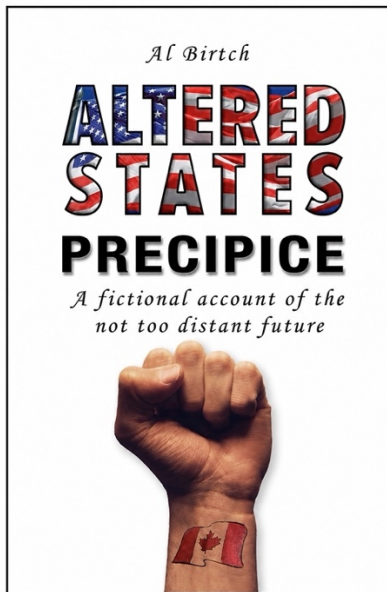




Genre: Speculative thriller fiction

President **JACK CARLSON**, is holding an emergency meeting with his cabinet and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the President's Chief Strategist **DAN BOWMAN**, the architect behind his most recent re-election. The President is apoplectic. The Governors of California, Oregon, Washington and Alaska along with the President of Mexico and the Premier of British Columbia had just held simultaneous news conferences. In 3-months' time they will be holding a referendum on a proposal to join together. If passed, it will create a Pacific-coast country that's over 5,000 miles in length, a population of over 180 million people and control a vast area of natural resources in forestry, mining and fishing. The combined GDP will be the 10th largest in the world. President Carlson is enraged. The dissolution of America will not be his legacy. Soon each of his top cabinet members have their assignments and are summarily dismissed.

But **DAN BOWMAN**, the puppet-master behind the curtain, stays behind. He has always had his own vision of America. A vision shared by some of the wealthiest and largest campaign contributors. He sees this announcement from a tactical perspective. It's the perfect opening to fast-track the final stage of America's transformation. Bowman knows his man better than anyone. *"Mr. President...This is tantamount to insurrection. It calls for gloves-off decisive leadership that only you Mr. President are capable of."* Bowman reminds the President that his cabinet are fundamentally bureaucrats at heart. They will get bogged down in legal precedence and be incapable of doing what is necessary to derail this affront to Carlson's leadership. *"You are right Dan."* Bowman seizes the opportunity. *"As Commander-In-Chief of our armed forces, you know far better than I that we cannot lose control over our west-coast naval and air force bases. That would be catastrophic for the country's security; weaken us in the face of our enemies who will see you as a failed leader. With your permission Mr. President, I will work on a fallback plan."* Bowman knows his man and he gets the nod he's looking for. Carlson then calls

Canadian Prime Minister, Silvan Trembley. Trembley is more circumspect about the situation. Canada had already been through a referendum when Quebec had proposed separating from the country...a vote that was defeated by the narrowest of margins. It is Trembley's plan to follow the same playbook they had back then. But...if the vote to separate passes, that his government would work towards a harmonious separation. President Carlson ends the call. *"Dan...make sure your fallback plan includes British Columbia. They are the thread that will physically link Alaska to the other states. As far as I'm concerned, if Trembley is going to step-aside, then he has relinquished any say in the future of British Columbia."*

The President goes on a country-wide campaign to paint these Governors as treasonous, and to stoke fear that the people in those states will become subservient to the far greater population of Mexico. Bowman puts more clandestine actions into play. A king-crab trawler out of Nome Alaska is sunk purportedly by a Russian frigate for violating Russian territorial waters in the Bearing Strait. 3 crew members are killed and 2 are rumoured to be held captive as spies. Russia denies having sunk the trawler. The Governor of Alaska needs President Carlson to step in. Carlson immediately makes his feelings known to the people of Alaska...*"see how vulnerable you are without all of America behind you"*. Orbiting American satellites that monitor the waters separating the two countries are strangely off-line at the time of the sinking. That fact catches the eye of Major Dunleavy, in charge of floor-operations at the NORAD base Cheyenne Mountain Colorado Springs. General Hodgins, base commander, assures him it is simply a coincidence...but there's something in his tone and his eagerness to shut-down the discussion that captures Dunleavy's attention. His concerns only escalate further when he learns from fellow Canadian, Corporal Levine, that a couple of days earlier he had received a text from his good friend in the 1st Armoured Division stationed out of Fort Bliss. They had timed their vacation leaves for next month at a fishing lodge. His buddy had to back out as all personnel leaves had inexplicably been canceled. His entire unit was moving out the next day but he didn't know to where or why. He had ended his text saying ... *"I don't know WTF is going on but do not reply to this and delete this text immediately. All of us have been instructed to relinquish our cell phones tonight."* Major Dunleavy is keenly aware that any such major troop movements should have been communicated to him at that mornings briefing. He has no idea why, but suspects the omission was intentional by General Hodgins. The one aspect of moving an armoured battalion of 36 tanks over the 1,600 miles separating Fort Bliss from Washington state, is that the flatbeds carrying the tanks inevitably attract social media attention. That was the information network Corporal Levine kept his eye on. And once unloaded at their final destination, they need a lot of logistical support. Fuel key among them. M1 Abrams tanks can operate on diesel, they function best on jet fuel. It doesn't take long before Corporal Levine deduces that the battle group has been relocated somewhere in the Mount Rainier National Park area. Besides social media reports, the final clue to the puzzle was recent closure of the park to the public do to the ongoing draught and extreme forest fire risk. But why hide the movement of an entire battalion of armour from the jointly, Canada-USA manned NORAD team? Major Dunleavy has watched the tension between President Carlson and the Governors of the West Coast states rapidly intensify. Lewis-McChord is under federal command and contains several rapid deployment units. If the order were given to seize control of Washington State...it would be over in a matter of hours. But Dunleavy can only draw one conclusion for the redeployment of the armoured battalion. It wouldn't be needed to take control over

Washington State. Mount Rainier Park is only 150 miles from the Canadian border. He concludes that is their objective. Major Dunleavy makes a decision that will soon have he and Levine on the run that very night. Soon they are home and in meeting room with the Prime Minister and his cabinet. It doesn't take long for them to agree with Major Dunleavy's assessment that if the referendum in British Columbia passes, that President Carlson intends to send the 1st Armoured Division into Canada to seize control of the breakaway province. There isn't any way Canada can match the force that American can bring to bear. But that doesn't mean Canada is simply going to roll-over. The Prime Minister and his advisors are confident that the silent majority of Americans do not agree with the countries sharp turn to the right. They believe the country is a powder-keg and just needs the right nudge for the pot to boil over. Captain Eric Fontaine, commander of the elite 153-person JTF2 special forces unit is tasked with designing and executing the plan to make that happen.

Within 3 weeks Captain Fountain and the 5 sergeants that support him have devised a plan. But how to get the 153 soldiers of the JTF across the border without bringing unwanted scrutiny. The solution is proposed by Specialist Daniel Maracle. He has been a member of the JTF for 3 years year and an expert at communications networks...especially at hacking into the enemy's systems. Maracle is a proud member of the Mohawk First Nation and his family comes from the Cornwall region's Akwesasne Territory. That area of North America is unique in that the Mohawk territories span both Canada and the USA. He is confident the leaders of the Mohawk Nation on both sides of the border will assist. The unit is divided into 3 teams. Team Alpha, will be comprised of 115 of the 153-person total unit. This main force will be led by Captain Fontaine. They will proceed to New York City with the specific destination of Wall Street. Within that 8-city block stands the financial heartbeat of America. The unbridled greed of the companies housed there had come to symbolize a lot of what had gone wrong with the American dream. The goal...burn it to the ground...leave nothing standing. Bravo team, consisting of 26 soldiers, would proceed to 1 First Street, North East, Washington DC. The Supreme Court Building. The objective is the same. If Wall Street was the poster child for runaway greed; the Supreme Court building was the epicentre for the steadily eroding freedoms of America's citizens. Freedom of choice, whether over your own body or your choice of life partner was not seen by the majority as something to be legislated over. The remaining dozen men and women of team Charlie would be led by Major Dunleavy and included communications Specialist Maracle. They would travel to CNN's broadcast headquarters in Atlanta. Their goal, to seize the facility and then, immediately after the start of the attacks on Wall Street and the Supreme Court building, go on-air and explain what was happening and why. Call on everyday American's to rise up. That the President sending in the military to seize the west coast states was going too far. Americans must not be killing fellow Americans.

Captain Fontaine's team knows that burning down a single building is one thing, but an entire 8-city block another. They elect to use a battle tested approach. The WWII firebombing of Dresden provided the model, except they wouldn't be dropping incendiary bombs. Instead they will farm the resources available to them. Cars run on gasoline and with a population of over 23 million people in New York City and its surrounding boroughs, there were several fuel depots with tanker trucks all pre-loaded the night before for their daily deliveries to more than

700 hundred gas stations. 15 of those would supply the ignition material. A few well-placed explosive devices at Manhattan's water-pumping stations that supply would render firefighters helpless. The science works. Wall Street and the Supreme Court building are ablaze. Major Dunleavy has been on the air for 20 minutes. He concludes his message and then leaves the national audience listening to the 1966 anti-war anthem For What It's Worth. Maracle looks down to the street. He see's National Guard jumping off trucks, M4's in hand. 3 jeeps are pulling up, with 50 Cal machine guns mounted on their backs. Dunleavy picks up his walkie and tells the ground-floor team *"do not fire. We'll be right down."* Dunleavy leads his unarmed men outside, arms raised. They are surprised to see the 3 jeeps swing around and begin to slowly bumping their way up the 2 levels of stairs until they reach the main landing where they are. The mounted machine guns now pointed out to the street. Dunleavy and the Guard Commander embrace. All over the country the main divisions of the military lay down their arms. President Carlson, his Cabinet, and the Joint Chief's have all been sequestered under the Whitehouse. Carlson demands the Joint Chiefs take control of their troops. When his demands are met by blank faces, he retreats to his office slamming the door behind him. The Cabinet are like rats deserting a sinking ship. They quickly hold a vote demanding President Carlson's immediate resignation. It passes unanimously. The head of the President's security detail is instructed to request President rejoin the group...and if he does not do so willingly, to escort him back. Devlin enters Carlson's office and explains the situation to the President...then adds. *"Sir...I've been on the protection detail of 3 Presidents now. I have sworn to sacrifice my life to protect the person occupying that office. This last 5 years is the first time I have questioned my willingness to do that."* With that Devlin pulls out his sidearm, chambers a round, Carlson's eyes widen, fear on his face. But Devlin puts it on the President's desk and slides it over to him. *"You have a decision to make Mr. President. I will step outside while you make it."*

The End