

Super Dimension Fortress Macross The Unification Wars The Plundering Fleet

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Translated by Gubaba

In 1999, something appeared in the vicinity of earth space, entering the atmosphere at a shallow angle. After descending, and spreading destruction upon the earth for about a week, it finally crashed on South Ataria Island, the southernmost tip of the Ogasawara Islands.

The amount of nuclear energy, equivalent to a small nuclear bomb, released during the crash was enough to convince those possessing nuclear weapons not to use them.

Upon close inspection, the ship proved, after public release of the information, that intelligent life did exist beyond the earth, and that they had made the stars their battlefield, creating a 1200-meter-long ship. Moreover, war was the sole purpose of this ship, since they found the vestiges of weapons upon it.

Mankind embraced its own fears that somewhere in space, battles were unfolding, using technology far surpassing that of earth.

The first thing humanity did was to join together to continue investigating the crashed starship for its “Overtechnology.” Opposing factions also began banding together.

In the initial stages of this development, each country pledged itself to the transition to a strong Unified Government. However, there was resistance in several quarters, and conflicts arose. After all, there was friction between certain countries, and issues of ideology, nationalism, religion, and cultural differences, and so the power of the new Anti-Unification forces was not something that could be lightly dismissed.

The flames of war touched every country in the violent conflict called the Battle of the Poles, and if the fighting worsened, it had the potential to engulf the entire planet in a new world war.

1

June, 2004. On the surface of the South Pacific, a newly born tropical cyclone began to wriggle. The huge swells of the ocean turned deep green, the wind whipped the waves upwards to the lead-colored sky, destroying their crests, and white spray scattered everywhere.

Something was below the tumult, deeply submerged and as still as death. At a depth of two hundred meters, six giant shadows noiselessly advanced.

The newly-constructed 32,000 ton submersible aircraft carrier *Nichirin* was escorted by five submarines, forming a mobile division of the general forces. Naturally, the shapes of the submersibles for this operation were nearly undetectable.

Among the subs escorting the *Nichirin* was one named the *Prince Marco*, captained by a man named Global.

The *Prince Marco*: a six-thousand-ton attack submarine. Externally, it had a normal, traditional tear-drop shape, but inside, it was filled with Overtechnology obtained from the fallen space craft. The power system had been replaced with a reaction furnace, and even the steering was highly advanced. Its armaments, too, were vastly increased. The vessel's pre-existing shell was crammed with so many new systems that it wouldn't be wrong to call it an entirely new submarine.

With the air of a decorated and extremely high-ranking officer of the Italian Navy, Global had the good fortune to command this sub. The United Government still respected the traditions and individuality of each nation that was a member.

2

"Looks pretty choppy up there, doesn't it, sir?" commented Marcciano, the First Mate, as he peered over the detection system behind one of the clerks.

"You'd be more comfortable on the surface...?" Global responded with a chuckle.

The orders from High Command were that for this operation, the vessels must remain submerged for the entire length of their journey, even while they traveled through Unification-controlled areas. This was their fourth straight month of underwater travel.

Unlike the second-generation subs of earlier times, clean, purified air continuously flowed through the craft thanks to its air system. Even so, the desire among the crew to breathe natural, unfiltered air was on the verge of exploding.

Marcciano shrugged and sighed, "No, sir, it's clearly too rough up there."

Global packed his pipe with tobacco and made as if to light it, but then stopped and looked out over the command room. Everyone was working as usual, with no atmosphere of tension or nervousness.

Global himself felt nothing out of the ordinary, but there was nagging feeling that everything was *too* peaceful. The division had had only one small mission, to support the United Forces quell a minor insurrection in a tiny South American country. This had turned out to be a useless detour. And even then, the operation had had to be performed while submerged. For over three months, the entire group had remained underwater, excepting only when the *Nichirin* had equipment brought to it, but only those personnel directly involved with the transfer were allowed on the deck.

Global was sure there was some reason for High Command's orders, but hadn't reached any conclusions yet.

"Are the other boats in the same situation as we are, sir?" asked Marcciano.

"You mean this irritated mood everywhere?" Global probed.

Unlike the fifty-ish Global, First Mate Marchiano was still in his thirties. It was easy to assume that Global had already grown accustomed to the aching in his body that came with long periods stuck inside such cramped quarters.

He said, "The *Fort Smith*, the *Mishichio*, and the others are about even, pretty much the same as this boat. Only the *Nichirin* is different."

"Yes," Marcciano grumbled sullenly. "The *Nichirin* is massive. They've got everything from a movie theater to a sports center. And Captain, I've heard that there's a

ton of girls aboard, right?” Marcciano, as many typical Italian men do, considered himself a ladies’ man, and made no attempt to hide it.

Global smiled wryly and patted the First Mate’s shoulder. “Well,” he said, “in three days you’ll be able to prowls to your heart’s content.”

The boats were advancing at the slow speed of twenty knots. The *Prince Marco* could handle speeds of up to seventy knots, but, since it was an escort, it had to match its speed to that of the much larger *Nichirin*, which could barely reach forty.

Global wondered if the deliberate pace had some connection to the upcoming operation. At this rate, it would take the boats about three days to reach the Australian port of Roper.

“Just three more days...” Marcciano murmured, his eyes glittering.

“Yes,” said Global. “If we don’t have any disturbances, we’ll be reaching Roper two days after tomorrow. That’s right, isn’t it?”

“Do you really think there’ll be any disturbances, sir?” asked Marcciano, his heart beating faster at the thought of arriving at Roper. “Dammit, we need to blow off some steam!”

After a moment, he continued, “Captain, when we get there, let’s really go all out and have a great time! What do you say, sir?”

“No. I’m all right,” Global replied, not in the mood for such ideas. He didn’t have any definite plans for their destination, and he wasn’t a prude in any sense, but he was already thinking of the next stop after Australia, in Japan, where his wife was waiting for him. His real home was there, not in his homeland of Italy. He had married rather late, probably because as an Italian, he was not very good at expressing his emotions.

It had all started because of the commanding officer of the division, Commander Hayase, who had introduced Global to his future wife and acted as the go-between for them.

Global’s heart and thoughts quickly soared past Marcciano’s. But the First Mate’s chatter was infectious, and soon the whole control room was buzzing with conversation.

But then a voice cut through the noise, crying “We’ve picked up a boat, sir!”

“Is it one of ours?” Global asked.

“Still confirming, sir!” shot back the operator as his display started spewing forth data. “It’s a *Pochov*-Class nuclear attack submarine, sir.”

“Soviet-made, eh?” said Marcciano, with palpable relief in his voice.

“Negative, sir. The approaching sub was sold to the United Rusrab Republic in 1993. It’s called the *Rotorgueuze*, sir.”

Marcciano clicked his tongue. “So it’s an Anti-Unification boat, huh? What the hell’s it doing in *our* backyard?”

“Thirty to right-rudder, increase speed to forty knots,” Global barked immediately, and the *Prince Marco* began to break away from the rest of the division. The formation broke, but the other vessels remained on the same course at the same speed. Dealing with the enemy sub was entrusted to the *Prince Marco* alone.

The computer analysis of both the submarines’ position was being reported moment by moment on the display.

In preparation for battle, Global and the crew all fitted themselves with small wires that could easily be mistaken for headphones. They differed from normal communications headphones by the fact that the microphone was a small point located at the throat rather

than a mouthpiece. Because of this, they could speak to each other without making a sound.

The computer display changed drastically. “We’re entering attack range, sir. Should we do it?” questioned Marcciano.

“No,” Global replied. “Stay on course a little while longer. I doubt they’ve even picked us up.”

“There’s your code of chivalry again...” Marcciano sighed.

Code of chivalry... for Global, it wasn’t just some fairy tale concept. He always looked at issues from the enemy’s standpoint as well as his own, and the thought of sinking a sub that didn’t even have its scope up was distasteful to him. The United Forces equipment was constantly being enhanced by the scraps of Overtechnology that were being pulled from the wreckage of the downed space ship, but both sides continued developing and expanding technologically. The war wouldn’t be decided until it was over. In a straight confrontation, the *Prince Marco* had minimal advantage over the *Rotorgueuze*. But in pursuit, for the *Prince Marco*, their opponent was a cat with a bell on its neck. And they were a lion stalking noiselessly.

“It’s time to catch them. Draw up across from them,” Global said. The only response he heard in his earpiece was the voice of the computer.

“Launch detected from enemy vessel. Rocket mortar, directed towards the ocean surface. Estimated to be a Trooz.”¹

Global inwardly gasped. A Trooz torpedo was launched into the air and would fall back into the sea, with its own propeller propulsion system and active homing to seek out its target.

“Trooz confirmed,” came the report from the computer. “Commencing countermeasures.”

Silence returned to the control room as though nothing had happened. Except that one display announced the launch of an anti-air missile while another projected the increasing trajectory of the enemy torpedo.

The *Prince Marco*’s computer was equipped with a self-preservation system. Unless he got orders specifically to sacrifice the vessel, Global would not have to worry about the fangs of the enemy touching his craft.

On the screen, before long, the two blips merged and then vanished. “Target eliminated,” came the report from the computer.

“Steady on, Captain,” said Marcciano eagerly, pressing for action.

Global nodded and gave his orders to the computer. “Stand by for attack. The target is the *Rotorgueuze*.”

“All green, sir.”

“Attack!”

And at that one word command, Global’s work as a captain was finished. All that was left was for the computer and the *Prince Marco* itself to function. On the display, the word “FIRE” appeared, and the signal on the sonar separated from the *Prince Marco* and advanced towards the enemy boat. From the notations, it appeared that the *Rotorgueuze* would attempt to evade at about forty knots. That was too slow, however, to avoid the long spear closing in on it.

¹ Not a recent type.

The control room was silent, as everyone waited for the torpedo to reach its target. And then, contact.

“Target eliminated,” the computer reported, and the entire command crew cheered with joy and relief. The joy increased, temporarily wiping away the resentment they felt at being trapped underwater for so long.

“Let’s catch up to the others,” Global said. “Marcciano, I leave it to you. I’m going to rest in my quarters for a bit.”

“Yessir!” Marcciano saluted cheerfully, and Global turned and left the command center.

Global entered his room, closed the door behind him, and tossed his hat onto the bed. Then he pulled out the chair by his smallish desk and gently lowered himself into it. He carefully removed his pipe from his pocket, but before picking up the lighter on his desk, he twirled the pipe around his hand, looking at it closely.

It’s finally turned a good color, he thought. It had been a birthday present from his wife the previous year. Customarily, he would polish it, but now, he just couldn’t seem to get his hand to move. How long had it been, that battle left him feeling so empty? Was it after he got married, or after the technology of the United Forces had so completely outstripped that of the enemy? Global wasn’t sure which it was. Or possibly it was some other reason.

From the time he was a child, watching war stories on television and in movies, he had always felt a burning envy towards the heroes. Perhaps it was just a lowbrow game to him, but he saw them fighting bravely under the banner of their ideals of righteousness. And of course, since they were heroes, it only made sense that their bullets would hit the bad guys more often than the bad guys’ would hit them. And of course he was looking at this from the perspective of the United Forces’ superiority over the Anti-Unification Forces’ strength.

Global himself had chosen the Navy. In sea warfare, one shot must be followed by the next, and the chance of seeing your opponent’s face was extremely small, and that was all right with him. Even now, he knew that he had not made the wrong choice... but still, something had changed.

3

After the battle with the *Rotorgueuze*, the next two days passed without incident. On the third day, their destination came into sight, as planned. The Australian port of Roper, converted in the year 2000, as the Unification Wars intensified, into a military harbor.

“Surface!” Global said, giving a command that he hadn’t given in too long. Since leaving Yokosuka in Japan, not even the vessel’s periscope had broken the surface of the water. Regardless of the fact that this was a normal surfacing operation, the *Prince Marco* aimed itself upwards and rose at emergency angle and speed, inclining as though the submarine itself were impatient. Global stopped himself from making the young helmsman start the maneuver over, and he noticed that he felt the same impatience himself. And before he could say anything at all, the sub’s bow broke through to the surface.

As the six-thousand ton vessel broke through the waves, what looked like waterfalls sluiced off of it and spray danced through the air. The bow thrust upwards into the sky, but the earth's gravity won, pulling the *Prince Marco* back down into the water. With the hull still swaying and vibrating, the hatch on the control tower opened, and salt-tanged air flowed into the boat. Even things from the land became suffused with the scent from the middle of the ocean. Here, this unique aspect of Roper Harbor came wafting in.

"Come on, sir, let's go to the tower!" Marcciano pestered Global. The other crewmembers were already climbing up with some difficulty.

Global hurried Marcciano through the hatch in the control tower. Just as he stuck his head outside, the other vessels accompanying the *Prince Marco* began to surface, one by one, and they replicated the behavior of the *Prince Marco*'s crew. Perpendicular to the ocean surface, all of them splashed out of the sea. Not even the flagship, the *Nichirin*, was excepted. It did not surface completely, but the carrier's 32,000-ton body caused tremendous waves that rocked the other submarines.

As Global drew closer to the giant ship surfacing, he felt a familiar emotion from when he first joined the mobile forces. Each one of the stupidly massive vessels had its belly filled with enough missiles to destroy both hemispheres. And yet, compared to the fallen spacecraft, even the *Nichirin* was little more than a child's toy.

A shiver ran down Global's spine. As mankind moved out into space, would they be bringing their man-made weapons with them?

He then heard footsteps ascending behind him, and a voice asking, "It's all right if we come up, too, isn't it, sir?"

Suddenly, all of the off-duty crew members climbed up into the bridge, their eyes turning to the already-open hatch. The crew spilled out onto the narrow deck to exult in their good fortune. It became a situation where if even one more person stepped out, people would be shoved into the ocean, and below Global, the people who were crowded out from the deck continued massing forward.

Marcciano took over from Global and shouted, "Okay, two or three at a time! Breathe in the salt air as much as you want, but hurry up so that next guy can go!"

The soldiers in front let out a whoop of delight as they ran forward. Soon voices could be heard from the back, as people cried, "Hurry up and switch already!"

"Ah, shaddup!" a nearby voice jeered. "We only just got here, and ain't even paid our respects to the horizon yet!"

"Being able to see this view almost like a perk of being stationed up here, isn't it, sir?" Marcciano whispered to Global quietly.

"Seems that way," Global answered, puffing on his pipe.

A cheer rose up; the harbor of Roper had become visible along their route.

A short time later, as the harbor facility came into view, Global remembered his earlier sense of uneasiness.

The *Prince Marco*, shoulder to shoulder with its companion subs, came to a halt at the pier. The crew was already waiting for the slow-in-coming permission to dock. Even now, they were changing clothes, and fights were breaking out in the washing area over who would get the hair gel. The only person not prepared was Global, the highest-ranking aboard the vessel.

However, an order to the mobile fleet arrived right then, saying only, "Permission to dock denied."

“Captain, sir, what’s going on?” a well-dressed Marcciano cried insistently. He and the others pleaded longingly to disembark.

“Hmm... even I don’t understand this order,” Global replied.

“They can’t keep us here, sir! The longest rotation is *three months!*”

Which was true. And also true for underwater deployments. “If everyone is forced to abide by this order,” Marcciano whispered, “we could have a riot on our hands, sir.”

“Well, we can’t exactly cover it up...” Global smiled.

“This isn’t funny, sir. If there were a mutiny... Um... I’d even be tempted to join it.”

“Well, now... I think it would be best to wait and see what the situation is. Who knows, perhaps there’s some kind of epidemic at the base.”

“I don’t believe that, and neither do you, sir.” With his right hand, Marcciano undid his top coat button, and sulkily went through the narrow corridor leading to the deck.

After that, time passed without anything in particular happening. Nothing in particular, that is, except for, on the slippery deck of each vessel, the sailors’ eyes almost involuntarily turned towards the shoreline, and they all slumped a little bit, as if they had gotten to last serving of corn on their plate, and found it rotten.

And the burning sun slowly set in the west, as day became evening. At that time, Commander Hayase, head of the mobile division, paid a visit to the *Prince Marco*.

Global, with the breeding of over a hundred years of military service, greeted him gladly as though born to do so.

Hayase waited, looking over everyone for not a short amount of time.

“It’s cramped,” he declared first, after crouching through the sections of the vessel and nearly hitting his head on a door frame. “It looks like everyone may have gotten *too* accustomed to being with the *Nichirin* here,” he said, and Global examined the interior of his vessel anew. The metal walls with flaking paint, the pipes and tubes of various sizes that writhed along the ceiling... Obviously, no one would mistake the living quarters of the *Nichirin* for a five-star hotel. It was built for pragmatism, not comfort. And then, there was the crew, not given over to tidiness or other niceties... But rather than feel superior, Global understood and sympathized with them.

“Global,” Hayase ventured, “is there someplace we could speak privately?”

“Of course, sir. We’ll go to my quarters.”

The two strode off to the captain’s quarters, leaving in their wake a long string of crewmembers scrambling to stand at attention and salute as they passed. And on their faces, resentment at the orders not to disembark became mixed with a faint look of hopefulness.

The two entered the room, and Global gestured towards the chair. Hayase sat down, and Global settled himself across from him, sitting upright on the bed, which left no more space in the tiny room for anyone else.

“Do you know,” Hayase asked, “if there are any bugs or listening devices planted in this room?”

“Uh... What?” Global was struck dumb for a moment by the question. And even after an awkward pause, he still wasn’t sure that Hayase wasn’t making some kind of joke.

“Well...” he started, “I wouldn’t worry too much about that... it’s not like we’re in the Soviet Navy or anything like that...”

Hayase snorted. “That is so like you,” he said, still fixing Global with a sober face. “I’m currently being about thirty percent dead serious.”

Global nodded, somewhat uncertainly.

“The thing is,” Hayase continued, “I’d like some reliable men who can keep their mouths shut. How many would you say are on your boat?”

“All of them, I’d say, sir.”

“I’m not looking for boy scouts. I mean strong men.”

Global started mentally checking through his crew, one by one. Finally, he said, “Roughly twenty, I’d say, sir.”

“Very good.”

“Commander Hayase, sir, what’s going on?”

Hayase gave Global a strange smile and replied, “I’d like to borrow them. We’re about to become Anti-Unification soldiers.”

The blood drained from Global’s face. What exactly was Hayase proposing?

“No need for alarm, Global,” Hayase corrected quickly. “I’m not talking about treason or defecting. It’ll be just a temporary shift. And it has nothing to do with HQ. They have no clue.”

Neither did Global. He tried to figure it out as Hayase began explaining.

According to him, before arriving at port, Global and the *Prince Marco* had encountered and sunk the *Rotorgueuze* as the enemy ship was returning from an attack on a fleet of allied cargo ships. Unfortunately, because the escort ship’s equipment was old, the *Rotorgueuze* had managed easily to escape after sinking the cargo boats. And those sunken ships had been bringing much-needed rations to the Roper port.

“However,” he continued, “the base commander is an obstinate man. He’s unlikely to distribute the stock that we have on hand. But there’s definitely more than enough food packed away there to last until we get home to Japan.”

“And you intend to bring it along, sir?”

“Of course, the problem is that your crew will be left with nothing but astronaut food and things like that. Let’s face it, the amount of supplies you have seems like an embarrassment of riches, hence the order not to come ashore.”

Global suddenly recalled his earlier words with Marcciano. “You mean, sir,” he ventured, “we might have a riot on our hands?”

“Hmm,” Hayase paused. “We have a saying in my country: ‘Grudges over food are not easily forgiven.’ Is one apple per person really sufficient?”

“So…” Global said, “you’re planning to instantly switch sides and raid those storehouses? Is that it, sir?”

“Exactly! It’ll give those tight-asses something to chew on, eh?”

“But, sir… Where exactly would we say these Anti-Unification forces were located, or got their strength from?”

“Oh, Global, that’s no problem! You know how large the *Nichirin* is, so who’s to say that some escapees from the enemy ships, at the end of a fierce battle, couldn’t stow aboard the *Prince Marco*, even, and keep hidden?”

“Sir… and then what? What exactly are you proposing?”

Hayase just winked in response. The two old soldiers continued hashing out childish conspiratorial plans. As the night passed ten o’clock, Hayase’s plans had been finalized.

As the *Prince Marco* arrived on shore, Hayase heard Global’s voice behind him, calling, “Sir! I’d be honored to participate in this mission, sir!”

“As would I, Global,” Hayase called back. “Let’s make you the chief executive!” He held out his right hand, and gave a thumbs-up.

4

As the clock wound to midnight, from the group of submarines, one small vessel broke from the others and slipped into the darkness. Then, a smattering of lifeboats could be seen approaching the shore. As they wended a circuitous path around the mouth of the bay, innumerable small vessels issued forth from them. In one of these, wearing his combat fatigues, was Global. He looked at his subordinates in the boat with him. A few hours earlier, they had seemed drawn and listless, but now their faces were overflowing with vitality. Because of this mission, everyone who had come along was eager to do their jobs to the limits of their ability. Even Global was having fun with this new operation.

Each one of the soldiers was equipped with riot control gas bombs, and for defense, they naturally were also carrying live ammunition. However, their lack of reconnaissance led to blind spots, and the likelihood of one of them being shot or even killed was high. This was, quite literally, the game called War. Yet for Global, he felt like the hero of a movie, and the feeling was irresistibly thrilling.

(Yes, this game of war was most certainly not a cold or robotic thing.)

And the depressing emptiness he had felt following the earlier battle began to evaporate.



Some days later, the Mobile Division left the bay at Roper. The report was as follows: “On June 21, 2004, the Roper Base was infiltrated by a landing party from an Anti-Unification submarine. Although twenty containers of rations were taken, damage was extremely light, caused only by one small detonation.”

Furthermore, once they arrived at Yokosuka, they were informed by High Command that they would soon be departing for a long-term experimental deployment in space. And as the guinea pigs of the mission, their success in the experiment was of the highest importance...

With special thanks to Neil Nadelman and Frank Reynolds for assistance with submarine terminology. Any errors that remain are my own dumb fault.