

# ULTIMATE NIGHTMARE

ISSUE

# 2



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Gathered by mutant psychic Professor Charles Xavier, the X-Men are soldiers for his dream of coexistence between normal humans and mutants like them.

Formed by General Nick Fury and led by Captain America, THE ULTIMATES are a small but lethal army created to protect humanity against all the new rising threats to the world.

When nightmarish scenes of what appears to be the annihilation of an alien civilization start broadcasting on every television, radio, cell phone and computer in the world, Nick Fury (leader of The Ultimates) tracks it down to an area of Russia called Tunguska. Gathering a small strike team of Captain America and the Black Widow, Fury goes to investigate. He also contacts an operative named Sam Wilson, who was investigating the Amazon River Basin using his remarkable flying wing-pack, to join the strike team.

The strange scenes were also broadcast into the minds of psychics across the planet-- psychics like Charles Xavier and Jean Grey of The X-Men. Xavier has also pinpointed the source to Tunguska.



S t a n L e e p r e s e n t s :  
**ULTIMATE NIGHTMARE**

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Tunguska?

How would you put it?  
Tunguska is the outback.



It was only lightly populated even before the explosion.

I think some of the tribes out there still, you know, catch their own food.

You mean people don't even have tractors?

Listen, that whole area was sealed off by an Evenk shaman-chief for fifty years because he believed it to be, seriously, "enchanted."

If someone deep in the Tunguskan forest, in an Evenk tribe or something, has gone full-blown-- there is going to be no coping mechanism for them.



The best that could happen is that they might be seen as the local version of a cunning-man or wisewoman.



The tone of their broadcast suggests that the best is not happening.

So you say.

I've placed the source of the signal against global positioning and have a location accurate to a square mile.

You're to prepare the X-Jet for launch. Whoever this poor soul is, I want him brought back here.

They deserve more than, at best, being able to tell people where the good fish are. And, as Piotr says, the best case scenario is unlikely.

Rescue this poor dreamer, my X-Men.



We're on the site, sir, but there's no sign of Wilson.

Hold that damn thing still, could you?

Who's that?



This is Wilson, soldier. Hold the chopper steady or else I'm going to go right into the blades on approach.

Where are you?

Look down. And step back.



My God.







Elsewhere...



You ever been to Tunguska, Peter?

No. Like I said, it's the outback.

Besides, it's...it's strange ground, you know?



How do you mean?

You know something exploded over Tunguska a hundred years ago, right?

Heard of it, sure.

Not me. What exploded?

Nobody knows. Maybe a meteorite. There's freaks in Moscow who say it was a spaceship--our version of the people who put tinfoil in their hats to keep the alien mind beams out.

But something blew up over Tunguska. Flattened a hundred square miles of forest.





They say the shockwave was felt in London.

For months afterwards, there was an aurora borealis over half the world at night.

It took us twenty years to get an expedition out there. I mean, that's how far out it is.



What people say is... the forest grew back wrong. Trees and plants were different.

There's a heavy level of mutation in the natural world there. That's why people don't talk about it.

No one wants to be too interested in mutation, you know?

Oh, I know.



Ah, hell.

Whatever exploded--and it went off like a nuke--it threw radiation everywhere.

So, after a few generations, a mutant broadcasting out of Tunguska? Not outside the realm of possibility.

That's not what bugs me.



Whatever we can figure out, someone else can figure out.

What bugs you, Logan? I mean, everything bugs you. But what's bugging you right this second?

What bugs me is that we ain't geniuses.

What bugs me is that there's no way in hell we're the only ones taking a trip to the countryside.





Sir.

I hate to be the one to break it to you, but you left the Army, Sam.

Force of habit, General, sir.



You're a good boy. This is the rest of the team for this mission.

Sam Wilson, meet codename Black Widow, our Russian specialist.

And I guess you've heard of Captain America, right?



Sir.

Stand at ease, son. Why'd you leave the armed forces?

I felt I had more to do out in the world, sir.

Mm-hmm.



Sam, let's get down to it. I want your take on this thing. Did ops bring you up to speed?

Your ops people put the TV footage on my phone, yeah. How widespread is this thing?

Worldwide, Sam. And people are starting to freak out.



I'll bet. You couldn't design a better psychological warfare attack if you tried.

You think that's what it is?

I think that's why you're mobilized, sir.



But no, I don't think it is.

I think the effect is purely accidental.

"Black Widow"... do I have to call you that?



Nick?

You're not cleared for real names, Sam.

Excuse me, General, but if I'm on a S.H.I.E.L.D. Helicruiser for a black ops mission into the middle of Russia, I think I'm cleared for whatever I damn well please.



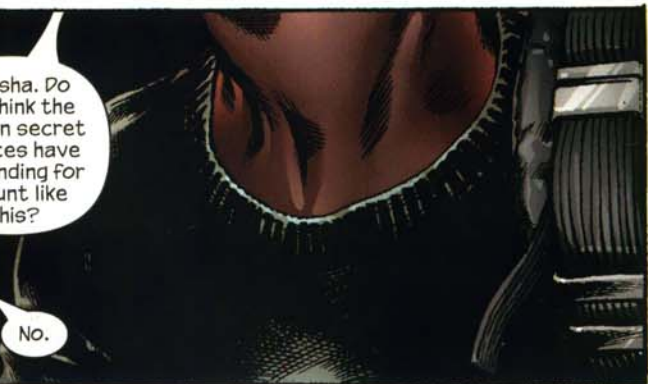
Sir.



Natasha.

Natasha. Do you think the Russian secret services have the funding for a stunt like this?

No.



No. At the height of the Cold War, they were limited to short-range radio and microwave transmission.

On the best day of our lives, General, could we take control of every communications device on Earth?

We're working on it.



Has anyone talked to a psychic about this?

S.H.I.E.L.D. Psi-Division is shut down.

Okay, so, ignoring that, someone in the middle of nowhere has a technology no one's ever heard of, right?



Right.

And I bet you Putin's acting like he's got no idea what's going on.

Right.



The Tunguska taiga is no-man's land, sir. And the Russians can barely keep their space-launch bases open. What's happening here is outside the box.

Mr. Wilson, I think it's important to bear in mind that Russian intelligence has always been boxes within boxes.

It's entirely possible that Putin doesn't know about this because he was never supposed to know.



No, right, I believe him.

In any case, this isn't psywar. Not deliberate psywar.

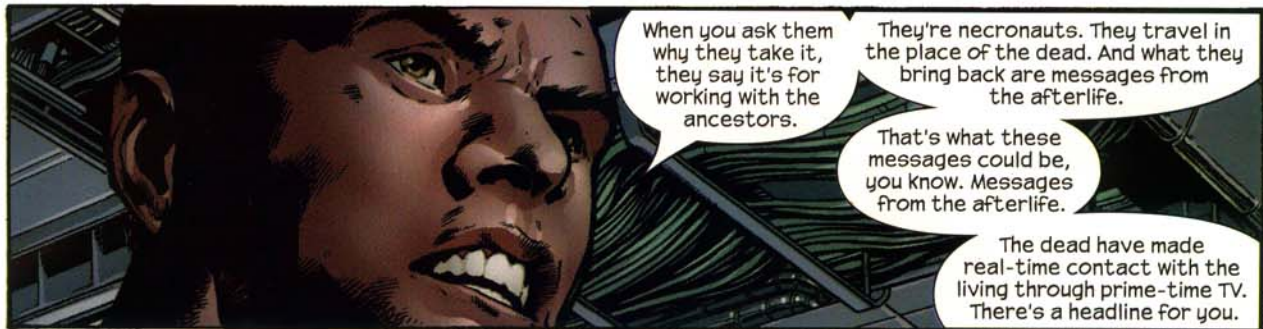
What interests me is that these take the form of messages from the dead. It's kind of why I was in the Amazon.



Down there are people called *ayahuasqueros*. Tribal doctors, mystics, medicine men.

They take this stuff called ayahuasca, this awful muck they brew up out of vines and stuff.

It's a psychedelic. They hallucinate all over the place--but it's their belief that the visions are actually another dimension.



When you ask them why they take it, they say it's for working with the ancestors.

They're necronauts. They travel in the place of the dead. And what they bring back are messages from the afterlife.

That's what these messages could be, you know. Messages from the afterlife.

The dead have made real-time contact with the living through prime-time TV. There's a headline for you.



The dead appear on American TV all the time. I've seen game shows.

They told me you were a scientist-type, Mr. Wilson. What were you doing down in the jungle with the loincloth brigade?

Um... do I call you Captain?



Cap is fine.

Cap, you're a machine. I'm a machine. Our parts are made out of water and meat and minerals, but we're walking pieces of engineering.

Everything's a machine. Plants, everything.



When we eat a plant, we disassemble it, junk what we don't want and plug the parts we need into our machine.

What if these jungle drugs are machines we can ride?



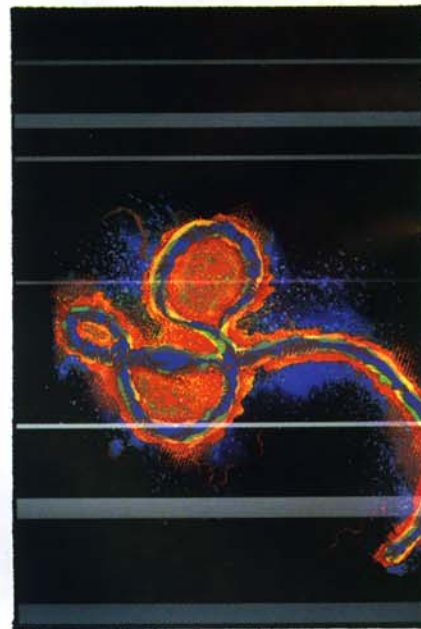
I'm on a S.H.I.E.L.D. retainer. If I come up with anything good, S.H.I.E.L.D. gets a shot at it.

I've seen dead soldiers, Cap. What if I could make a chemical machine that brought them back?



...  
...Damn.

Call me Steve.





Sir, we have long-range geophysics results on the target area.

It's not good.

Let's see them, son.



This is the ground-zero region in low-level resistivity. The basic shape of the area.



This is the high-power scan. This is what's underneath Tunguska.

It's two miles long on each side.

An underground complex?

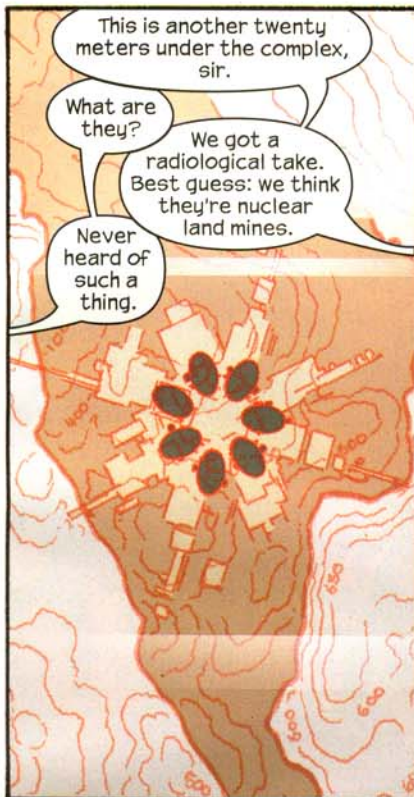


Is there a way in?

There appear to be several entrances. We're approaching from the south: it'll bring us right over one.

Sir. It gets worse.





This is another twenty meters under the complex, sir.

What are they?

We got a radiological take. Best guess: we think they're nuclear land mines.

Never heard of such a thing.



The British developed one in the 1950s, sir. It's entirely possible that the Russians obtained the specs.

Almost certainly. We owned British intelligence in the fifties. What's the trigger?

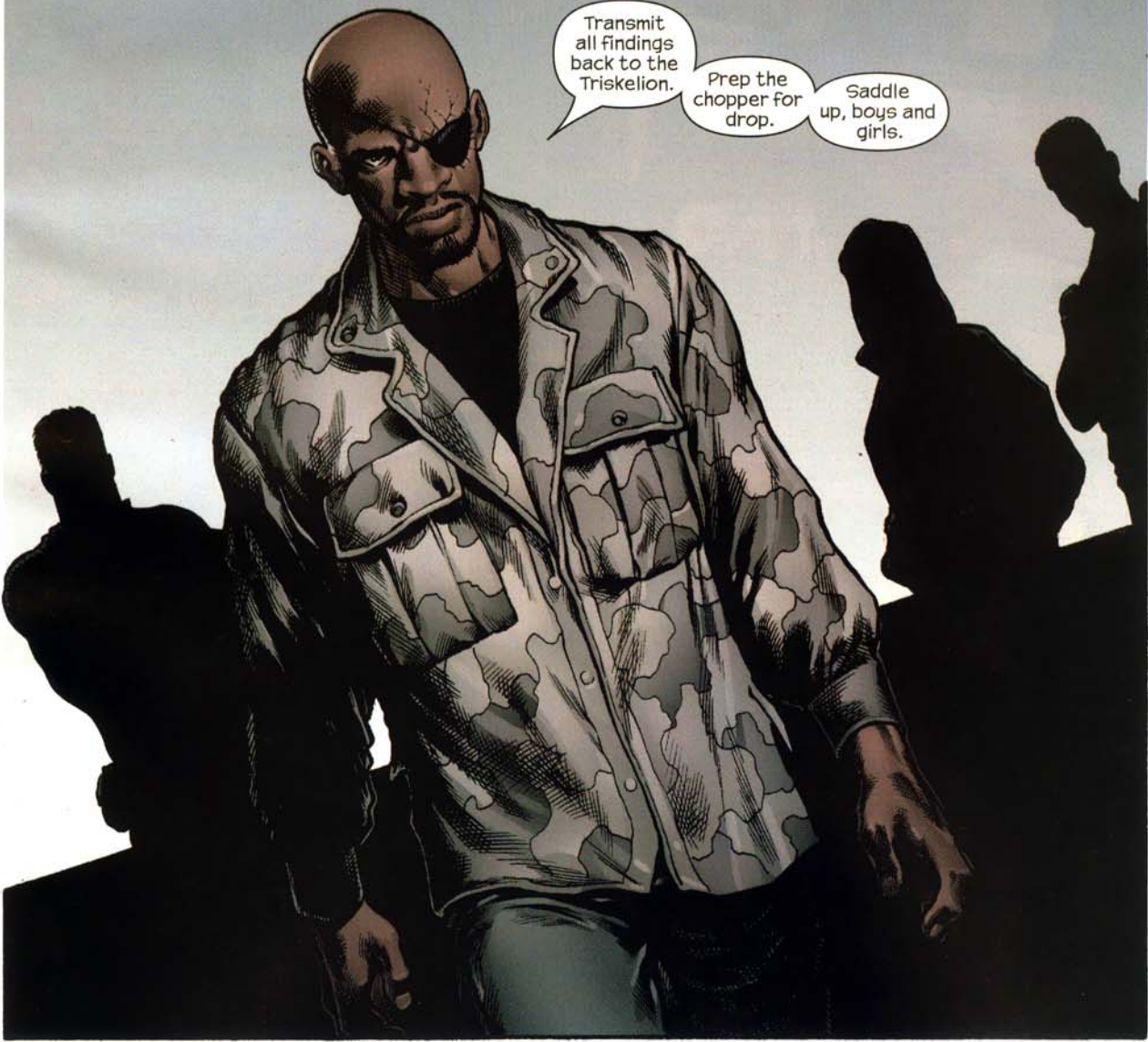


Provided the powerpacks on the trigger mechanisms haven't rotted out? Probably a primitive form of radio frequency I.D.

The ops team advise radio silence when you go in, sir. Just in case--

--just in case our radios accidentally trigger nuclear land mines.

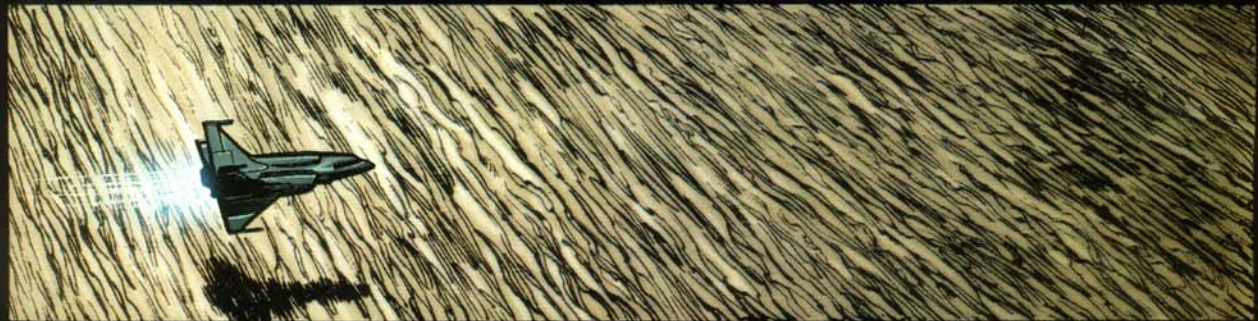
Terrific.

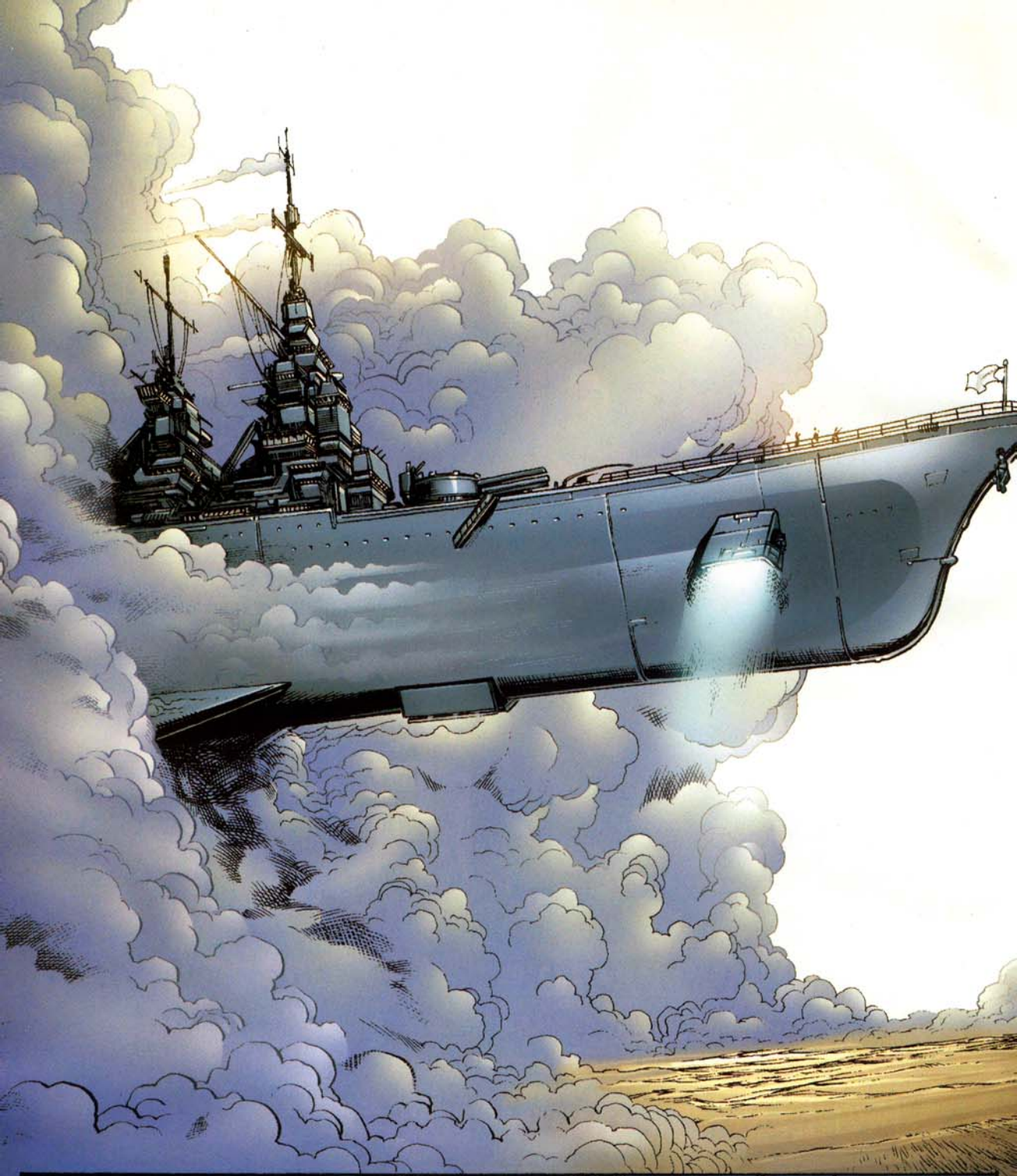


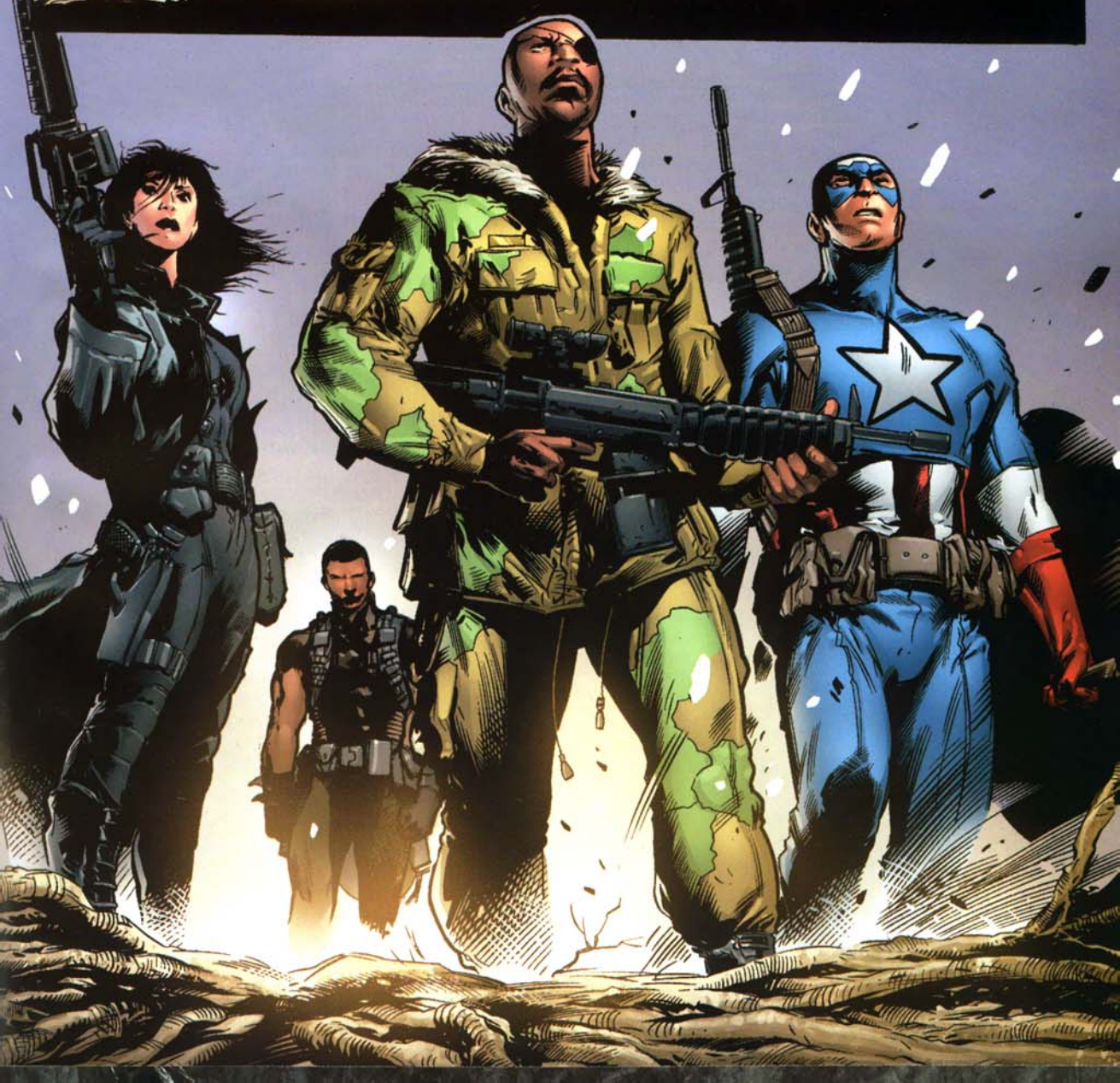
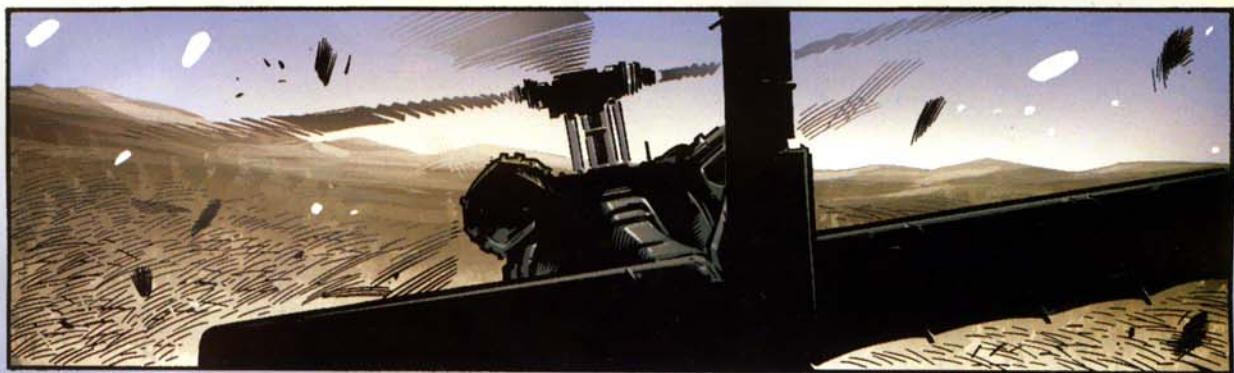
Transmit all findings back to the Triskelion.

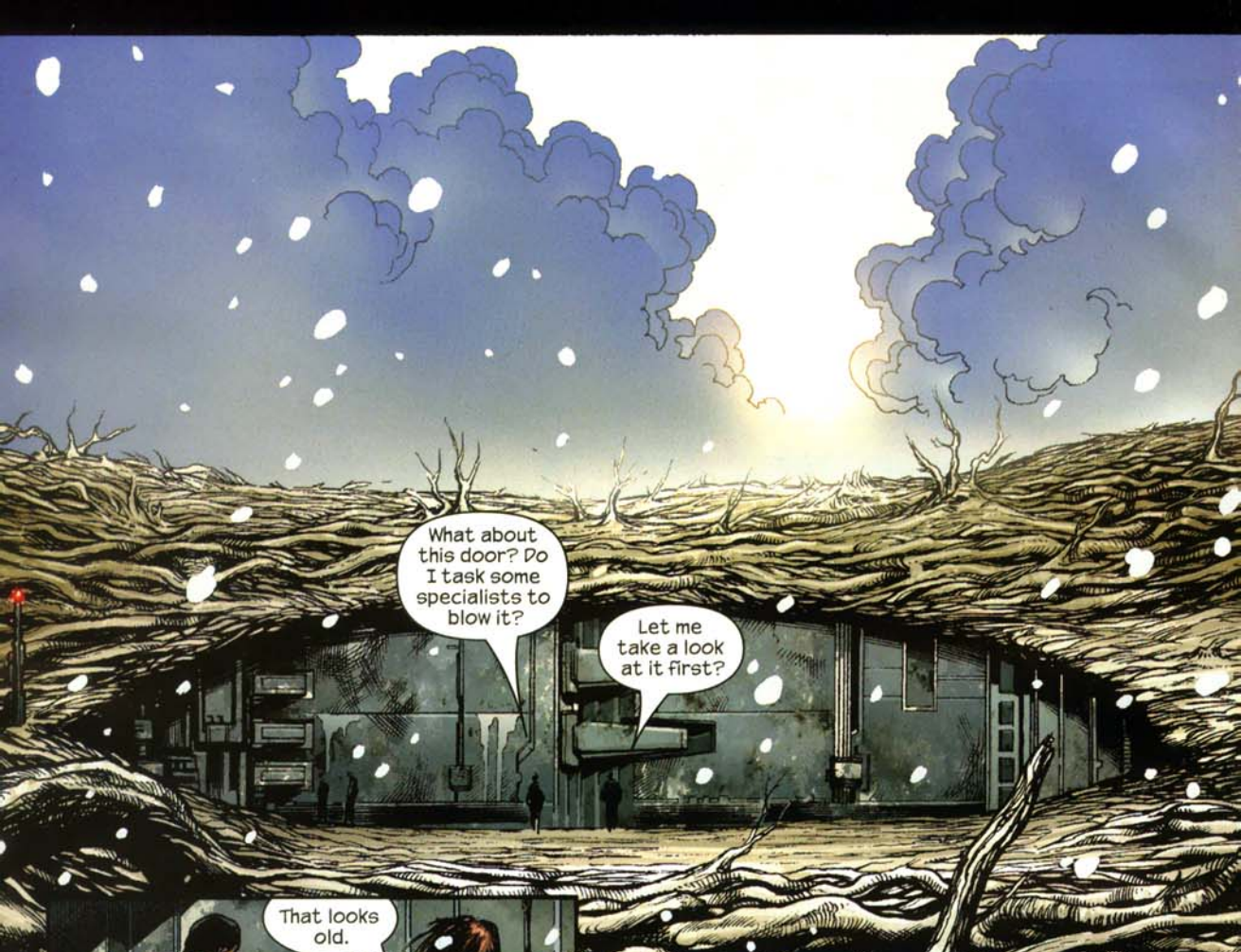
Prep the chopper for drop.

Saddle up, boys and girls.









What about this door? Do I task some specialists to blow it?

Let me take a look at it first?



That looks old.

It is. 1980s at best.

And it's not powered. This is going to take a minute.



If it's not powered... how are they getting in and out?

They're not. If it's unpowered, then there's no one in here.

Which is kind of interesting, isn't it?



If this was a Soviet government asset, things start to make sense.

When things collapsed and people stopped getting paid, they just left their stations.

It's entirely possible the staff just locked the place up and went home.



A two-digit code?

No. This is old. Typical Russian, if you don't mind me saying.

An 80s keypad stuck on a 60s computer system. Take two things that work and nail them together.



So you type 99  
for Commit, and  
Return to  
confirm...



Move  
in.





You're sure it's through here?

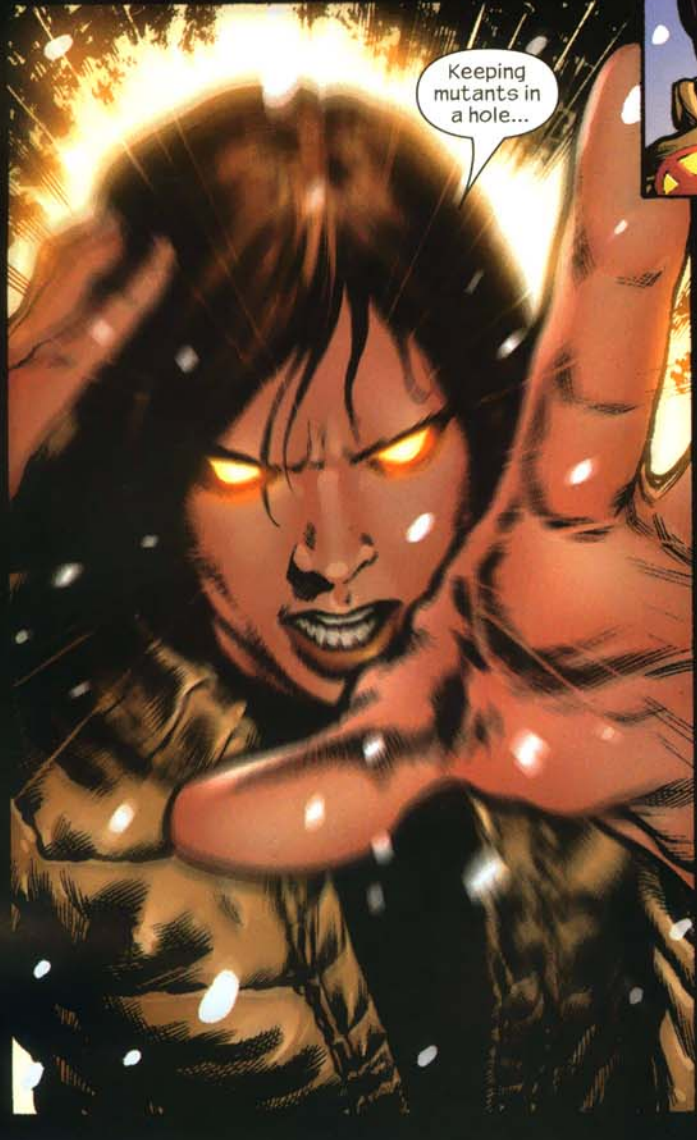
We didn't see any settlements in this direction.

So whoever's broadcasting is doing it from down here.



You want me to get the door?

No. I'm in a mood to do this myself.



Keeping mutants in a hole...









TO BE CONTINUED...