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LINE ZERO

'Well, soldier, this is your lucky day."

Jackson shifted in his chair. Flanked by a couple of sunglasswearing suits, he didn't feel lucky. The fact that number three in the little entourage, apparently the mouthpiece, wore a short skirt rather than a suit and didn't cover the brilliant green playground of her eyes did nothing to put Jackson at ease.

"I've had plenty of those," Jackson said. "You maybe want to cut to the chase, so I can get back to doing what I do?"

Bright-eyes smiled, showing perfect teeth. "Don't you worry, you'll be doing what you do. Only from now on, you'll actually make a difference. I'm offering you an in to something special."

Rising from the chair, Jackson's mouth twisted into a halfsmile. "Yeah, sell that somewhere else. I have to get back to my team, ma'am."

"We aren't spooks." Bright-eyes offered Jackson an envelope. "Well, we aren't the kind of spooks you think we are. As much as can be explained, is explained in that letter. I can tell you that you'll be working alongside the best of the best. You think your team is hot? They're pedestrians compared to team we've got."

Jackson took the envelope. His curiosity got the better of him. He slid out the letter and started reading. "You have got to be playing me."

Bright-eyes gave Jackson a wink. "You are going to love your new toys."

There is no history of Line Zero. The past is as shrouded in misdirection and euphemisms as the future is in conjecture and secret wishes. What is known is that during the Cold War, a collection of individuals with influence formed a special team, so deep in the

black the government does not know it exists.

Above politics and beyond concerns of diplomacy, Line Zero exists to safeguard the nation, sometimes from itself. Those recruited into the team are known to have strong, personal convictions—convictions based on the spirit and hope of the nation itself. These men and women have all attempted to serve the nation in one form or another. Some became known within the community of their endeavors, some labored in obscurity, but all let their morals lead them. Whether famous, infamous, or simply invisible, these individuals had intelligence, skills, and ethics.

Line Zero works because it gives an outlet for the convictions of its members. Economics, diplomacy, and international reputation are important to a state, but the security and survival of the nation is paramount. It has



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been accepted in Line Zero that the government of the nation considers its own interests before the interests of the nation. This has led to many dangerous moments. Sadly, politicians can rarely be trusted to adhere to the fundamental ideas and ethics of the nation.

This does not make Line Zero a force for international conflict. It is well-understand that a secure and stable world helps create a secure and stable nation. However, concepts such as inviolate sovereignty are ignored when involvement in a foreign state's internal struggle is required to protect the nation.

Codename CINCINNATUS

Line Zero is controlled by Codename CINCINNATUS, named after Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus, a hero of the Roman Republic and symbol of public service while sacrificing private gain. The creators and/or directors of Line Zero are not known. It could be a single individual, but the word among the Line Zero operatives is it's led by a council. Whatever the truth, Codename CINCINNATUS directs Line Zero by feeding information and providing missions. The various operatives of Line Zero are self-governed, though within recent memory, a team of operatives was directed to remove another member, who had betrayed the unit by selling special technology known only to the unit—called Zero Tech. Another, less violent, incident had an operative frozen out. This operative had passed on information about Line Zero to a journalist. The operative was not sanctioned, merely removed from the team

Bright-eyes—she used the name Angela, but was known as Two-Seven in the team—handed Jackson a cell phone. It looked exactly like his existing cell. He pulled that out and compared the two.

"That's your new cell," Angela said. "It's already got your number programed, so you can stuff your cell in a sock drawer somewhere." "What's wrong with my cell?" Jackson hefted both phones in his hands, and could feel no difference in weight.

"Your old cell is just a cell phone." Angela tapped the cell she had given Jackson. "This one is the one Cincinnatus will use to contact you. This is your Line Zero hotline."

Contact

Each Line Zero operative has a special cell phone with which Codename CINCINNATUS can initiate contact, and with which the operative can contact or receive communications from other operatives. A search of the cell phone will reveal a Zero Tech chip—known as a Zero Chip—that allows for the communication, and also allows the cell phone to maintain communications even when normal cell phones would lose the signal. This chip has an integral self-destruct that cannot be removed from the assembly without destroying the chip. When activated, the self-destruct melts the chip. This is how operatives are removed from Line Zero.

Jackson sat across from Angela. He sipped coffee and eyed her warily. "Three weeks and I hear nothing from you guys."

"You're still getting the pay checks, aren't you?" Angela smiled. "Lighten up. Our operational tempo can be slight, but sooner or later, things blow up."

Jackson put down his mug. "And things have blown up?"

"And then some."

Jackson pulled out his cell phone and laid it on the table. "Why did I get a call from you and not Cincinnatus?"

"I got the call," Angela said. "And I chose you to be on my team. I figured you'd be bored. If you're not interested . . . "

Jackson held up his hands in mock surrender. "Oh no, I'm plenty interested.

Organization

There is very little organization to Line Zero. Teams are fluid, though some operatives prefer to work

together once a history of trust has been established. There is no base, nor are there any functional locations permanently tied to the unit. When contacted by CINCINNATUS, directions to a safehouse in which the operatives will find required equipment. The equipment always includes a laptop which has a Zero Chip to provide communications and a connection to the CINCINNATUS database for information retrieval. Like the Zero Chip in the cell phone, this chip can self-destruct, and will if any attempt is made to alter or tamper with it. The safehouses are only temporary, and once the mission has been completed, CINCINNATUS withdraws its protection. Whatever overwatch or ownership CINCINNATUS has exerted is removed.

CINCINNATUS chooses very specific operatives for a mission, but if an operative prefers to work within a set team, that is the operative's decision. Line Zero only recruits members that CINCINNATUS judges to have the initiative and personal morality required to undertake missions independently and in a manner that reflects the spirit and morals of the nation.

All operatives are known by numbers. Though they may exchange names and other personal information, CINCINNATUS always refers to operatives by their numbers. Based on the operatives now active, there does not seem to be any particular code or meaning to the numbers, and they may simply be random.

Game Information

Any nation could act as the parent country for Line Zero, and the outline has been left relatively vague regarding the location for that purpose. If required by the campaign, Line Zero might be attached to an international organization such as the United Nations or NATO. Further, Line Zero might not even be affiliated with a particular government. In a world in which an Alien conspiracy is kidnapping innocents, Line Zero might be the secret anti-Alien resistance organization.

CINCINNATUS

This is the ultimate NPC, a motivator and information bank the GM can use to pass on vital information or prod the characters into action. For all intents and purposes, CINCINNATUS is Line Zero, without this entity, there would be no Line Zero. The removal of CINCINNATUS means the removal of Line Zero access. Further, it should be made clear to PCs that they are expected to act in a manner acceptable to the general concept and ideas of a free nation, rather than thuggery or mob justice. Actions outside the parameters set by CINCINNATUS will likely mean the characters are frozen out of Line Zero

Zero Tech

The equipment used by Line Zero is usually at least 1 Progress Level higher than the general technology available in the setting. The origin of this technology is not addressed, but depending on the campaign it could be reverse-engineered from Alien technology or CINCINNATUS may have secret research facilities about which the players know nothing. From wherever it comes, Zero Tech is beyond the general technology available in the setting. In a standard Modern campaign, the Progress Level would likely be Progress Level 5, Information Age. In such a campaign, Zero Tech would encompass most of the equipment available in Progress Level 6, Fusion Age, and some general equipment is listed below.

Line Zero weaponry is at the highest end of its Progress Level. While a gadget system or other system to increase the effectiveness of weapons could be used, Line Zero operatives in a Modern campaign should not have access to laser weapons. Some advanced weaponry available to Zero Ops is included below.

Zero Chip

All Zero Tech includes a Zero Chip. The purpose of the chip is to allow CINCINNATUS to track Line Zero

equipment and deactivate it if it falls into the wrong hands. The removal of a Zero Chip is pretty much impossible without rendering the pieces of equipment inoperative and destroying its secrets. People and characters will—of course—try to remove the chip. As such, it requires a Craft (electronics) skill check against DC 40 followed by a Repair skill check against DC 50 to remove the chip without destroying the equipment. Further, it requires a Craft (electronics) skill check against DC 30 to note the alarm on the chip that will alert CINCINNATUS to the chip's removal. If the alarm is noted after the chip's removal, it is already too late. If it is noted before the chip's removal, it requires a further Craft (electronics) check against DC 40, followed by a Repair skill check against DC 50 to disarm the alarm. Even with the alarm disarmed, the individual attempting to remove the chip must continue on with the skill checks for the actual removal.

Line Zero Equipment

This equipment is available to Line Zero operatives. Equipment usually awaits the characters at the safehouse designated by CINCINNATUS. If the characters request equipment above and beyond what CINCINNATUS delivers, as long as the request is within reason, CINCINNATUS tends to deliver whatever is requested. Requests for nuclear weapons, cloning technology, and/or expensive sports cars would likely lead CINCINNATUS to reconsider the inclusion of the characters in Line Zero.

The equipment listings do not include Purchase DCs as no Line Zero equipment is intended for purchase or sale. The restrictions on most Line Zero equipment is Illegal, not because it is outlawed but because it is not supposed to exist, nor would it have been attained through legal channels unless supplied by CINCINNATUS.

Hades Weapon System

The Hades Weapon System (HWS) includes a group

of weapons with interchangeable accessories and parts. All HWS weapons will accept the listed accessories. The HWS fires a unique 7.2X25 mm caseless round. Various ammunition types are available in this cartridge, but it is only available through Line Zero and is unknown to the general public.

All HWS weapons are manufactured from composite materials that are not usually detectable by standard metal detectors. The minute amount of metals in the key components is very difficult to detect. In game terms, it would require a Computer Use skill check against DC 30 to detect.

Each HWS weapon includes a personalized security setting. If desired, this security setting can ensure the weapon only functions properly for the owner or owners of the weapon, or for a particular group. If an unauthorized individual picks up or attempts to use the weapon, a special trap is immediately triggered. After a trap is triggered, only an authorized user can reset the weapon to its normal state.

Initially, the security module will emit a stunning shock through the grip of the weapon, forcing a Fortitude save against DC 18. Failure will leave the target stunned for 1d4 rounds. If the target does not release the weapon at that time, the security module will discharge an electric shock dealing 1d6 points of electricity damage. The security module will continue to discharge an electric shock each round until the weapon is reset by an authorized user

Some HWS weapons include a select-fire mode. These weapons can be fired on semi-automatic, 3-round burst and full automatic modes. When using the 3-round burst mode with the Burst Fire feat, it fires only three bullets instead of five and can be used with only three bullets in the weapon. This setting does not grant the ability to make burst fire attacks without the Burst Fire

feat; if a character uses the setting without the feat, he or she makes a normal attack, and the extra two bullets are wasted.

Another feature on some HWS weapons is a variable ammunition feed. The standard HWS magazines can be loaded with two different kinds of ammunition. A selector allows the user to choose one ammunition type or the other. Once one type of ammunition has been spent, the weapon will continue to fire the second type of ammunition, no matter on which the selector is set.

HWS Mk 7 Autoloader Pistol: This is the smallest version of the HWS. While its magazine holds 16 rounds, it can accept the magazines from other HWS weapons. When used for Double Tap, the Mk 5 incurs a -2 penalty unless the HWS Recoil Compensator is used. This penalty stacks with other penalties for using Double Tap.

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HWS Mk 12 Variable Ammunition Autoloader Pistol: This handgun is the standard sidearm for Line Zero operatives. It is larger than the Mk 7, and while its magazine holds 24 rounds, it can accept the magazines from other HWS weapons. The Mk 12 has the select-



fire and variable ammunition features, as discussed above. When used for Double Tap, the Mk 12 incurs a -2 penalty and a -4 penalty when used for Burst Fire or Autofire, unless the HWS Recoil Compensator is used. This penalty stacks with other penalties for using Double Tap, Burst Fire or Autofire.

HWS Mk 5 Personal Defense Weapon: The Mk 5 is only slightly larger than a machine pistol. While the Mk 5 magazine holds 30 rounds, it can accept the magazines from other HWS weapons. The Mk 5 has the select-fire feature, as discussed above. When used for Burst Fire or Autofire, the Mk 5 incurs a -2 penalty unless the HWS Recoil Compensator is used. This penalty stacks with other penalties for using Burst Fire or Autofire. With the magazine removed, this weapon grants a +1 circumstance bonus to Sleight of Hand checks made to conceal the weapon.



HWS Mk 15 Sub-Machine Gun: The Mk 15 is the largest of the HWS weapons, and includes a folding stock. While the Mk 15 magazine holds 40 rounds, it cn accept the magazines from other HWS weapons. The MK 15 has the select-fire and variable ammunition features, as discussed above. With the stock folded, The Mk 15 incurs a -2 penalty when used for Burst Fire or Autofire, unless the HWS Recoil Compensator is used. Further, with the stock folded, this weapon grants a +1 circumstance bonus to Sleight of Hand checks made to conceal the weapon. With the stock retracted and the magazine removed, this weapon grants a +2 circumstance bonus to Sleight of Hand checks made to conceal the weapon.



Table: Ranged Weapons

Weapon	Damage	Crit	Damage Type	Range Incr	Rate of Fire	Mag	Size	Weight	Purch DC	Rest
HWS Mk 7 pistol	2d8	20	Ballistic	30 ft.	S	16 box	Tiny	2 lb.		Illegal
HWS Mk 12 pistol	2d8	20	Ballistic	40 ft.	S,A	24 box	Small	3 lb.		Illegal
HWS Mk 5 PDW	2d8	20	Ballistic	50 ft.	S, A	30 box	Medium	5 lb.		Illegal
HWS Mk 15 SMG	2d8	20	Ballistic	60 ft.	S, A	40 Box	Large	6 lb.		Illegal

Table: Armor

Armor	Type	Equipment Bonus	Nonprof. Bonus	Maximum Dex Bonus	Armor Penalty	Speed (30 ft.)	Weight	Purchase DC	Restriction
Polyfiber	Conceal	+5	+2	+6	0	30	2 lb.		Illegal
Polyfiber Tac	Tactical	+7	+3	+4	-1	30	4 lb.		Illegal

Polyfiber Armor: This fabric armor includes thin plates of an advanced polymer known as *polystern*. It covers the torso and upper thighs. The polyfiber and polystern plates are of an unknown material, but provides greater protection than kevlar. It is easily concealable and can be worn under regular clothes.

Polyfiber Tac Armor: This is the tactical version of polyfiber armor. It includes complete protection of the body, as well as a polyfiber/polystern helmet. While light, this armor can only be concealed with difficulty and cannot be concealed when wearing the helmet. When the helmet is worn, the armor's equipment bonus is increased to ±8

Zero Tech Equipment

This is some of the standard equipment that would be provided by CINCINNATUS. A variety of other types of equipment exist, but these are the most common.

Computer, ZT notebook: This Zero Tech notebook computer is extremely thin and light. It also has twice the power and speed of the most powerful desktop available to the public. It has an integral satellite modem that operates at fiber-optic speeds. It has extremely powerful security software and hardware, and has encrypted access to the CINCINNATUS database.

DEC: A marvel of computer technology, the Data Encryption Card is designed to allow those who are not computer savvy to bypass technological and computer barriers or perform computer-related tasks. Each DEC is an individual data-carrying card roughly the size of a credit card with a hole in its center and a magnetic

strip on one side. Each DEC carries a single program designed for a single purpose; this may be to open doors, bypass security restrictions, crash a computer, or even to modify information. Almost any task that can be performed by using the Computer Use skill can be encoded into a DEC. DECs can be swiped in magnetic keycard readers and can be inserted into CD/DVD drives on computers with the same ease.

When a character uses a DEC for its designated purpose, the DEC's Computer Use bonus (+20) is used in the place of the character's. DECs can be modified to allow for other connections with computers, such as a USB port. These attachments slid onto the DEC and cover the magnetic strip.

Duracable: Strong as steel, flexible as rubber, and almost as light as normal rope, duracable has replaced cables and ropes for Line Zero operatives. Duracable is made of lightweight and durable wiring wrapped hundreds of times in a swirl that reinforces itself as more stress is placed on the coil. Duracable is able to support up to 10 metric tons of weight. The standard dispersement is 50 ft.

Grappler Tag: Often used in conjunction with duracable, the grappler tag is a small disc roughly six inches in diameter. When placed against a solid surface, the grappler tag attaches to that surface by magnetism (if the surface is ferrous) or by an array of nearly microscopic metal barbs (if not). The tag can then be attached to duracable and used as an anchor for climbing, pulling, or any other purpose. A button on the top of the disc releases the grappler tag's hold.

HWS Accessories

- 7.2 HWS Armor Piercing Ammunition: HWS armor piercing ammunition provides a +1 attack bonus against armored opponents or opponents with natural armor, but incurs a -1 penalty to damage.
- 7.2 HWS Explosive Ammuntion: HWS explosive ammunition explodes on contact with a target, delivering +1d6 damage, but using this ammunition incurs a -2 attack penalty.
- 7.2 HWS Hollow-point Ammunition: HWS hollow-point ammunition provides a +1 modifier to damage but incurs a -1 attack penalty against armored opponents or opponents with natural armor.
- 7.2 HWS Non-Lethal Ammunition: HWS non-lethal ammunition only inflict non-lethal damage and incurs a -2 attack penalty.

Laser Aiming Device: This small laser mounts on a firearm, and projects a tiny red dot on the weapon's target. A laser sight grants a +1 equipment bonus on all attack rolls made against targets no farther than 30 feet away. The device can be switched from visible laser to infra-red. The infra-red is visible to individuals using nightvision equipment.

Recoil Compensator: The recoil compensator is a small device affixed to the barrel in order to increase the weapon's handling when firing on burst or automatic settings. When attached, the Recoil Compensator incurs a -1 circumstance penalty to Sleight of Hand checks made to conceal the weapon .

Removable Suppressor: The suppressor fits on the end of the firearm, capturing the gases traveling at supersonic speed that propel a bullet as it is fired. This eliminates the noise from the bullet's firing, dramatically reducing the sound the weapon makes when it is used. The only sound is the mechanical action of the weapon (Listen check, DC 15, to notice). When used, the suppressor increases the size of the weapon by one category, meaning the Mk 7 pistol would be small, the Mk 12 pistol would be medium, and both the Mk 5 PDW and Mk 15 SMG would be large.

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Table: Equipment

Name	Size	Weight	Restriction
Computer, ZT notebook	Medium	4 lb.	Illegal
DEC	Diminutive		Illegal
Duracable	Medium	2 lb.	Illegal
Grappler Tag	Tiny	1 lb.	Illegal
HWS 7.2 Ammunition, box 50	Small	1 lb.	Illegal
HWS Laser Aiming Device	Tiny	0.5 lb.	
HWS Recoil Compensator	Tiny	1 lb.	Illegal
HWS Removable Suppressor	Small	2 lb.	Illegal
Nanobeacon	Fine		Illegal
Soother Pulse	Diminutive		Illegal

Nanobeacon: An invaluable device used in tracking and search and rescue, the nanobeacon is a small microchip that is placed on a target's body (or on an object). It sends out a pulse every second that can be detected by sensors attuned to the beacon's frequency. The nanobeacon projects its pulse at up to a 500 mile radius, each nanobeacon with its own unique identification code. Nanobeacons are often used to coordinate combat squads, track wanted criminals, and even to help recover kidnapped or lost children. A beacon can be placed on any character or object by making a simple touch attack against the target.

Soother Pulse: A small box that fits in one hand, the soother pulse emits sub-audible noises and subtle vibrations that can soothe almost any animal. It carries in its memory banks the codes of pulses to soothe almost every animal on the planet, and new pulses can be loaded into the device whenever they are discovered. A character using the soother pulse gains a +6 equipment bonus on all Handle Animal checks when dealing with an animal identified in the soother pulse's database.

Jackson slid a new magazine into his Mk 12. "I've never seen anyone move so fast."

Angela smiled as she searched the pockets of one of their neutralized opponents. "That's a little cocktail Daddy Cincinnatus brewed up."

"That injection you took back at the safehouse?" Jackson asked.

Angela held up the data card they had been sent to retrieve. "Just call me Lady Apollo."

Jackson holstered his sidearm. "Wouldn't that make you Athena?"

"Wouldn't that make you a wise-guy?"

Line Zero Augments

Augments are the most secretive feature of Line Zero. LZA's are nanobots, robots built of molecule-sized components, that alter an individual's body. While incredibly powerful, the LZA nanobots have a lifespan of 24 hours. Further, they are powered by the body's own resources, and use inflicts bodily damage on the host.

Augments will be delivered along with other equipment by CINCINNATUS. Usually, operatives will use a different augment, providing a variety of enhanced abilities for a mission.

The LZA nanobots are injected with a hypodermic needle. Once they enter the bloodstream, it takes 90 minutes for them to alter the body enough to actually augment physical performance. An augment lasts a maximum of 24 hours from the time of injection. As the LZA nanobots use the body's resources, and the alteration required for augmentation is deleterious, the subject loses 1 hit point per hour while the nanobots are active. These lost hit points—24 in total by the time the LZA nanobots expire—cannot be healed in any manner unless the LZA nanobots are deactivated. Deactivation requires a second hypodermic injection, 90 minutes after which the LZA nanobots cease to function and cease damaging the subject's body.

Achilles: The Achilles augment increases the density of the skin and muscle tissue. One-half of lethal damage per attack is converted to non-lethal damage, up to a maximum of 30 hit points of damage per attack. For example, if the character was shot for 24 points of

damage and then again for 32 points of damage, the character would take 12 points of lethal and 12 points of non-lethal damage and then 17 points of lethal and 15 points of non-lethal damage.

Ares: The Ares augment is a combat augment. It provides a stackable modifier of +4 to both attacks and Defense.

Poseidon: The Poseidon augment increases the bodies speed. When active, the Poseidon augment triples the character's movement speed, as well as adding 1 attack action per round.

Selene: The Selene augment is also called the covert augment. It provides a +10 modifier to all Hide and Move Silently skill checks as well as providing darkvision for up to 120 ft.

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