: Haven't you played Battlefield 1942 yet?

PETER: I've been busy.

RICHARD: Well, we need you. Open it up, go to the LAN

servers, our server is called BMBW Crew, and we're playing Wake Island. Try get on the Japanese team, that's the one I'm on.

RICHARD LEAVES THE ROOM AND THE SCENE
FADES TO BLACK, AS IF THE SCENE IS
ENDING. THE LIGHTS GO BACK ON AND
PETER IS AT HIS COMPUTER WEARING A
HEADSET, TRYING TO PLAY BATTLEFIELD
1942.

PETER: How come if I change weapons all my gear
changes? Who are in the planes? You keep killing
me and there's nothing I can do about it. Look,
I'm just going to play as medic and help people
out, this is too hard.

LEAHY AND RICHARD WALK INTO PETER'S
OFFICE. THEY BOTH TAKE A CHAIR. PETER
TAKES OFF HIS HEADSET TO TALK TO THEM.

LEAHY: If you're busy, we can come back.

PETER: I've just been playing some battlefield with the
guys.

LEAHY: You should have said.

LEAHY AND RICHARD GO TO LEAVE.

PETER: No, no. It's alright- I'm terrible at it anyway.
What did you need me for?

LEAHY: We just got word back about Operation Baghdad
Assist.

PETER: You thought that could wait?

RICHARD: We knew it was going to go smoothly. If you were
on a streak or something we didn't want to ruin
it.

PETER: Well I'm not- so give me the details. What
happened? You said things went well.

LEAHY: Alright, so luckily you woke Gillespie up. He didn't even know it was happening, and he was all like (WHINY VOICE) 'Baghdad's too insecure, there's no distribution capability on the ground.' I told him to shut up and make it happen.

RICHARD: So from there, we were able to air lift the supplies from the Kanimbla-

PETER: I love that boat.

RICHARD: It is great. We got all that off pretty easily.

LEAHY: Well, it was only 750 kilos of supplies.

PETER: Really? Not even a tonne? I thought we'd send more than that.

RICHARD: It was all we could muster up in such short time to keep Baghdad in the news.

LEAHY: But we did get a contribution by (POINTING THUMB OVER SHOULDER) Those Guys, bringing it up to 6.8 tonne.

RICHARD: Yeah, and it was made to look like it was all us. Real nice of them.

LEAHY: And so we got all the supplies to the RAAF and loaded them onto a plane with a detail of 13 soldiers to protect it all.

PETER: Were our PR guys and the media there too?

RICHARD: Yep, we made sure of that.

LEAHY: And so we got it over there without a problem. Our guys unloaded the plane with the rotors still running, and got the whole cargo out in 35 minutes.

PETER: That's good. Make sure the media guys know about that.

RICHARD: There were even some flashes on the horizon of conflict in the distance.

PETER: Do we have any images of that? It would look great in a feature article.

RICHARD: I'll have to get back to you on that one. But that was phase I out of the way.

LEAHY: Yeah... phase II is where things started to fall apart.

PETER: What happened in phase II?

RICHARD: Well, no one told the guys up at Randwick we were doing Operation Baghdad Assist, they found out on CNN with everyone else. They had to figure out what to send.

LEAHY: They got in touch with us and asked what they should do. We said they should prioritise medical supplies for treating civilians, especially the sorts of supplies you would see on TV. They said that didn't help, so they called our supply warehouse in Melbourne and asked for a stores list- but there wasn't one.

So they put together the supplies for a 250 man medical kit. Good on them really, shows some initiative.

PETER: Too bad we can't tell the media about that.

LEAHY: No, it would look... bad. So Randwick was told they needed to put together enough supplies to fill a plane, so they got together some extra contractors and put together 45 pallets of supplies.

RICHARD: But they had to leave 17 of them behind, because the plane that arrived could only fit 28. No one told them.

PETER: Crap, but they got 45 pallets together in such a

short amount of time, that's impressive.

RICHARD: Well it turns out the RAAF decided to send a second plane. So not only could they have sent those pallets, but really they should have made more.

LEAHY: But they worked through the night to fill the supply order. Not only that, they got some other people to help them.

PETER: Who else got involved?

LEAHY: I mean, just some day staff from Liverpool Hospital, Westmead Hospital, uh, New South Wales Health Department, and a couple of private corporations. You know, B. Braun, Baxter, Johnson and Johnson. So it became a real team effort, a cross-departmental, public private partnership.

PETER: We pulled day staff out of hospitals to work on this?

RICHARD: Look, we didn't pull them out of hospitals. They stayed to work after their shift or came in on their day off, so the hospitals still ran as normal.

LEAHY: The main point is we all pulled together and got these supplies over there and unloaded. The media got plenty of coverage of the events and they loved it.

PETER: So the supplies got to the hospitals fine?

LEAHY: They, uh, haven't yet. I don't know if you know this but Baghdad is a mess, like, really bad. Much worse than we thought.

PETER: I thought you guys said this whole operation went smoothly. This was like, a mess from start to finish.

LEAHY: Everything happened like we said- and the supplies are over there, just not at the hospitals yet.

PETER: And when will that be?

LEAHY: I have no idea.

RICHARD: Really, that wouldn't be on my priority list right now. The media have gone, they're writing their stories about Operation Baghdad Assist as we speak. It almost doesn't matter if the supplies get there.

PETER: This doesn't sound like a positive outcome.

LEAHY: I think as a phase III we should go in there and liberate Baghdad, make sure those supplies get to the hospitals

RICHARD: The main goal was to just look good. We've already done that, no need to take unnecessary risks liberating hospitals.

PETER: Yeah, I guess not.

ACT [4] SCENE [5]

EVERYONE IS BACK IN THE MAIN MEETING ROOM, WITH ROBERT IN THE CENTRE AND EVERYONE AROUND HIM. ROBERT IS READING A NEWSPAPER, LOOKING HAPPY WITH THE RESULTS.

ROBERT: This is great. Everyone loved Operation Baghdad Assist. They love the war, and they love us.

RICHARD: We got media coverage in a bunch of other newspapers too. We were mentioned in the ABC news, Liverpool Leader, Hobart Mercury, The Age, The Australian, Cairns Post, the list just goes on.

ROBERT: I love it. This is just what we needed. (THEN

CAUTIOUS) No one has followed up on the story though, right?

RICHARD: No, I've been handling the media and they all think the supplies got to the hospitals. To them there's no more story.

LEAHY: Most won't even be able to get to the hospitals now anyway.

RICHARD: Why's that?

LEAHY: The phase I supplies, they've been sitting on the airstrip for weeks now. Some of it has started to go bad, we'll probably have to chuck them out.

RICHARD: Well, we better not let anyone know about that.

PETER: So this has all been a complete waste?

ROBERT: No. This was a success. Do I need Richard to start listing newspapers again? Operation Baghdad assist did exactly what it needed to.

This doesn't leave this room though, alright? Can you imagine the mess if people found out we never supplied the hospitals we said we would?

PETER: I just feel bad, we said we were going to supply the hospitals and we haven't at all.

ROBERT: No one's arguing with you on that. But first, we said to each other, we were going to drum up some positive press for this war. And we did that- it was objective number one. We may not have done what we said to the media- to everyone- but we kept our promise to each other.

RICHARD: What we said to everyone else was like a sub-promise of that.

ROBERT: Exactly. We kept our promise to each other by telling everyone else we were going to do

something completely different. I can hold my head high about that.

LEAHY: I'm fine with it, we did the original plan.

ROBERT: Blame it on Baghdad anyway. We were trying to help them and the city was just a mess, they should have fixed themselves up before our supplies rotted.

That's just the phase I supplies. Leahy, what happened to the phase II supplies?

LEAHY: Yeah, so, as the phase II supplies were on their way to Baghdad, they got redirected to Tallil because Baghdad is such a mess. Those supplies have been redirected to medical facilities in a city called As Nasariya.

ROBERT: See, it's not a complete waste.

LEAHY: Our guys say As Nasariya is well stocked on medical supplies though. I mean, I wouldn't turn them down either, but they don't "need" need them.

PETER: So those 39 hospitals in Baghdad, the ones we set out to help initially-

ROBERT: Nothing- squat- nada. But hey, we try pour soldiers and resources in there and we'll have a whole lot of bad news- right? No mission is worth dying for.

PETER: I just feel like we haven't done this properly.

ROBERT: (HOLDING UP A NEWSPAPER) Western Australia Supports Operation Baghdad Assist.

PETER: It's wrong to-

ROBERT: Australian Medical Aid Airlifted To Baghdad. Does everyone remember my quote from that article? We had an obligation (RICHARD AND LEAHY

START TO JOIN WITH A MUMBLE) to provide essential services such as food, medical care and the like.

PETER: Your quotes won't save lives.

ROBERT: I know what you're trying to say. We haven't done things right by *this* war, as in the one over there, but we've won the battle in a much bigger war that's been going on for a lot longer.

This was a battle in the spin war. The never ending tussle between public opinion and, well, everything. You need to remember, we got into this war for the sake of appearances, and that's what we'll be judged by.

PETER: Something about this just feels... I don't know, wrong. Regardless of the headlines, we didn't do what we said we would, and we were meant to help people.

ROBERT: We did enough. They're leaving us alone and we get to keep our jobs for another day. That's all you can really ask for.

ACT [5] SCENE [1]

START WITH A VIDEO OF THE MISSION ACCOMPLISHED SPEECH BY BUSH.

PETER IS SITTING AT HIS COMPUTER WITH LEAHY AND RICHARD AROUND HIM. THEY'RE CROWDING THE COMPUTER AS PETER TRIES TO WORK.

RICHARD: Add a heading to that slide.

LEAHY: Now change its colour. Make it a yellow.

PETER: How do I do that?

RICHARD: There's a button in the tool bar. See the one

with the letter A and the coloured bar underneath it?

PETER: Alright, which one should I change it to?

LEAHY: Make it that bright, sandy yellow.

EVERYONE REVOLTS BACK IN DISGUST

PETER: It's more of a sand in the eyes yellow.

RICHARD: Definitely a grating yellow, like it grates against the eyes.

LEAHY: A real- sandpaper to the cornea feel.

ROBERT WALKS IN, HE'S NOT CONCERNED
EVERYONE IS PLAYING AROUND ON THE
COMPUTER

ROBERT: Working hard by the looks of it.

RICHARD: We just got Office 2000 cleared by IT. Our presentations are going to go next level.

ROBERT: Not to brag, but I've been rolling on Office 2003 for months.

RICHARD: Oh...

ROBERT: Don't worry, there's not much different. Especially Powerpoint that you're playing with there.

RICHARD: It looks so good. Everything we make in it looks great.

LEAHY: Except this sandy yellow.

ROBERT: Let me see.

ROBERT WALKS OVER TO LOOK AT THE
COMPUTER SCREEN AND WINCES LIKE THE
REST OF THEM.

ROBERT: Oh god, I didn't even know that colour was on the spectrum. Now, I didn't come here to have my eyes gouged out, I'm here on a serious matter.

PETER: What's up Robert?

ROBERT: What is Gillespie doing over there? I've heard about some serious conflict over there between to rival factions.

LEAHY: Do you mean the looting and rioting, the civil war between the Sunni and Shiites, or how Al-Qaeda has moved into the country since the previous regime has been removed?

ROBERT: I-I was told there had been some bullying.

PETER: Oh, do you mean... the commandos?

ROBERT: Yes. How do you know about this and haven't done anything?

PETER: Did you hear Leahy? There's a lot going on over there.

ROBERT: Don't worry about anyone else, just focus on our guys. Gillespie told me the SAS is saying the commandos are not a real unit, because they haven't faced real combat since East Timor. And the commandos are complaining they don't get to pick their own missions.

LEAHY: But all that- it's all true.

ROBERT: Then they either don't want to admit to it- or don't know. That means that just telling them will not make the commandos feel better. Can we find something for them to do so they feel better about themselves? There has to be something.

RICHARD: No deal. No one has anything to do over there. The SAS have nothing to do. We sent them to capture another airbase-

ROBERT: Was it unprotected?

RICHARD: It was empty. So they took that. Some other coalition forces were securing the River Euphrates. We told the SAS, 'Do not go anywhere near the River Euphrates, it is not safe, we don't want to risk it.' They went to have a look anyway-

ROBERT: And what happened?

RICHARD: Nothing. We even have 32 divers over there bored off their rocker.

ROBERT: Why do we have 32 divers over there?

RICHARD: To do dive stuff I guess. They did everything they could around the docks and ports, ran out of things to do, so we sent them over to the embassy.

ROBERT: Why did you send them to the embassy?

RICHARD: That's where everyone is: the SAS, the commandos-

ROBERT: So that's why they're bullying each other.

RICHARD: Yeah, the embassy has pretty much become a sharehouse for everyone- and they have nothing to do either.

ROBERT: Alright, look, I want you guys to do some searching, and find these commandos something to do so the SAS stops picking on them. You can put it into a pretty report for me and present it to me in powerpoint.

PETER: Alright, you guys heard the man. There's a war going on... let's find something to do.

ACT [5] SCENE [2]

EVERYONE IS IN THE BOARDROOM WITH

ROBERT IN THE CENTRE AND EVERYONE
AROUND HIM. LEAHY IS HOLDING A PIECE
OF PAPER.

ROBERT: Alright, do you have anything for me- for the commandos?

PETER: Well, there's plenty for them to do. Since we moved in and took the city, people have just been looting and rioting. No one's contained it yet.

ROBERT: Really, no one has done anything about the looting?

PETER: No one's received orders. Some, uh, coalition forces have just been watching people loot- weapons drawn and everything-

RICHARD: Full capacity to intervene.

PETER: But haven't received any orders to stop them, so they just haven't.

ROBERT: That's messed up, but if no one else is stopping the looting, we don't have to put our hands up for that mess.

PETER: There was the civil war between the Sunni and Shiite Muslims. Now the previous regime is out of the way they're fighting over which form of Islam will be the dominant religion.

ROBERT: Holy wars... the punishment due for getting involved with that isn't worth it. Sounds like a very touchy- and personal matter.

RICHARD: Fighting for religion, something I just don't understand.

PETER: And because the place is such a mess, Al-Qaeda has moved in and is trying to recruit and take over.

ROBERT: They're the lot that do the bombs and stuff right?

PETER: Yes.

ROBERT: Let's not get involved with that.

RICHARD: There's also the problem that the Coalition Provisional Authority, headed by this feller Bremer has put 50,000 bureaucrats, managers and the sort out of work.

ROBERT: That's a lot.

RICHARD: He also dissolved the army, police, and Ministry for the Interior- making 700,000 armed men with combat training unemployed. We don't know what these people will do next, and since there's so many there's no way to track them.

ROBERT: How did this war become such a mess? Wasn't the whole point to fix the place up?

PETER: It turns out the previous regime wasn't the oppressive dictatorship we originally thought. Turns out it was more a pressure cooker situation with all these rival factions vying for control, and the old guy was the linchpin keeping the whole thing together. We came in, undid everything, and now everyone's just going crazy.

ROBERT: Rumsfeld said they would rush to us and welcome us as liberators. As. Liberators. How could we get this so wrong? Don't They have all this surveillance equipment and spies and stuff? How does one group of poeple with so many resources get one thing so wrong?

RICHARD: That- that seems out of our jurisdiction.

LEAHY STANDS UP

LEAHY: I have some good news regarding the commandos!

ROBERT: (WAVING FOR LEAHY TO SIT DOWN) You're in a boardroom, not a battlefield-

PETER: Sometimes I can't tell the difference.

ROBERT: Try question time hungover. What's the good news?

LEAHY: A Brazilian representative of the UN has been killed in an explosion.

EVERYONE PAUSES FOR A BEAT TO PROCESS THIS

ROBERT: ...I'm sorry, what?

PETER: What Leahy means is, as a result, our diplomats and representatives want protection so it doesn't happen to them.

ROBERT: See, you should have led with that- next time, lead with that, or the thing similar to that- you know, the thing I care about.

Playing bodyguard to a bunch of diplomats is a lot safer than everything else we just talked about. What commando units do we have for this?

LEAHY: I have a list here-

ROBERT: Aw, no presentation?

LEAHY: I, I didn't have time.

RICHARD: That's not the only reason.

LEAHY: (LEANS FORWARD, AND IN A TERSE WHISPER ACROSS THE TABLE) Richard!

ROBERT: What's all this then?

LEAHY: (EMBARRASSED) I don't know how to use Powerpoint.

ROBERT: That's alright, it's a pretty intuitive program,

you can just feel it out.

RICHARD: I can teach you. I was teaching Peter just then.

LEAHY: Yeah, and my eyes still feel that grating yellow.

PETER: I think I know it well enough that I could teach him.

ROBERT: See, it's that simple.

PETER: Hey.

ROBERT: Alright, back to resources. Which commandos can we put in charge of diplomats, so they don't get their faces blown off?

LEAHY: So... (READING FROM PAPER) there's the SAS in the AO with the commandos who have formed the BSG with support from the CSSE, which is drawn from soldiers of the SFTG, who have taken up residence at BIAP, and also support the ASNHQ-Fwd.

LEAHY PAUSES AND EVERYONE LOOKS AT HIM. ROBERT GOES TO SPEAK WHEN LEAHY CUTS HIM OFF AGAIN.

There's Australian SF embedded in the CJSOTF-W HQ as well as the ADF's LOs including the SF and ARCENT LO. The US plan to move the SFTG's CSSG including the OC forward for the SAS to better support the ADF, according to DFAT.

ROBERT: Are you done?

RICHARD: And 32 divers.

ROBERT: It sounded like you dropped the alphabet and tried to put it back together.

LEAHY: Look, I'm just relaying back to you what I got.

ROBERT: You could have translated it first.

PETER: What Leahy's trying to say is we have plenty of manpower, and most of them are staying at the embassy anyway.

ROBERT: Why is everyone at this damn embassy?

PETER: It's a real nice place, used to be the ambassador's place *and* the embassy. Even though the ambassador left, the gardener still maintains the place.

ROBERT: I don't blame him for leaving with all these wars going on.

PETER: Uh, the ambassador moved out in 1991.

LEAHY: I was getting to our resources based at the embassy, (REFERRING TO PAPER) the BSG moved to site JTF 633 with the SFTG on behalf of DFAT, coming under its OP COMD.

ROBERT: Didn't you already say that?

LEAHY: No, that's what I was getting to!

ROBERT: Alright, alright. (TO PETER) So did Leahy just tell me about the SAS and commandos at the embassy?

PETER: Yes.

RICHARD: And 32 divers.

ROBERT: Well, lets give our commandos some commando stuff to do. It keeps them out of trouble and diplomat faces attached to diplomat bodies.

PETER: Alright, so what we'll do is get deployment figures for our guys there. We'll get numbers on diplomats and see how many people we can allocate to each. Leahy, do you have numbers, alright, *numbers*, on our SAS and commando guys

over there?

LEAHY: Yes. I have figures on our deployment.

PETER: Sweet. Richard, can you get in touch with our diplomats and see what protection figures they think they'll need.

RICHARD: Yeah, sure.

PETER: I think, we should put our SAS guys on some perimeter work at the same time. If they're out in the field guarding checkpoints they can't be at the embassy bullying the commandos.

LEAHY: If we're going to put the SAS on perimeter duty then I need to interject!

PETER: What is it?

LEAHY: If we're going to put our SAS on checkpoints then I'm worried about their ability to take prisoners of war.

PETER: (BEAT) And why would they need to do that?

LEAHY: Because they can't at the moment.

PETER: Look, we're just getting them out of the embassy for a while. I don't think they need to take prisoners of war.

LEAHY: I'm just saying- you don't know what's going to happen-

RICHARD: The divers can hold the prisoners.

PETER: I know what's going to happen. Nothing's going to happen. I would never put our SAS, commandos, or anyone in a situation where I didn't know what was going to happen. Our commandos are going to babysit some diplomats and our SAS are going to play border duty far away from the commandos.

ROBERT: Alright, I'll let you guys sort this out. Meet
 up with me later and give me deployment figures.

ACT [5] SCENE [3]

 RICHARD AND PETER ARE IN PETER'S
 OFFICE. PETER IS AT HIS COMPUTER WHILE
 RICHARD IS SITTING ACROSS FROM HIM AT
 HIS DESK.

RICHARD: You know what I can't figure out, why would the
 insurgents attack that Brazilian guy when he's a
 representative of the UN?

PETER: I guess things like diplomatic immunity don't
 matter when you're fighting rebels. They don't
 really play by the rules.

RICHARD: It's a bit hard to play by the rules when we
 have tanks. They don't really have tanks, so
 it's hard to fight fair.

PETER: We barely have tanks ourselves. Remember we
 couldn't send any of ours over?

RICHARD: Yeah, but we have, like, other people's tanks.

PETER: Yeah, we complain about them not fighting fair,
 but we have jets and guided missiles and stuff.
 We're almost like the big guy that picks on
 someone at the pub because we can get away with
 it.

RICHARD: Tanks are just the ultimate argument stopper.
 They could be all like 'hey, get out of our
 city' and we're just like, 'Shut up. Tank.' How
 do you come back at that unless you have a tank-
 or a friend with a tank?

PETER: That's why they do all the sneak attacks and the
 IEDs. I get they're a pretty dog thing to do,
 but what else are you going to do against tanks?

RICHARD: I mean, have you heard how destructive our .50

cals are? You don't even have to be hit by one, one can pass you by a metre and the shockwave is enough to kill you.

PETER: Maybe we should just deck the embassy out in .50 cals. Anything threatening comes within 100 metres the diplomats can jump on them and clear away the threat themselves.

RICHARD: Oh, that reminds me. I spoke to the embassy guys, they said they wouldn't need more than 50 people to guard the diplomats and the embassy. I said that's all good, but I need a solid number, so they said 35. I said sweet, we can do that.

PETER: Did you say 35 people as an official order?

RICHARD: Not like 'official' official- but I told Gillespie about it. I mean, that's pretty much all the divers and a few other people.

PETER: The whole point of this was to give the commandos something to do.

RICHARD: Oh yeah, that's right.

PETER: What information did they use to decide they only needed 35 people. That's still quite a bit less than 50.

RICHARD: I don't know, maybe they got the number of diplomats and multiplied it by 3.

PETER: 35 isn't a multiple of 3. What, do they have 11 and two thirds of a diplomat?

RICHARD: I don't know. They gave me a hard figure that sounded good, so I went with it.

PETER: C'mon Richard, these guys are pretty much public servants. Would you put them in charge of their own safety?

RICHARD: I mean, I wouldn't put *them* in charge of their

own safety, but we're public servants.

PETER: Yeah, but we've been in wars and are real high up and stuff. Theses are just people who want to work overseas for a couple of years.

And it's going to look bad if people hear they said they needed 50 commandos and we only give them 35. It's not like we're tight on manpower.

LEAHY ENTERS THE ROOM.

LEAHY: I've taken care of it.

PETER: Taken care of what?

LEAHY: The diplomat bodyguard numbers.

PETER: You've taken care of it?

LEAHY: I have.

PETER: Richard and I were just discussing it.

LEAHY: And what were you saying about it?

RICHARD: Well, I was saying how I've taken care of it.

LEAHY: You... did? I just gave Gillespie the all clear on deployment numbers.

PETER: Did you? And what did Gillespie say?

LEAHY: Ok, so I told him how we need to guard the diplomats, and he was like 'yeah we do, this Brazilian guy just got blown up,' so I was like 'I know, how many commandos do we have at the embassy?' and he was like, 'pretty much all of them' and I was like, 'alright, we're gonna need all of them.'.

PETER: How much is pretty much all of them?

LEAHY: 77.

PETER: 77?

RICHARD: Much more than 35. Almost double- actually... more than double.

LEAHY: 35 what?

RICHARD: Commandos.

LEAHY: Who's getting 35 commandos?

RICHARD: The embassy.

LEAHY: But I said 77.

PETER: Oh God.

RICHARD: I know that now.

LEAHY: Why didn't you wait until you'd spoken to me?

RICHARD: Because I was speaking directly to the embassy. So why wouldn't you wait until you'd spoken to me?

LEAHY: Because I spoke directly to Gillespie. Would you trust public servants with their own safety?

PETER: That's what I said. Why didn't you talk to each other- or to me- before making any decisions?

LEAHY: I mean, he came up with that number while I was on the phone with him.

RICHARD: Same!

PETER: (TO LEAHY) And what did Gillespie use to decide on 77 people?

LEAHY: You mean aside from years of experience?

PETER: This isn't biscuits for catering, you can't just go by feel. We had people going around saying they'd need 50 guards, then they tell you (GESTURING TO RICHARD) we'd need 35, and then

you (GESTURING TO LEAHY) come out and decide we need 77.

LEAHY: I mean, the more the merrier right? Those diplomats will feel more than safe with 77 commandos around.

PETER: Do you even know how many diplomats there are? The commandos could be piled on top of each other, then they'll have nothing to do- again. And here's a bit of reverse psychology for you, the more guards they have, the less safe they'll feel because they're a bigger target.

RICHARD: Yeah, they were saying there's only a couple of diplomats, and the rest are just their staff.

PETER: And having more guards will make the place seem like a bigger target. The insurgents will think the embassy is really important if we've got 77 of our best people defending it.

I don't care how many commandos guard the embassy. The problem is we have conflicting deployment numbers now. No one is going to have a clue what's going on. I just hope this doesn't end up a complete mess.

RICHARD: I'm sure we'll be fine. We'll figure out how many commandos we need and issue a correction to Gillespie. These things have a way of sorting themselves out.

ACT [5] SCENE [4]

BACK IN THE BOARDROOM. ROBERT IS THERE LOOKING CONCERNED, RICHARD IS RUBBING HIS EYES AND SEEMS DISTRACTED, PETER AND LEAHY ARE NORMAL.

ROBERT: What the hell is happening with deployment numbers?

PETER: We thought it would sort itself out, it didn't.

ROBERT: Everything I've heard has confirmed that.

PETER: We had some crossed wires and sent out conflicting messages on deployment numbers.

ROBERT: Crossed wires? You bloody braided a switchboard. The embassy doesn't know how many people to expect, Gillespie doesn't have a clue what's going on, the commandos don't know what to do- which means they're doing nothing, and the diplomats don't feel safe. There were two things we had to do; give the commandos something to do, and make the diplomats feel safe. Won't anyone think of the diplomats?

RICHARD: (RUBBING HIS EYES) I wish I could stop thinking about them.

ROBERT: What's up with you? You've been boring into your eyeballs this whole meeting.

RICHARD: I had to sit through a presentation before, someone was annoyed with the mix up on catering deployment and sabotaged the Powerpoint.

ROBERT: What's this about the catering corp?

RICHARD: Since no one knows what's going on, no one knew how many people we were sending, and Gillespie didn't arrange a catering corp.

PETER: Hold on, Richard, are our guys being fed?

RICHARD: They are- but not by us.

ROBERT: Doesn't matter how many people are there, they need to eat.

RICHARD: Yeah, but how much people need to eat depends on how many people there are.

ROBERT: What are our guys doing instead?

RICHARD: They're borrowing food from the coalition.

ROBERT: You can't exactly borrow food.

LEAHY: Ha, it's not borrowing unless you plan to give it back.

RICHARD: Yeah, so someone was really annoyed that wasn't arranged, so they went into the Powerpoint for the deployment strategy and did a copy-paste of every text box. You know how it creates the same text box just slightly below the original and to the right? Yeah well they left it like that and didn't tell anyone.

We opened the presentation like that and every text box was doubled up and off-centre. It's hard enough to organise these meetings so we decided to power through.

ROBERT: This is just great. This whole thing was meant to make the commandos look good. The SAS must be laughing at them now. The commandos can't even feed themselves and have to go to our allies for food.

RICHARD: It would be funnier if the SAS weren't lining up with them.

PETER: How could this get any worse?

RICHARD: It's not all bad, they've found a baker that does some pretty good flatbreads.

ROBERT: That's not the point. Our diplomats don't feel safe, the commandos are idle, we can't even feed our own guys, and there are all these other wars going on. What the bloody hell is happening?

PETER: Don't worry, we'll get this sorted out. First thing we'll do is get a catering corp out to the embassy and get our guys fed as soon as possible.

RICHARD: Yeah, I've looked into that...

PETER: This sounds bad.

RICHARD: It's going to take a couple of months to get the equipment out there. We're talking a commercial kitchen. And that's even if we 'express post' it.

PETER: Alright, we'll get our guys fed in as few months as possible.

LEAHY: An upside is our guys are only just getting enough food. By the time the catering corp arrives they will be lean, mean fighting machines. Literally.

PETER: As long as they can look after our diplomats we'll be fine.

ROBERT: Yeah. As long as the terrorists don't notice 77 hungry commandos guys guarding a government building we'll also be fine.

LEAHY: Sounds like they're too busy fighting each other.

ROBERT: God, that's right. You know, I really don't appreciate these other groups starting these other wars. I'm like, 'no, this is our invasion. Stop trying to steal our thunder by starting your own war. I don't care if it's been brewing for 20 years.'

PETER: Oh, I heard an update from Rumsfeld on the rioting and everything.

ROBERT: What did he say?

PETER: 'Stuff happens.' He said that freedom's untidy, and that free people make mistakes and commit crimes and do bad things.

ROBERT: What? We plunge a country into multiple civil

wars and it's just 'stuff happens'? And people are free to commit crimes? If it's a crime then they're not free to do it, that's against the law. As long as there are laws no one is free. We're the ones that took the country- we have the guns- we decide what the laws are. This whole thing just seems like an excuse to get out of fixing the place. God, I could do with some good news right now.

RICHARD: What are we doing about the divers?

EVERYONE LOOKS AT RICHARD, THEN JUST
PUT THEIR HEADS IN THEIR HANDS.

ACT [5] SCENE [5]

LEAHY GOES INTO PETERS OFFICE, HE
LOOKS GRIM.

LEAHY: Peter, I think we've solved our problem with the commandos.

PETER: What, have the embassy decided they don't need protection?

LEAHY: No, uh, remember how the main point of that was to stop the SAS from making fun of them?

PETER: Yes...

LEAHY: Well, uh, from what I've heard from Gillespie, I don't think the SAS will be making fun of the commandos anymore.

PETER: Do I want to know why?

LEAHY: It's one of those things where; no, you don't want to know, but you have to because it's important.

PETER: I want to get Richard in for this then. I don't

want to have to go through this alone.

(PETER PICKS UP HIS DESK PHONE AND CALLS RICHARD) Yeah, can you get in here? There's some heavy stuff about to go down and I don't want to be alone right now.

(TO LEAHY) That sounded- that didn't come out right.

LEAHY: No, it was alright. Appropriate too I think.

RICHARD ENTERS PETER'S OFFICE,
EXCEPTIONALLY CHIPPER.

RICHARD: Hey Peter, hi Leahy, what's the bad news?

LEAHY: That's- it's big.

RICHARD: Oh...

RICHARD TAKES A CHAIR, LEAHY DOES TOO.

PETER: So, what's happened?

LEAHY: Well, you know how we discussed the SAS's capability to hold prisoners?

PETER: I- you are the worst at leading up to these things. Just tell me what happened.

LEAHY: Okay, so... some SAS boys were chilling at one of their regular checkpoints when a bus was going by, so they stop the bus and search it, all standard checkpoint procedure. Turns out, the bus was full of young, military aged- is how they were described- men, on a bus bound for Syria. And they all had recently issued passports.

PETER: And so they were pretty obviously-

LEAHY: Pretty obviously going over to Syria to be trained for combat.

PETER: And since we disbanded the army, there are a lot of-

LEAHY: A lot of bitter young men with basic military training and nothing to do.

PETER: And our guys stopped them-

LEAHY: And had no way of holding them.

PETER: So, through lack of any other options, they-

LEAHY: They had to let the bus go.

RICHARD: How big was the bus?

LEAHY: It was a bus.

RICHARD: I mean like, was it a 14 seater? Because that's the biggest you can drive on a regular license. Or was it like school bus sized?

LEAHY: I wasn't told the size of the bus, so I figure it was a regular bus.

RICHARD: Yeah, but *what* is a regular bus?

PETER: Let's save the bus philosophy. We just let a bus of future soldiers go straight to training.

RICHARD: At least it wasn't a bendy bus.

PETER: So I take it everyone knows about this.

LEAHY: Yes. Which is why they're not really going to make fun of the commandos anymore.

RICHARD: Are we sure they were going to become soldiers? I mean, maybe they all got new passports around the same time to go find work in Syria together. I mean it's Syria, what's the worst thing that could come out of Syria?

PETER: It takes 6 weeks to get a passport here. That country is on fire, its government disposed, do

you think they could issue that many passports so fast?

RICHARD: I mean it's, yeah- pretty improbable.

PETER: This is just the worst. Did one of you guys use a monkey's paw to wish the SAS would stop making fun of the commandos? Our commandos are starving, we have divers with nothing to do, hell, this whole thing started because a Brazilian guy from the UN was killed. And now our SAS are laughingstocks because they can't take prisoners of war. Everything about this has been the worst possible outcome.

LEAHY: Do you want me to call off the bodyguards for the diplomats then?

PETER: No- god no. The commandos still need something to do.

ACT [6] SCENE [1]

SOME CLIPS OF BUSH'S MISSION
ACCOMPLISHED SPEECH PLAY BEFORE
REVEALING EVERYONE AT THE BOARDROOM
TABLE, ROBERT HAS A BAG OF CHIPS ON
THE TABLE AND GETS MORE IRRITABLE
THROUGHOUT THIS ACT

ROBERT: (HOLDING THE BAG OF CHIPS) Alright, you heard the big man right? Mission accomplished, it's over, we're outta there.

ROBERT PASSES THE BAG OF CHIPS AROUND
TO EVERYONE

ROBERT: Here, take a chip, take a chip.

RICHARD: Thank you.

LEAHY: Where did you get the chips from?

ROBERT: (STILL LEANING OVER HANDING OUT CHIPS) War

spending.

LEAHY: But these aren't war resources...

ROBERT: There's a war on, no one checks my receipts. And this war is almost over, we gotta slip a little something in for ourselves.

PETER: Hold on, Robert. There are two wars on at the moment.

ROBERT: I know.

ROBERT PICKS UP ANOTHER BAG OF CHIPS
FROM BEHIND THE TABLE AND CHUCKS THEM
ON THE TABLE

ROBERT: Help yourself, war chips are on me. We're finally getting out of that place- I hate it so much, man.

PETER: We've already started the extraction process, getting most of our people out of the country.

ROBERT: Good. I can't wait to get our boys out.

LEAHY: Uh, we'll still have a peacekeeping force there, to help tide things over until the country gets back on it's feet.

ROBERT: The place burst into civil war and we have no phase IV planned to contain it. Lets just get out of there as soon as possible.

RICHARD: The first bunch of troops have already left, they just have to go through quarantine.

PETER: Quarantine?

ROBERT: Peter, I do not like how you said quarantine just now. It had that upwards inflection of a question, as if you didn't know there would be a quarantine.

PETER: I haven't heard anything about quarantine for returning troops at all.

RICHARD: I was just told about it myself.

ROBERT: Please tell me one of you knows about the quarantine process for returning services men. This shouldn't be a surprise to anyone, everything goes through quarantine; people, boxes, horses, why would this be different?

LEAHY: The quarantine involves removing the dust from all personnel and equipment on the return from a desert area to prevent any possibility of cross-contamination.

ROBERT: See, Leahy knows about it. So what's happening with the quarantine Leahy?

LEAHY: I don't know. I know the regulations and procedure, but I haven't heard anything about enacting a quarantine in this instance.

ROBERT: (EATING A HANDFUL OF CHIPS) Alright, can I just say I hate this. I hate how everything is going right now. Our guys are almost home, and they're getting jumped by a quarantine. Is that what's happening? Peter, you had to do quarantine coming back from East Timor, how is this a surprise?

PETER: I don't know, nothing was ever brought up about it.

ROBERT: Everything went to plan, we're out of that place when we said we would be, how has no one thought about quarantine? The only thing I've wanted to do since we started the war is leave, this is the last hurdle to get out of the place and no one has thought about it.

LEAHY: I know what needs to go into the quarantine-

ROBERT: Then why didn't you arrange it beforehand?

LEAHY: It's- it's a whole defence force wide thing, not just the army.

ROBERT: Does Gillespie know what needs to happen for quarantine?

RICHARD: He's about to find out!

ROBERT: How about this? I want everyone to meet back with me soon and tell me what needs to go into this quarantine. We need to do to get our boys through it so they can get back home. This is meant to be extraction time, lets extract.

PETER: Alright, Leahy, come see me in my office after this meeting. You seem to know what needs to go down in a quarantine so that will be the best place to start.

ACT [6] SCENE [2]

PETER IS AT HIS DESK ON THE PHONE

PETER: The quarantine is news to you too, is it? Well let me tell you, it was a less than pleasant surprise for Robert. I want you to get a quarantine procedure sorted out as soon as possible so we can start sending people home... I don't know what needs to be done, that's why I'm telling you to. I probably did have to go through this in East Timor, but I wasn't the one in charge of it.

LEAHY ENTERS

PETER: Look, Leahy just came in. I'll talk to you later. (PETER HANGS UP) Sorry, just talking to Gillespie- telling him to get this quarantine sorted.

LEAHY: You had to go through the same standards of quarantine for East Timor, you seriously don't

remember?

PETER: By that time I just delegated, I didn't have to do any of the quarantine stuff myself.

LEAHY: Well, it hasn't changed since then. We still have to meet Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service regulations to prevent the introduction of noxious and/or destructive pests.

PETER: I think all the pests are already in here.

LEAHY: You mean like rabbits and foxes?

PETER: I was thinking much more locally, but what are the standards we have to meet?

LEAHY: Well, whole goal of the quarantine is to prevent any dust from another nation entering the border.

PETER: Dust!? That place was made of dust! We need to get rid of every trace of dust?

LEAHY: It's quite easy, actually. For things like vehicles, they just need a high pressure wash down, pass a wet inspection, then a dry inspection, and they're good to go.

PETER: That seems easy enough. It's a headache for the troops but it's doable.

LEAHY: But vehicles then need to be wrapped in plastic, to prevent catching any further dust and *then* they can be loaded onto a boat, where it will be inspected again and hosed down again.

PETER: The scope of this extraction is less creeping, and more... expanding- exponentially.

LEAHY: The inspection and wash down on the boat are done by AQIS. We've just got to get them wrapped and ready.

PETER: So we just clean the cars and they'll be good, that's easy enough.

LEAHY: Well, that's for the parts of the cars that *can* be cleaned. Anything that can harbour dust but not be completely cleaned needs to be removed.

PETER: (BEAT) What does that include?

LEAHY: Think about it, what on a car could you not confidently remove dust from? Fabric, foam, all porous surfaces like rubber; so things like windscreen wipers, tyres, window liners, engine hoses, and cargo trays.

PETER: Is that all?

LEAHY: Now that I think about it, any electrical tape people have put on things will have to be removed. Dust gets stuck to that there's no removing it.

PETER: Do you understand what you're saying? Not only are people going to have to pull apart windows, tyres, and engines, but think of everything made of cloth on a car-

LEAHY: Of course, a lot of the debris shields are made of fabric, tray canopies, all the interior, seats-

PETER: That's exactly what I mean- people are going to have to strip these cars bare!

LEAHY: And wash them from there.

PETER: Yes, so once someone has pulled out the interior of a car, they then have to lug a pressure washer in there and get all the dust out.

LEAHY: To the standard that vehicle passes a dry inspection.

PETER: How could this get any worse?

LEAHY: Well, there's also wood, canvas, and cordage. Like, you know the zodiac boats the navy has?

PETER: Yeah...

LEAHY: We'll have to leave them behind, they have wooden frames. Tents are made of canvas, so they'll have to go-

PETER: You said cordage, so that's pretty much any rope as well-

LEAHY: And anything with rope on it. Parachutes, they're made of fabric, they'll have to go. Anything with wooden handles, so no stretchers, no tools, no floats. Heck, even the hoses people use to clean everything out, they'll have to leave them behind.

PETER: So we need to chuck away all this stuff we brought over?

LEAHY: We might be able to bring back some medical supplies. You know, anything just made of metal we might be able to clean, but bandages, wraps, a lot of containers, they won't make it. And a lot of stuff will go bad if we leave it and try to bring it back later

PETER: All these resources- and all this time- wasted!

LEAHY: Don't get angry at me, I didn't make these standards. I'm just making sure we adhere to them to prevent the spread of any noxious-

PETER: Any noxious pests-

LEAHY: and/or destructive pests.

PETER: Yes, you said that before. I mean, that would be just about everything, right?

LEAHY: Think about it, no wood. What's one of the main uses of wood we have?

PETER: I don't know. I thought everything used metal these days.

LEAHY: Ammo crates.

PETER: ...dear god...

LEAHY: How many ammo crates do you think we have over there?

PETER: I'm getting sick thinking about it.

LEAHY: And that's just the ones that haven't been opened. The whole point of this quarantine is to stop the spread of dust right? So if an ammo crate's been opened then we'll have to clean all the rounds inside, individually, to make sure there's no dust.

PETER: How many rounds does an ammo crate usually hold?

LEAHY: Sort of give or take 100. Depends on the round-and the crate.

PETER: Well, lets put together a report on this so we can get it back to Robert.

ACT [6] SCENE [3]

PETER IS WALKING BETWEEN OFFICES WHEN
RICHARD STOPS HIM.

RICHARD: Peter! I have something for you on the quarantine.

PETER: I'm pretty busy at the moment Richard. Can you just send me an email?

RICHARD: I have some good news, we won't have to worry about putting our helicopters through the quarantine.

PETER: You mean the ones Leahy wanted to send over for no reason that didn't have anti-missile

detection and a bunch of other stuff.

RICHARD: Yeah, those ones. Turns out they were missing some other stuff too. We sent the helicopters overs without EAPS.

PETER: What are EAPS?

RICHARD: Engine And Particle Separators.

PETER: Is that just the army term for dust filters?

RICHARD: Pretty much, yeah.

PETER: So we sent helicopters into a country- pretty much made of sand- without dust filters?

RICHARD: Yes.

PETER: And so, what happened to them?

RICHARD: Well, the engines have been inspected and...

PETER: Do I want to know?

RICHARD: They'll need complete engine replacements.

PETER: Bloody hell! Complete engine replacements?

RICHARD: And we'll have to send them away to get the engine replacements done. Less work for the quarantine crew.

PETER: Yes. Our helicopters have had their insides mangled by sand and need complete engine rebuilds, but at least they don't need to go through our quarantine.

RICHARD: (SLAPS PETER ON SHOULDER) That's the way, got to keep that positive perspective.

RICHARD WALK OFF AND LEAVES PETER
STANDING BY HIMSELF

ACT [6]

SCENE [4]

EVERYONE IS IN THE BOARDROOM AGAIN
WITH ROBERT IN THE CENTRE. ROBERT HAS
CHIPS STREWN OUT ON THE TABLE

ROBERT: (EATING CHIPS) So, have we got this quarantine sorted?

LEAHY: Yes, we've put together a plan so our troops can adhere to AQIS standards and get back in the country as soon as possible.

LEAHY SLIDES A PIECE OF PAPER OVER TO
ROBERT TO LOOK AT.

ROBERT: (READING THE PAPER) Dear Jesus, they need to practically strip the insides of the cars. How much is this going to cost us?

PETER: There will be the cost of new materials; interiors, tyres, window seals, which are all items we mostly have on hand or can easily source.

LEAHY: There's also the additional cost of repairs to the internals of vehicles.

PETER: Why would there be additional costs for repairs to the internals of the vehicles?

LEAHY: Gillespie told me the vehicles that have already gone through the quarantine process have had water seep into the engines, gearboxes, and other parts of many of our vehicles. They'll need complete rebuilds as well as new interiors, tyres, engine hoses, wipers, and window seals.

ROBERT: So in order to get all our fleet back home we've pretty much had to trash everything?

PETER: We're making them rip out every rubber seal and blast the inside of naked cars with a pressure washer.

RICHARD: Our helicopters have been spared the quarantine

process.

ROBERT: At least they're fine then.

RICHARD: No, they need complete engine rebuilds. But theirs come from sand and not having dust filters instead of water.

ROBERT: (EATING CHIPS) Richard, that doesn't make me feel better. Why did we deploy these helicopters if they didn't have dust filters?

PETER: Because our blackhawks didn't have the right ant-targeting computers or the right... dust filters.

ROBERT: These helicopters didn't have the right anti-targeting computers, or dust filters either.

LEAHY: Look, if you're worried about all our stuff coming back trashed, don't worry. Nothing's coming back for a while.

ROBERT: What do you mean?

LEAHY: All our ships have amassed a thick red patina on the underside of their hulls-

ROBERT: Wait, what's a patina?

LEAHY: It's a build up of, you wouldn't say rust here, but all the stuff you get stuck to the underside of a ship since it's in the water all the time. All our ships have a think cake of the stuff on the underside of the hull. You know, it's made up of salt from the water and dust from the environment, so they're not entering Australian waters until all that dust is gone.

ROBERT: That doesn't make me feel better. Our stuff is still trashed, it's just coming back later because our ships are also covered with dust. I feel like we're in The War of the Worlds, our whole effort undone by some microscopic dust

that shouldn't matter and that we didn't account for.

RICHARD: Apt metaphor, we are the invaders.

ROBERT: Now we're trying to un-invade the place, we're trying to leave and that's what's holding us up.

LEAHY: That's not all about the ships though...

ROBERT: What else is there?

LEAHY: Not only do they have to wait until the dust cake comes off the bottom of their ships, both the Kanimbla and the ANZAC have serious mussel infestations in their intake filters. They'll need to flush them out.

PETER: Not the Kanimbla!

ROBERT: Mussels. If they were going to get mussels in their filters, maybe we should have given them to the helicopters so they wouldn't need engine rebuilds.

LEAHY: But- but they wouldn't be compatible, they're completely different sizes.

ROBERT: Look, I don't care. How are we going to manage this quarantine- and reduce the number of cars that need to have their engines reconstructed as a result?

RICHARD: I think it's an either-or situation. Either we get our guys out fast, or we trash some car engines in the process.

PETER: We've put together some specialist teams to help with the quarantine- all made up of experts; psychologists, supply clerks, air load teams, weapon fitters, these guys all know what they're doing. They're called the Force Extraction Team and they'll have us out of there in no time.

ROBERT: That sounds great, but how are a bunch of psychologists going to help us prepare for a quarantine.

PETER: Oh, the Force Extraction Team aren't going to do the cleaning and preparation, they're just going to watch and advise. It's the returning servicemen that are going to do all the work.

ROBERT: Great, I'm sure what people want during a surprise quarantine is more people telling them what to do.

What can I say? This war has been a mess from the get go. You had one thing to do to get us out of there and you ballsed that up as well. I just, don't know what to say. Let's just get this quarantine out of the way so we can wrap this whole thing up.

ACT [6]

SCENE [5]

PETER IS SITTING AT HIS COMPUTER IN HIS OFFICE. THERE'S A KNOCK AT THE DOOR AND A SOMEWHAT TIMID ROBERT COMES IN. HE HAS HIS SHOULDER SLUNG BACK OF WAR CHIPS.

ROBERT: Hi, Peter, are you busy?

PETER: No, come in.

ROBERT COMES IN AND WALKS OVER TO ONE OF PETER'S CHAIRS ACROSS FROM HIS DESK. HE SLUMPS INTO THE CHAIR AND PULLS OUT A BAG OF WAR CHIPS.

PETER: What's up? You seem a bit beat.

ROBERT: No, no- it's nothing. Just, stressful couple of days you know.

ROBERT PUTS HIS HEAD IN HIS HANDS. HE HEAVES ONE HEAVY BREATH THEN LETS OUT

A LOUD WHEEZE THAT'S MEANT TO BE
CRYING. PETER GETS UP FROM HIS CHAIR
AND GOES AROUND TO ROBERT'S SIDE OF
THE DESK TO COMFORT HIM.

PETER: What's wrong? Robert, c'mon.

ROBERT EATS A HANDFUL OF CHIPS.

ROBERT: It's just so hard, y'know?

PETER SITS IN THE CHAIR NEXT TO
ROBERT. ROBERT TAKES HIS HANDS AWAY
FROM HIS FACE AND STARTS TO TALK SOME
MORE.

ROBERT: I have to run this war that everyone hates.
Everything about this war has been a stuff up.

We couldn't get out of it to start with. We
ended up sending those helicopters over. The
vaccines were a mess. We may have gotten good
press with the medicine stuff, but we didn't
actually help anyone. The commandos and the SAS
still hate each other. And now this quarantine
is a mess. I just wanted to get everyone home
and I can't even do that.

I hate this war. I never wanted to have anything
to do with it, but now I feel bad that things
didn't work out. I never wanted this war, but I
still feel bound to it.

PETER: It's because you've worked so hard at this war,
you can't help but feel somewhat invested in it.
I think you've done a good job, anyone else
would have us on the front line, getting killed
left right and centre.

You've done a great job of keeping us out of
this war, whilst also keeping us in it. The
problem is you can't tell anyone what a great
job you're doing. Old mate eyebrows wanted to be

part of this, and you've had to keep him happy while doing what you thought was right. And you can't come out and say that, because you need to follow the party lines.

ROBERT SHOVES A PILE OF CHIPS INTO HIS MOUTH.

Robert, save the war chips for later. Your problem isn't that you're weak or a bad leader. It's that you're a good leader that can't take credit. You've been strong for too long.

ROBERT: Thanks Peter. It's nice to hear that. There are times when I feel like I'm managing this war all on my own.

PETER: I'm here for you Robert, and this war is almost over. You know what they say, war is hell. Or at least, running one certainly is.

ROBERT: You always know what to say, Peter. I know you're already the Chief of the Defence Force, but you'll go far like this. Get me through the rest of this war and I'll see what else I can line up for you.

PETER: How much higher could I really get?

ROBERT: (SMIRKING) You'd be surprised.

CURTAIN