

THE PRECONTINENTAL ORDER

An Organization

By Ryan Quinn
for *Spycraft 2.0*®

Had I been listening to the mad speculations of a lunatic, or to the scientific conclusions of a lofty genius? Where did truth stop? Where did error begin?

-- **Jules Verne**
Journey to the
Center of the Earth

BACK TO THE BLUE

There's no question — planet Earth is on the brink. With the population consuming available space faster than we can build skyscraper apartment complexes or capsule hotels, and nuclear conflict a household discussion topic for decades, it's only a matter of time before the human tribes erupt into war over the most basic of needs. This world simply wasn't made to support twenty billion people.

Or... was it? Members of the Precontinental Order, freedom-lovers and contrarians of the highest magnitude, argue that we haven't even approached the limits of human expansion. While census operators wring their hands and nations toy with birthing restrictions, the Order sings a simple song: "We came from the oceans, and we can return." Compared with the dry lands our ancestors colonized, the sea may as well be infinite in size, scope, and natural resources. The Precontinentals swear they know the way to prevent World Wars 3, 4,

and 5 — humanity just needs some room to stretch its legs.

Well, its fins, anyway.

AGENDA

The history of the Precontinental Order is the history of the wildlife photographer and the nature documentary. In the late 1950s, capturing

PRECONTINENTAL ORDER

Goals:	3	(Enlightened Evolution, Protection, Visionaries)
History:	2	(Changing of the Guard, Golden Age)
Image:	4	(Prominent Goals, On Record Methods, Secretive Leaders, On Record Members, Secretive Sites)
Sites:	4	(Advanced Lab, Harbor, Records Office, Training Ground)
Tools:	6	(E-III, G-IV, R-IV, S-IV, T-III, V-IV, W-II)

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underwater images made the move from scientific research to common entertainment. Colored images of the world beneath the waves flooded western homes thanks to the promotional efforts of famed environmentalist Jacques Cousteau, and the natural, alien beauty of the undersea touched thousands of people. Some of these people were fundamentally changed.

At the time, the founders of what would become the Order were little more than a loose group of Harvard and Yale students in a New England seaboard study. The group didn't even consider themselves activists, but rather artists fascinated with the ocean, mildly paranoid skeptics gripped with the heightened nuclear terror of the 50s, and intellectuals speculating on the population explosion of the baby boom.

"We could go there" became "we could live there," and over decades (and with the rising age, retirement, and bitter philosophical disagreement of several members of the original group), the sentiment eventually became "we *must* live there." To this day, most Precontinental leaders firmly adhere to the belief that colonizing the oceans and convincing the Earth's governments to extend their reach downward isn't simply an attractive option — it's the *only* option.

Though the majority of the Order's efforts are accessible and generally inoffensive (conservationism and international research, for example), it's highly unlikely their unusual message would have found any true purchase — if not for one very important genetic breakthrough...

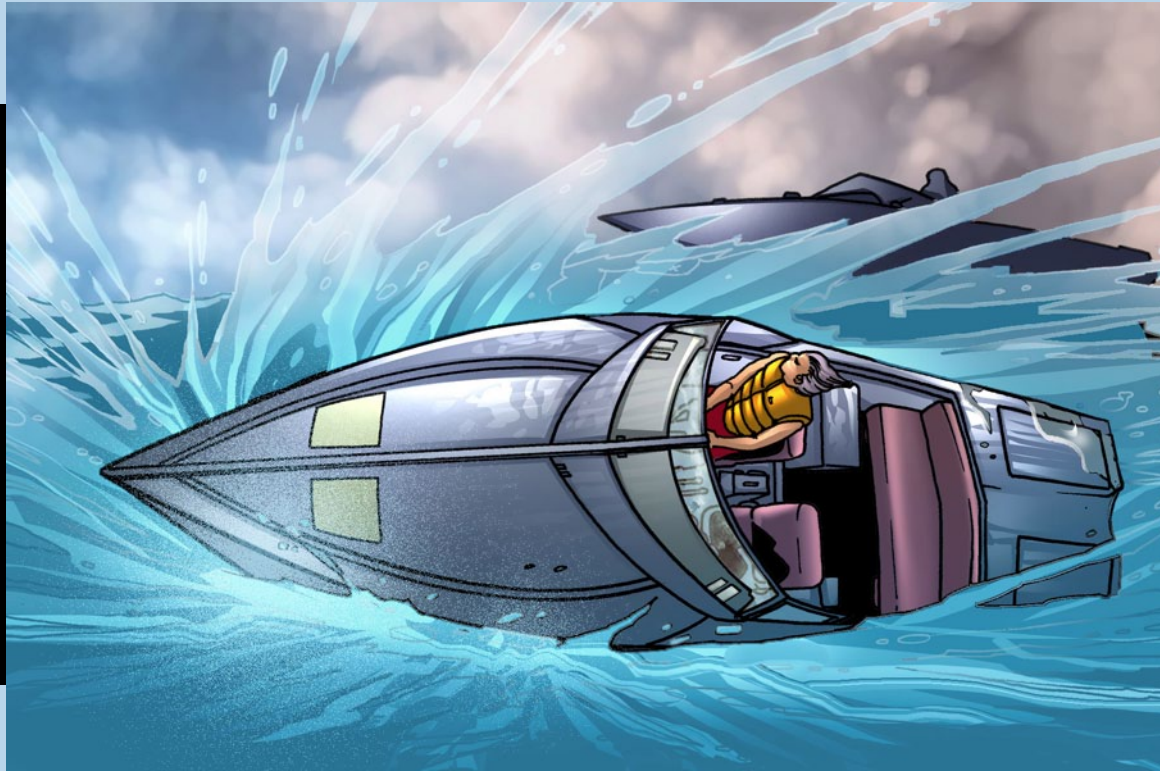
REDEFINING LIFE ON EARTH

In the early 80s, the burgeoning Order had evolved into a wealthy New England environmentalists' social club with comparatively few investors. It's not entirely clear how these fringe biologists managed one of the greatest discoveries of the modern age, though many well-connected members suspect foul play, and point to the sudden, brutal, and criminally overlooked death of founder Dr. Joni Berman as proof. Berman was last seen mere days after the discovery was announced, retiring to the back porch of her beachfront Gloucester home. She washed up on a nearby shore the next morning, drowned after a prolonged beating, and within a month the remaining Precontinentals settled into their new home, a Boston high-rise emblazoned with their new moniker: Northeast Aquatechnology, Inc.

Funding for the move came from a raft of new investors from the United States, France, Italy, and Russia, all interested in exploiting the group's discovery: that with the right equipment, humans could breathe underwater. Many pursuits followed: testing organs for resistance to deep-sea pressure, growing slick skin grafts that wouldn't bloat with absorbed water, and coordinating week-long sessions of eye surgery to help swimmers see in minimal light. The Precontinentals' wild-eyed dream suddenly looked like a very real possibility: they wouldn't return to the sea but their grandchildren might.



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METHODS

The Precontinental Order's core membership seeks to remain borderless, forming loose cells that operate largely independently, especially among island nations, but all cells embrace consistent methods. They nearly always cooperate with local governments, at least publicly, assisting marine endeavors of all sorts. This helps them stay on the right side of news agencies and the common man, and also lends legitimacy and credibility to their

message, which they hope world leaders will soon embrace.

Each Precontinental cell employs its own means of developing the Order's power base, though all present themselves as faces of the famed non-profit conservationist group, and provide no-strings attached support to local environmental agencies, especially to help clean up oil spills, test water quality, and the like. They also subsidize residence programs

for promising biologists and oceanographers, doing their best to subtly indoctrinate them to the Order's philosophy. The most promising and dedicated of these students are eventually recruited, filling out the Order's ranks.

Agents working with or for the Order can expect lots of exposure to local bureaucracies, and to be paired with local experts in small and non-democratic nations. When the Order pursues a political foothold, high-powered meetings at posh costal villas are far more common than gatherings at research laboratories — it's critical that the Order's operatives appear strictly humanitarian (akin to the Peace Corps or *Medecins Sans Frontieres*), so they prefer to project the image of an interest group rather than a research collective.

NORTHEAST AQUATECHNOLOGY, INC.

Privately, of course, the Order engages in many other missions, ranging from defense to research, investigation, and sabotage. Operatives draw on a wide variety of tools to safeguard humanity's future on earth: electronics and tradecraft gear remain fairly commonplace for a clandestine agency, and weapons are limited due largely to the organization's *mostly* pacifist nature, but vehicles include a variety of watercraft (personal and remote-operated), as well as insulated land craft that can take to the seas.

Those publicly espousing the organization's tenets rather than simply looking for a paycheck can expect far more as they rise in rank. At first, devotees can request specialized training: in swimming, watercraft piloting, and nearly any life science. Top operatives willing to risk their lives to further the cause can volunteer to go under the knife and receive

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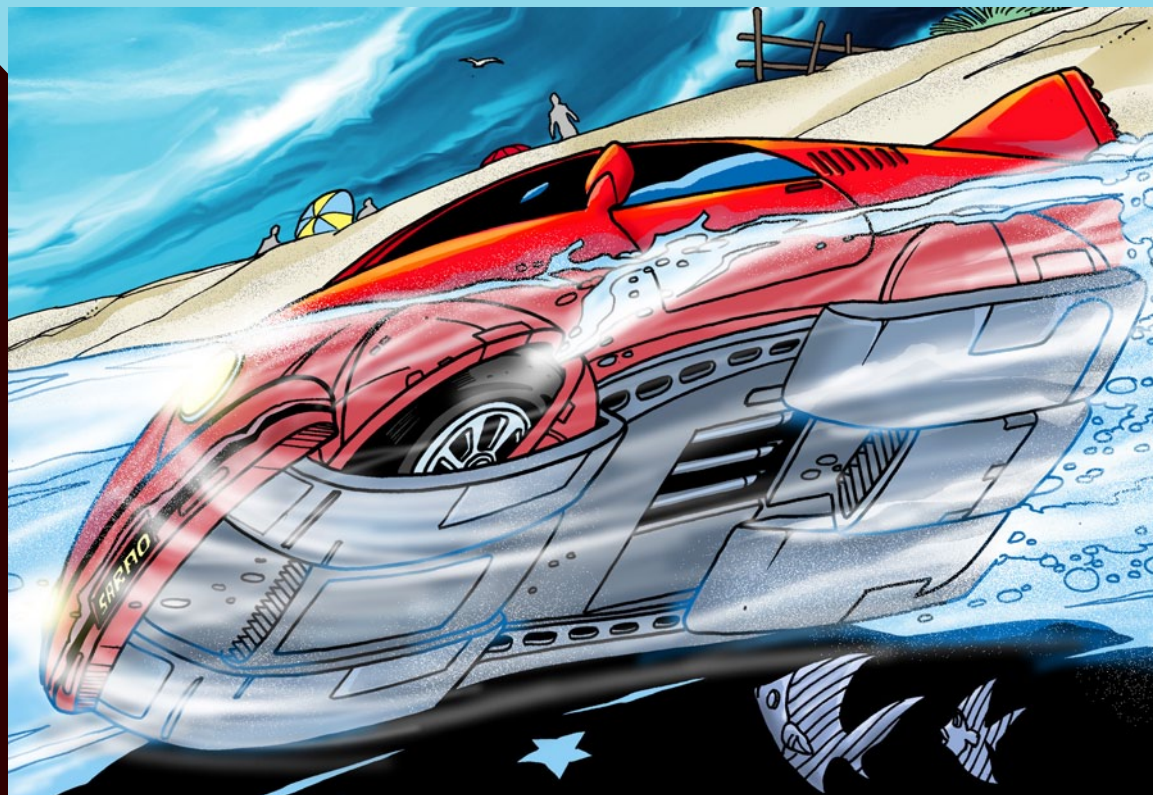
modifications to prepare them for life in the depths: increased lung capacity, wider light spectrum vision, and even artificial gills or feet webbing. Immense secrecy surrounds these operations — they're performed exclusively in off-the-grid laboratories, carefully watched by the Order's most elite surgeons and guards. Only operatives who prove a lifelong commitment to the Order are even considered, and only after a vote of support from at least two independent cells.

The organization's research is advanced but also quite uncertain at present; only the most senior operatives may subject themselves to more than one body modification. The Order's genetic experiments are meant to be introduced to humanity more... holistically... and they're not in the business of creating mermaids or shark-toothed freaks regardless.

OPERATIONS

Since its inception, the Order has struggled to reconcile its public activism with its private research. Each cell approaches this problem in its own way, and each weighs the value of legitimacy against the furthering of the Order's scientific goals. One cell might drum up support by organizing a flashy protest against offshore drilling in the same week another isolates, bribes, and — if necessary — kidnaps a marine biologist to secure their findings.

Despite this inconsistency, all cells share a few major focuses, and securing relevant genetic research — plus keeping it out of the hands of those who might misuse it, share it, or, worse, use it to promote their own agenda — nearly always tops the list. Operatives are also expected to keep tabs



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on emerging figures in the fields of hydroculture (underwater farming), architecture (in particular, the creation of artificial islands and landmasses) and life sciences, and do so not only by planting bugs and tapping phones but also by spreading propaganda and stealing research.

Keeping the oceans clean and pure is crucial to the Order's long-term goals, and cells have historically cooperated with local governments (most notably in South America) to set up 'sting' operations

intended to tag, arrest, or eliminate pirates and drug smugglers. Violent operations are common, but more so is the bait and switch, in which operatives pose as buyers to lure scavengers with a derelict vessel in waters they frequent. The Order also donates money and personnel to help clean up oil spills, using its clandestine arms to assess, identify, and when necessary, expose the guilty parties.

Lastly, and perhaps most visibly, the Order builds, architects, and designs: mobile research barges,



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insulated floating laboratories, and half-submerged ‘coastal’ homes, while slick-talkers secure funding from sources on both sides of the law. Operatives protect and entice private donors, involving themselves in nearly any public seaside construction that can accommodate a water quality survey, and inoffensively keep their fingers on the pulse of the waves in every nation on the planet.

STRUCTURE

The Order’s internal structure is largely associative — there’s no operational headquarters, per se. Instead, individual cells create power blocs by region (or, where the Order is extremely prevalent, as in France or Chile, by nation), and these blocs vote on mission priorities and allocation of funds. Some blocs resemble political action committees, while others are barely attentive to conservationism until they’ve exhausted their pursuit of scientific breakthroughs. Again, they share certain commonalities.

Nearly all blocs have a nerve center (usually a private lab) near the coast. This location is used for research and Order gatherings, but never soliciting visitors. Landlocked cities and towns typically do not see a strong Precontinental presence.

Committees comprised of individual cell leaders vote on major decisions. A bloc in Antarctica that cares mostly for research might completely ignore the Order’s greater needs if its most prominent members feel they’re a waste of time. Thanks to the Order’s loose structure, few complaints arise.

In most cases, the Precontinentals recruit for passion before talent. Anyone can be trained as a research assistant or public activist but not everyone can be made to believe mankind’s future lies beneath the waves. Two exceptions are operatives and scientists; these highly skilled personnel are so highly sought that the Order chases nearly anyone who can be swayed with money or glory, so long as they can keep their mouths shut. Given the Order’s size and the esoteric nature of its goals, an operative who undertakes a single mission or provides financial aid or comfort might be treated as a trusted ally — though this is still a far

TABLE 1: PRECONTINENTAL ORDER REPUTATION

Condition	Reputation Gain/Loss
Objective (Recruit)	+1
Triumph (Profession or Science)	+2
Exposure (Any “incidents”)	-1
Multiple deaths during any Endangered Bystanders event	-2

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cry from those dedicated followers benefiting from the Order's most guarded secrets and advances. The Order's trust is relatively straightforward to gain, but it's extremely careful (even stingy) with its confidence.

Successful Order endeavors are broadcast to all members in the bloc, usually through encrypted channels. As a small fish in the sizeable pond of international factions, the Order motivates its troops by constantly projecting an image of success. Even a flattering article in a tiny local paper could be bouncing through every member's lines by the next morning.

THE PRECONTINENTAL ORDER IN YOUR GAME

The Precontinental Order is a unique beast in the Spycraft universe — its lack of national allegiance keeps it from having a major unified front, and its approach changes according to the cell and allies involved. Rather than introducing it as a single monolithic organization, a GC might sprinkle its operatives through a campaign focusing on other groups and goals, each cell seemingly an isolated unit supporting local governments and infiltrating other local factions. Only by comparing these experiences do the agents become aware of the Order's technological and genetic prowess, and its ultimate goals.

The GC can alternately recruit agents directly into the fold. Though the Order isn't as widespread or powerful as some groups, it doesn't demand sole allegiance, allowing agents to retain their standing even with governmental home offices, so long as their mission objectives don't conflict. As an added bonus, the Order's localized structure might let a relatively untested agent make a quick name for him or herself simply by volunteering to take on dangerous operations. In the Order's relatively thin ranks, a capable spy has plenty of room to impress, and with enough clout and success he could even land a regional command role in short order.



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Missions engaging the Order should involve an immediate and high-risk impact on its goals — lobbying to divert funding for marine exposure programs in schools may help the Precontinentals

TABLE 2: VEHICLES

Vehicle	Size	Occ	A/T	MPH	D/S	Upg	Comp	Cargo	R/F	Qualities	Year	SV
SPSS	H (2×10)	4	2/5	10/11	9/+6	1	25/+1	5 tons	20/D	LOB (Radar S, Sonar S, Thermal S), SEN (Radar 1), UNC	2000s	\$1 million

TABLE 3: GADGETS

Picks by Caliber	PR	Cap	Rng	SZ/Hand	Battery	Save	Weight	Comp	Year	SV
<i>Caliber IV</i>										
Pressure Sheath	4	—	—	N/—	—	—	—	30/+3	2010s	—
Pulmonary Pocket	4	—	—	T/—	—	—	1 lb.	40/+4	2010s	—
Sunlight Lens	3	—	—	F/—	48 hrs.	—	—	40/+5	2010s	—
<i>Caliber V</i>										
Fins	6	—	—	S/2h	—	—	2 lbs.	30/+2	2010s	—
Gills	7	—	—	T/—	3 hrs,	+10	0.1 lbs.	30/+3	2010s	—



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in the long run, but it's not the stuff of espionage. Defending a research base still under construction, infiltrating a group of speedboat drug-smugglers, or silencing a photojournalist writing an article about a web-fingered swimmer... These all hit at the very heart of the Order's deepest goals, and offer plenty of action and intrigue to boot.

REPUTATION

Furthering the Precontinental Order's goals and avoiding unwanted attention can bolster an operative's Reputation with the organization, as shown on Table 1: Precontinental Order Reputation (see page 28).

GADGETS

Universally, the Housing for Order "gadgets" is an operative's body (which is typically Medium). See Table 3.

Fins

Webbing is grafted between the character's fingers or toes, creating makeshift 'fins' that propel him through the water with ease.

Mechanism: Skill check (Swim) (Caliber V)

Additional Rules: With a successful Swim check, the character can move his normal Speed, rather than at 1/4 his Speed (rounded down).

(Tomorrow from page 30)

Gills

Limited-functionality gills are placed somewhere on the character's body, usually somewhere they won't be immediately visible.

Mechanism: None

Additional Rules: The character can breathe normally underwater until the gadget's battery runs down.

Pressure Sheath

This installation requires over a month of painful surgery and treatments, adapting the character's body and bloodstream to the deleterious effects of deep sea pressures.

Mechanism: Save boost (Caliber IV) — applies only to Fortitude saves for Pressure Damage

Additional Rules: The character is immune to The Bends (see *Spycraft 2.0*, page 349).

Pulmonary Pocket

The character's lungs are modified, not replaced, with a circular sac that greatly increases his air capacity.

Mechanism: Save boost (Caliber IV) — applies to Fortitude saves for Suffocation

Additional Rules: The character can hold his breath for a number of rounds equal to four times his Constitution score (see *Spycraft 2.0*, page 349).

Sunlight Lens

The character's eyes are modified through extensive laser surgery, radiation, and partial cone

replacement, allowing him to see more effectively underwater and in the absence of light.

Mechanism: Skill check (Perception) (Caliber III)

Additional Rules: When underwater, the character suffers only 1/2 the usual penalty in opaque and murky water, and at any depth, rounded down (see *Spycraft 2.0*, page 351).



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VEHICLES

Self-Propelled Semi-Submersible (SPSS):

Commonly called a "Narco sub" due to its use as a drug-smuggling vehicle, this watercraft isn't technically a submarine, as it can't dive; instead, the majority of the vehicle glides under the water, making it extremely difficult to detect via radar or sonar. See Table 2.

