
PANAMA PAN-CORPORATE ZONE

By Uncle Benny

> I'd never heard of Uncle Benny before, but he's been personally vouched for by FastJack. Given that it's not something he does a lot, I think we can trust the following information.
> Captain Chaos

PANAMA AT A GLANCE

Government Type: Corporate Protectorate

Population: 20,000

Human: 68%

Elf: 11%

Dwarf: 6%

Ork: 10%

Troll: 3%

Other: 2%

Per Capita Income: 35,000¥

Estimated SINless: <1%

Below Poverty Level: 5%

Corporate Affiliation: 90%

Education:

Less Than Twelve Years: 11%

High School Equivalency: 29%

College Degrees: 45%

Advanced Degrees: 15%

Major Ethnic Groups:

Pan-Corporate citizenship: 80%

Panamanian Aztlaner: 20%

Major Languages Spoken:

English: 95%

Japanese: 41%

Spanish: 37%

Currency: Nuyen (corporate script also accepted)

DocWagon Medical Coverage: 100%

Guaranteed Response Time: 10 minutes.

Welcome to the Panama Canal, arguably the most valuable and corrupt strip of land in the Americas. Now, I know Caracas looks like it could give the Zone a run for its money on the latter issue, but it's like comparing a sleazy, down-on-her-luck stripper with an uppity, high class escort girl. In Panama, we do it with style.

> Please Benny, you haven't been here in years. We've only gone further down the drekhole since then.
> Carmaux

> And you think we didn't?
> Uncle Benny

A TALE OF TWO CANALS

Panama's strategic position was first noticed by the Spanish, who transported countless treasures across the isthmus on their journeys to Seville. In the early 20th century, the good old USA built the Panama Canal, a feat of both human engineering and political backstabbing. The Americans managed the Canal until 1999, when they handed it over to the Panamanian government. Aztlan annexed Panama lock, stock and Canal in 2048, but didn't have a chance to enjoy its new toy. Shortly after the infamous Veracruz Settlement, the Azzies ceded it to the Corporate Court.

> With an estimated 500 *trillion* nuyen worth of cargo crossing it every year, the Canal plays a major role in the global economy. There was no chance in Hell that the other megacorps would let Aztechnology keep it.
> Don Dinero

For the past sixteen years, the Zone (that's what we call it around here) has been a tool for the Court's whims. Though day-to-day operations are efficiency incarnate, the big boys enjoy perks like preferential rates and priority service. Meanwhile, the smaller fish can only watch this abuse with impotent (and growing) frustration.

This situation could change overnight if Aztlan builds its Nicaragua Canal. More than a dozen shipping companies have already signed special agreements with Tenochtitlán, with rumors pointing at Wuxing as a potential ally. If they get away with it, the Azzies will control maritime traffic between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, while the Panama Canal slips into oblivion. Interesting thought, neh?

> Not if the other megas flex their muscles ... and you know I'm not talking about legal protests.
> Abraxas

LIFE IN THE ZONE

When people talk about the PPCZ being a corporate country, they mean it. The Panama Canal Authority has a Board of Directors with lavishly-paid delegates from all the Big Ten (except Aztechnology), who choose a Governor from its ranks every year. Predictably, the Board is a nest of vipers that shifts into overdrive when elections approach.

Except for some Panamanian wageslaves, everyone else here is an import with temporary “citizenship” status. Though this was originally an effort aimed to promote teamwork between rival corpsters, the suits take every opportunity they can to backstab fellow Pan-Corporate citizens from other megas. Truth is, as long as it doesn’t hurt the Canal and the corps’ pockets, anything goes.

> Say an Ares data manager is a shoo-in for promotion, but his Renraku pal thinks she should have the position. All she needs is someone to take a few embarrassing pictures of Mr. Suit having some Novacoke-induced fun in Panama City ...

> Nisarg

> If you’re talking about Joachim Larsen, he’s been AWOL for a week. The only clue that Pan-Corp security has so far is a bunch of half-burnt, nonsensical notes amid a pile of ashes in his house.

> Uncle Benny

> There’s more than meets the eye here. Word at the Helix is that Larsen was treading dangerous waters.

> Munin

Panama City: Lights and Shades

Yes, it is on Azzie soil, but it’s within spitting distance of the Canal so Zoners love coming here in their free time to have some fun. And boy, do they get plenty of it. From classy nightclubs and members-only country clubs to sordid brothels and fortune-telling *brujas*, the night never stops in Panama City. Zoners love it so much that more than a few end up here when they retire.

Though the sprawl welcomes Zoners (and their nuyen) with open arms, so does Aztechnology Corporate Security. Covert operations have increased dramatically since the Nicaragua Canal was announced, with both CS and PPCZ agents working hard to gain an edge over each other.

Despite the heavy Azzie presence, the Zone and Panama City are good places to enter Aztlan unnoticed. Just slip through with the masses crossing the Canal every day from one side to the other and you’re in. You need to grease a few palms (how much “grease” depends on what you want), but it’s so common that Zoners joke about their “retirement fund.”

> Panama City is also a hotbed for Catholic rebels and the Great Colombia policlub. Collaboration against Aztechnology isn’t unusual—rumor is that Pan-Corp reps meet with the dissidents to discuss mutual interests.

> Silent Opposition

> Hey Benny, you forgot the big one.

> FastJack

> No I didn’t. I just don’t want anyone’s ghost hunting me after being flatlined.

> Uncle Benny

> What are you guys talking about?

> Kid Code

> There’s another place you can slip into from the Panama Canal—or, more accurately, from its RTG. The system acts as backup for Zurich-Orbital’s main terrestrial link in Switzerland—you know, just in case “something” (yep, that’s you and me) ever happened to it. If you ever manage to find it and sneak through the best security that a group of paranoid megacorps can buy, drop me a line. I think Benny is also getting bored of being part of a two-man club.

> FastJack

GAME INFO: PANAMA

Though no longer as important as in the 20th century, the Panama Canal still remains an essential part of global trade. News of Aztlan's Nicaragua Canal have thrown the Corporate Court into an outrage, as the megas know very well who's behind that project and what are its intentions.

GETTING IN/OUT

Sneaking into the Zone is very difficult. The Panama Canal is invaluable for the megacorps, who protect it heavily. Between Aztechnology's saber-rattling and the occasional rebels, the Pan-Corporate Security Force has enough to worry about. Ships are astrally scanned for anything suspicious before entering the Canal.

Corporate employees and tourists use the Bunau-Varilla Airport. Civilian flights are limited to HSCTs and suborbitals, as the risks of a semiballistic overshoot damaging the Canal were deemed unacceptably high. Aztlaners crossing or working at the Canal every day and Zoners visiting Panama City use specific traffic gateways, which are separated from the rest of the Canal. In an effort to reduce annoying procedures, Aztlan and the Corporate Court established a special visa for them. Runners wishing to enter Aztlan from the Panama Canal might want these visas, but they'd need to forge them or make a deal with a megacorp.

RUNNING IN PANAMA

Teamwork only gives you someone else to blame, or so believe many in the Canal. It's a small community so intrigue within its multi-corporate workforce is inevitable. Be it for personal or professional reasons, runs between rival corpsters are fairly common. Most take place in Panama City, which is also infested with Aztechnology spies, Vatican agents and Colombian rebels.

Deckers might also be tempted to deck into Zurich-Orbital through the Canal's satlink, but that is easier said than done. Matrix security is handled by the Corporate Court's infamous Grid Overwatch Division, whose deckers have a 24-7 presence in the Zone's RTG.

Cold Case

Joachim Larsen's mysterious disappearance is this Zone's topic of the week. Larsen's satellite expertise had made him a key figure in Ares Global Commsat before his transferal to Panama. Many suspect he was extracted, but no one knows who did it.

Frustrated by the inconclusive official report, Ares Macrotechnology hires the runners for its own private investigation. As soon as they start digging for clues in the Zone and Panama City, the team is hounded by frenzied chipped gangers, bizarre magical attacks and surveillance drones. Perhaps Larsen wasn't involved with another corp after all ...

CHECKPOINT VERIFICATION TABLE

Country	Verification System Rating
Panama	3

UNAUTHORIZED BORDER CROSSING TABLE

Country	Sensor	Flux	ECCM	ECD	NPC/Pro. Rating
Panama	8	10	5	5	Superior/4

LATIN AMERICAN MATRIX RTGS

Country	Security	Access	Control	Index	Files	Slave
Panama	Red-6	10	12	10	10	10