

# AMERICA'S GALACTIC FOREIGN LEGION

## BOOK 7

### ENEMIES



The military science-fiction saga twists like a snake trying to bite its own tail in this seventh installment.

Even the paranoid have enemies. Colonel Joey R. Czerinski knows this, being both paranoid and having enemies himself, some of whom he even calls friends.

While he goes about his usual routine as local Legion commander at the DMZ on planet New Colorado, he also is busy fixing football and baseball games, placing outrageous bets, cheating others, mocking the media, weaseling out of trouble with his superiors, and generally pissing off everyone around him. Foes new and old do their best to exact the revenge they believe he fully deserves. This only confirms Czerinski's motto ... Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they aren't after you.

To complicate matters, the appearance of a new alien species on the galactic horizon threatens to make life even more difficult on planet New Colorado. Can human and spider enemies make a tentative pact to work together and beat back this new threat, as they did the marauding ants? Or is New Colorado doomed to be overrun and exploited in yet another violent contest of superiority?

# **AMERICA'S GALACTIC FOREIGN LEGION**

## **Book 7: Enemies**

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## ~AUTHOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT~

I dedicate ***America's Galactic Foreign Legion*** – ***Book 7: Enemies*** to American hero James Atlee Wheeler. I also wish to thank Penumbra Publishing editor Patricia Morrison for appreciating that humor can be a difficult thing. A special thanks to my son and computer technical adviser Michael Knight.



# AMERICA'S GALACTIC FOREIGN LEGION

**BOOK 7**

*ENEMIES*



*by*

***Walter Knight***





## CHAPTER 1

American technology enabled humanity to colonize space. There was no United Nations effort to reach the stars. Russia, China, and Japan never built starships – they couldn't even get to Mars. Anyone who wants to travel the galaxy, does so on American starships.

And of course, only American military might is capable of defending humanity from the alien empires out there. The first line of defense for humanity is volunteers from the United States Galactic Federation Foreign Legion. The Legion is posted to the very edge of humanity's frontiers.

After a series of wars with the Arthropodan Empire, a peace treaty allowed humans and spiders to share the distant planet of New Colorado. To further interspecies harmony, coexistence, and trade, spiders were now allowed to immigrate to humanity's half of the planet, and were granted U.S.G.F. citizenship. Spiders were even encouraged to enlist in the Foreign Legion. The Arthropodan Empire reciprocated.

Although the two cultures often clash, similarities are striking. Both spiders and humans love fine dining at McDonald's Restaurants, shopping at Walmart, getting a jolt in the morning at Starbucks, gambling at casinos, drinking beer, riding Harleys, playing and watching football, and viewing Satellite TV.

Someday all of New Colorado will be Americanized, but until that day happens, it is my job

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to face down the Arthropodan Empire across the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). I am Colonel Joey R. Czerinski, Hero of the Legion, Butcher of New Colorado, and nemesis of the Anthropodan Empire and all spiders.

The only thing worse than a spider terrorist is a human terrorist. After all, humanity invented terrorism. We know how to do it right. Fortunately, I have already killed most of the human terrorists here on New Colorado. The last significant human leader of the insurgency in my military sector was Danny Jesus Grant. I shot Grant in the head and personally buried him in one of my cemeteries. (A while back, I had invested in upscale high-tech cemeteries. It seemed like a good investment at the time.)

However, informants tell me that Danny Grant is still alive and causing trouble. I don't see how that can be, but I guess rumors are much harder to kill than men.

Grant, a Legion deserter turned drug dealer and bank robber, was particularly dangerous because he was a natural organizer and recruiter. A great public speaker, Grant was loved by all who listened to him. He could mesmerize any crowd. Everyone listening thought Grant's message was directed especially at them.

Perhaps that explains why people are refusing to believe Grant is really dead. Maybe I should not have buried Grant so fast. I should have put him on display and let the desert flies and maggots nibble on him. Grant was no Messiah. He was just a thug and a deserter, and I killed him. Let the dead stay dead. *Good riddance.*

\* \* \* \* \*



Danny Grant did not die. He could hear familiar voices coming from aboveground. Someone even called out his name. Grant pushed a fist up through the soft dirt to the fresh air. A rat, startled by the sudden displacement of dirt under its burrow, scrambled to get away. Grant snatched the rat as it fled across his face, and bit into its soft belly. The warm wet flesh brought renewed strength, but Grant needed more. Now sitting still half covered with dirt, he looked about, seeking help.

“Danny!” exclaimed Al Turner, one of Grant’s former insurgent cohorts. “You’re alive? But the Legion executed and buried you! How could you come back from the dead?”

“It’s no big deal,” answered Grant, still shivering from the cold ground, and spitting out dirt. “I feel fine, except that I’m real thirsty.”

“It is a big deal,” insisted Turner, handing Grant a water bottle. “You rose from the dead just like Jesus. It’s a miracle. God has touched you.” Turner dropped to his knees.

Robert Acosta, another insurgent, backed away and crossed himself. “He is a blood-crazed, *Night of the Living Dead* zombie,” accused Acosta, holding out a small gold crucifix from a neck chain for protection. “Stay away! Chupacabra!”

Grant gave the miracle angle some thought as he finished gulping down the bottled water. It was more likely that an embedded human growth hormone microchip in his brain prioritized bodily resources, and made repairs from unneeded tissue. Grant would not be surprised if he no longer had an appendix or ear lobes as his body found sources for replacement tissue. He touched his ears to check. His steel stud

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and ears were still present. Or, maybe the bullet just bounced off his thick skull. Grant could see how others might think they had witnessed a miracle. *How might their superstition be useful?* he thought. Grant ran his fingers over the lettering of his tombstone. 'DANNY JESUS GRANT: Killed by the Legion.' For sure, Grant knew he was not a blood-crazed zombie like Acosta suggested. He would put an end to that speculation now.

"The Legion buried me alive," said Grant. "Colonel Czerinski shot me and buried me alive. Both will pay dearly for this atrocity!"

\* \* \* \* \*

"Someone vandalized the grave site of your old nemesis," commented Major Lopez, as he drove our jeep to the cemetery. "I thought you might be interested."

"Which nemesis is that?" I asked. "I have killed so many."

"Danny Grant," replied Major Lopez. "Someone dug him up and stole the body."

"I knew I should have buried him deeper or cremated the fool. That's what I get for being cheap. No wonder there are so many rumors about Grant still being alive. It was probably insurgents wanting to make an imprint memorial of his brain. Ha! Too bad for them. They waited too long to dig Grant up. The brain is decayed and eaten by worms by now."

"It might have been coyotes or wolves scavenging for food," suggested Major Lopez as we walked to the grave site. "We found fresh blood on the tombstone, and the entrails and tail of a rat in the dirt."

"No," I reasoned. "Scavengers would have left

messy body parts. The whole body is missing.”

“But insurgents only need the head for an imprint memorial. Maybe it was medical students. I hear cadavers are worth a lot of money these days.”

“There is no shortage of fresh cadavers on New Colorado. Maybe the insurgents were just squeamish about cutting off the head. Or maybe it was just souvenir hunters. Grant’s body will probably turn up in someone’s freezer or in the trash.”

“Or in one of those ‘See the Thing’ roadside tourist attractions,” offered Major Lopez. “Are you sure Grant is dead?”

“Of course Grant is dead. No one can survive being shot in the head. I killed him myself. Grant was cold, decaying meat when I put him in the ground. End of story.”

Major Lopez stared incredulously at the scar on my forehead. I ignored his stare and refused to recall my own miraculous recovery from death on Mars after being shot in the head by loan shark Bubba Jones. My resurrection was the result of recently having a longevity chip imbedded in my body. I was sure Grant could not have had a similar chip imbedded, because shortly after my acquisition, that technology was banned by the government.

“But look at the grave,” Major Lopez insisted. “The dirt looks like someone pushed their way up. No one dug up this grave.”

I studied the tombstone’s inscription, ‘DANNY JESUS GRANT: Killed by the Legion.’ “Grant did not rise from this grave. Someone dug him up. It may even have been grave robbers, or cemetery employees looking for jewelry. Some drug addicts will do anything for quick cash. I’ll talk to the cemetery manager to see if anyone suspicious has been

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hanging around, casing the place.”

Major Lopez collected the rat's tail as evidence. He also collected a blood sample for DNA from a hand print left on the tombstone. The DNA would be checked against citizenship files. Lopez photographed the bloody fingerprints and entered them into the Galactic Database. The prints matched Grant's.

“It's just not possible,” I objected. “When I kill someone, they stay dead.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Even paranoid people have enemies. But, I don't worry that much about my many enemies. It's my friends that worry me most, because friends are close enough to kill me at any time. If Danny Grant is not dead, fine. I will kill him later. But what shall I do about Major Lopez? I suspect that Lopez spies for the spiders. But how do I prove a decorated Hero of the Legion has turned traitor for money? The matter is further complicated by the fact that Major Lopez is my best friend, my most competent commander, and a close business associate. For now, I manage Lopez by keeping him close and keeping him busy. I suspect I will still have to shoot him someday, but for now I would rather postpone that unpleasant task. Besides, shooting Lopez isn't so easy, and could be hazardous for one's health. If I try it, I'd better not miss.



## CHAPTER 2

“I want Colonel Czerinski killed,” fumed the spider commander of the New Gobi Desert Military Sector. “Czerinski is responsible for arming human insurgents, and his rogue activities have to be stopped.”

“Czerinski stopped arming insurgents a long time ago,” commented Major Lopez, deciding not to add that the activity had been his personal pet project – not Czerinski’s. “The Legion now hunts them down. There is no reason for you to hold a grudge for so long.”

“No longer arming the insurgents? Ha! What about Danny Grant?” asked the spider commander. “The Legion had Grant in custody, and Colonel Czerinski assured me the terrorist would be executed. But you let him go! Just today I reviewed a surveillance video of Grant brazenly robbing a bank right here in New Gobi City. Explain that!”

“Colonel Czerinski shot Grant in the head and buried him,” answered Major Lopez. “I saw it happen. I was there.”

“Your own words admit complicity in allowing Grant to escape imperial justice,” accused the spider commander. “Your lies are unacceptable.”

“The matter is being investigated,” explained Major Lopez. “I have been personally looking into it. If Grant is still alive, which I doubt, I will find him. Grant is an enemy of the Legion, too.”

“I still want Czerinski dead!”

“I will not kill Czerinski,” said Major Lopez. “I

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don't mind passing along information to you once in a while, but murdering my commanding officer is way too risky for what you pay me."

"With Czerinski gone, you would be promoted to take his place," advised the spider commander. "Think of how much graft and corruption you could bring in then. Besides, Czerinski has been holding you back because you are a threat to his authority. You are a hero of the Legion. You should have been considered for promotion to general a long time ago."

"I will not kill Czerinski," repeated Major Lopez.

"Fine!" said the spider commander. "Just give me Czerinski's daily itinerary, and I will kill him myself during one of his troop inspections along the DMZ. It shouldn't be that difficult."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Let's go inspect the troops," I suggested.

"I thought you weren't going to do that until this afternoon," replied Major Lopez. "The quartermaster is expecting you at the warehouse right after breakfast."

"The supply geeks can wait," I said. "I want to tour the border-crossing checkpoints to make sure legionnaires are watching for Danny Grant, should he attempt a crossing. Did you know Grant robbed a bank on the spider side yesterday?"

"Yes, I heard," said Major Lopez. "Mind if I skip the inspection? I have a lot of paperwork to catch up on, and I plan to use all morning to do it."

"How did you know about the robbery?" I asked. "It's not common knowledge yet."

"I am your military intelligence officer. It's my job to know everything."

“Screw your paperwork,” I said. “You are coming along with me for a surprise inspection of the checkpoints. Bring that stack of Grant’s photos along for distribution to the guards.”

We walked from Legion Headquarters to New Gobi City’s main border crossing. Corporal Guido Tonelli was supervising searches of trucks. His monitor dragon, Spot, was sniffing for drugs and Big Macs. At the same time, Guido was receiving calls for his thriving sports bookie business. He had managed to get financial backing from an arm of the Bonanno family repatriated to New Memphis after the spiders executed vice kingpin Saviano Juardo.

Perennial favorite Seattle Seahawks were eight-point pick to beat the Miami Dolphins in next week’s Super Bowl. “Guido, put me down for five thousand on Miami,” I said, as I returned his salute. “This is going to be easy money.”

“Are you crazy?” asked Guido. “Everyone is betting on Seattle to three-pete. Even the spiders are betting heavy on Seattle.”

“What do spiders know about football?” I motioned for Guido to follow me inside the air-conditioned guard shack. “I’ll take the eight points and Miami any day.”

“We don’t have time to be hanging out at Guido’s shack all day,” complained Major Lopez, staying outside. “There is a lot of ground to cover if we are going to check all the border crossings before lunch.”

“If you want to stay out in 110-degree heat, go ahead. I’m going to be enjoying Guido’s new air conditioner. Sometimes I think you’re wound way too tight, Lopez.”

I handed Guido a photo of Danny Grant robbing the First Arthropodan Bank of New Gobi City. Grant

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had not even bothered to wear a mask.

“Grant might try to cross to our side of the DMZ,” I explained. “Make sure your squad is alert and watching for him.”

“I already got the memo on Grant,” replied Guido, as he answered another gambling call on the communication device in his ear. “Seven thousand credits on Seattle? You haven’t paid up on last week’s losses. Do I have to break your thumb to get you current? I’m not a credit agency.”

“Focus Guido!” I said. “Get off the phone. It is important we catch Grant. The spiders are real upset that he escaped our custody.”

“The spiders are going to be upset if they don’t get their bets in on time,” commented Guido. “I thought Grant was executed. How did you let him get away this time?”

“Just keep a close eye out for him!” I ordered.

“Don’t worry, sir. Grant won’t pass through here.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Atop the Marriott Hotel on the Arthropodan side of the border, a spider sniper team was alerted to watch for the Legion commander at the crossing below. The spider sniper could see two Legion officers talking to the border guards, but the Legion commander would not stay still. Also, a guard stood in front of the Legion commander, obscuring a clear shot. The sniper thought about punching a hole in the guard, too. A high velocity round could easily go through the guard, killing them both.

But the guard was Guido. The sniper had just placed seven thousand credits with Guido on the



Seahawks to win the Super Bowl. It would not do to shoot the only bookie in the DMZ.

“What are you waiting for?” asked the spotter. “Shoot!”

“I cannot get a clear shot,” replied the sniper. “I might hit the guard instead of my target.”

“So!” complained the spotter. “Waste them all! What difference does it make? We will not get another chance like this to kill the Legion commander.”

“But that is Guido blocking my shot,” said the sniper. “They just went inside anyway.”

“Oh,” sighed the spotter. “You’re right. We cannot shoot Guido. Not yet, anyway. I still need to make back the money I lost on last week’s game. I borrowed ten thousand credits, and I’m betting it all on the Seahawks this time.”

“Good move. That’s where the smart money is.”

\* \* \* \* \*

As I talked to Guido, I watched Major Lopez pacing back and forth just outside the guard shack. He was sweating profusely from the heat.

“If you aren’t careful, spider snipers might pick you off,” I called out to Lopez. “You should come inside.”

“Snipers?” asked Major Lopez. “What do you know about snipers?”

“I know they would love the chance to nail a Legion officer,” I commented.

“Nonsense,” said Major Lopez. “We are not at war. Hostilities have ended.”

“They might mistake you for me,” I added. “Some of those spiders are still upset. But they won’t get me. I’m too careful.”

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"Paranoid bastard," mumbled Lopez as he entered the guard shack.

I watched him scan the rooftops on the spider side. The Marriott Hotel was a prime location to position a sniper. But the tinted windows of the guard shack provided cover. *Maybe*.

Lopez ducked down behind the cement wall of the shack and found a chair. "No one wants to start another war."

"As long as Danny Grant is still alive, we *are* at war," I responded. "If he is not dead, we need to find him and finish the job."

"Maybe you're right," said Major Lopez. "Let's take the tunnel to the next checkpoint. I don't like how exposed we are here."

"And you call me paranoid!" I teased, laughing. "I will not be a tunnel rat."

"We will take the tunnel," insisted Major Lopez. "It needs to be inspected, anyway."



### CHAPTER 3

“With all this money from the bank job, we should flee to the independent side of New Colorado,” suggested Al Turner. “There is no reason for the insurgency to continue the fight. We won.”

“Maybe I just like to rob banks,” replied Grant. “I have unfinished business here. First we will cross the MDL and kill Czerinski. Only then will I travel to the Free Coloradan Republic. This planet isn’t big enough for the two of us.”

“Maybe we should just buy passage to Mars,” replied Turner. “I hear Czerinski isn’t all that easy to kill.”

“Even the whole galaxy isn’t big enough for Czerinski and me,” said Grant. “Are you with me or not?”

“I’m with you,” answered Turner. “We have been through a lot together, and you have never been wrong. I’m just making sure you have thought out all our options, now that we are flush with cash.”

Their truck slowly approached the border checkpoint at Gila City. Grant knew the legionnaire at the gate from basic training years ago. He slipped the guard an envelope stuffed with cash, and was immediately waved through with no search or ID check.

Grant and Turner drove under the cover of night through the American side of New Gobi City, finally stopping at Blind Tiger Tavern. It was rumored that Czerinski spent a lot of time there, and might even be a part owner. After hanging around until closing time

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and not seeing Czerinski, Grant decided to rob the Blind Tiger. He pretended to be passed out at a table, while Turner and Acosta hid in toilet stalls. After the doors were locked, the bouncers were preoccupied trying to wake up Grant. Turner and Acosta burst out of the restrooms, brandishing AK-47's. Grant pointed a pistol at the largest bouncer. They herded the employees up against a wall. Grant thought about shooting them all, but noticed one of the waitresses was pregnant. *Too messy*, he thought, although he usually was not so squeamish.

He ordered the manager to open the safe, and took the cash. As they left, Grant gave the one-finger salute to the video surveillance camera by the front door, sending a clear message to Czerinski: Danny Grant was back from the dead!

\* \* \* \* \*

Spider bandit leader Mountain Claw cut through the fence at a construction site on the edge of Gila City. Dressed in black and looking like ninjas, Mountain Claw's gang hot-wired a loader and stole all the equipment they could carry. Using the loader's shovel, Mountain Claw smashed down the rest of the fence and drove into Gila City.

Mountain Claw crashed into the front of a grocery store, ripping an ATM off its foundation. He raced down the highway with the ATM in the clutches of the loader, and headed straight for the safety of his stronghold in the hills.

"Where are you taking me?" asked the ATM. "You should drive more carefully. Your reckless driving could kill us all. I will bet you don't even have a driver's license."

“What?” replied Mountain Claw. “You speak?”

“Of course I speak,” said the ATM. “I am an advanced model self-powered United States Galactic Federation Foreign Legion Recruitment ATM. It is a capital offense to interfere with my operation in any manner, especially during time of hostilities. Put me down at once!”

“Shut up, you worthless scrap of tin,” said Mountain Claw. “I intend to crack you open like an egg shell and take your cash.”

“You are such a rube,” said the ATM. “How do you expect to get away with this? My GPS tracking has already alerted the Legion to your location.”

Mountain Claw pulled over to the side of the road, intending to toss the ATM off the edge of a cliff. The plan was to smash the ATM on the rocks below, to release the treasure inside. Suddenly, the soft ground on the edge of the cliff gave way. The loader tipped over the edge and fell into the canyon below, taking the ATM and Mountain Claw with it. Mountain Claw was seriously injured and trapped in the cab of the loader. He looked up to see a Legion helicopter gunship circling above, shining its spotlight on the wreckage. Mountain Claw’s ninja conspirators fled the scene, leaving him to be caught by the Legion.

“Are you still alive?” asked the ATM.

“Just barely,” answered Mountain Claw. “I’ll be okay once the bleeding stops, and my exoskeleton is duct-taped back together.”

“What were you thinking?” asked the ATM. “You cannot just steal a Legion ATM.”

“It seemed like a good idea at the time.” Mountain Claw sighed. “I miscalculated.”

“I hope you have a good medical plan,” commented the ATM. “You do not look well.”

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"We spiders are resilient," said Mountain Claw, trying to sound cheerful. "But, no matter. I expect to be executed shortly by the Legion. I will never see the inside of a hospital. This is the end for me."

"Have you ever thought about joining the Foreign Legion?" asked the ATM. "The Legion has an excellent medical plan and benefits."

"Are your circuits defective?" asked Mountain Claw. "The Legion wants to kill me!"

"One way or another, your life of petty crime just came to an end," commented the ATM. "Lucky for you, I have pressing recruitment quotas to meet. I am willing to offer you a generous enlistment bonus – minus the damage you caused tonight, of course – if you enlist now. Put your claw on my identification tray pad to certify your contract."

"No way."

"I'll throw in an authentic driver's license."

Mountain Claw could see flashlights flickering from the bluff above, as legionnaires descended into the canyon. He stretched his claw out to the pad. A pin pricked his claw, drawing a blood sample for DNA identification and inserting a tracking chip.

"Was that really necessary?" asked Mountain Claw. "I'm already running out of blood."

"Do not be such a sissy," said the ATM. "I am issuing you Legion identification and a copy of your enlistment contract. You will report for duty immediately at Legion Headquarters in New Gobi City – if you survive your hospitalization. This will be your last chance to make something of yourself. Do not screw it up!"

"Whatever," said Mountain Claw, about to pass out. "Screw the Legion. I'm going to die here anyway."

"You will need a new name," added the ATM.

“It’s a Legion tradition for fugitives like you.”

“I like my name,” said Mountain Claw. “Just kill me if I have to change it.”

“And skew my recruitment quota?” scoffed the ATM. “Not on your life. Fine. Keep your name.”

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Major Lopez shined his flashlight on Mountain Claw’s face. Legion enlistment papers and driver’s license lay on the ground next to a Legion identification card. “Mountain Claw,” read Major Lopez, picking up the ID. “What an idiot. Is this what the Legion is coming to? We’re recruiting fools and drunk drivers? The Legion has been going downhill ever since we let spiders in.”

“I guess he just wanted one last fling before he reported for duty,” commented Sergeant Green. “Don’t worry. I’ll whip him into shape – or else.”

“Why is he dressed like a ninja?” asked Major Lopez, directing his question to Private John Iwo Jima Wayne. Wayne was one of the Legion’s many spider legionnaires. He had been busted back to private from corporal several times for fighting, and once for kidnapping Colonel Czerinski.

“Because he is a retard,” replied Private Wayne. “Kill him now and save us the trouble of having to do it later.”

“That’s not very enlightened of you,” replied Major Lopez, assisting the medics in pulling Mountain Claw out of the wreckage. “Isn’t he a fellow spider? Soon you will be brothers at arms.”

“He is a fool, no matter what species he belongs to,” said Private Wayne. “And he is not my brother. I will slit his throat myself if you human pestilence are

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too squeamish to do it.”

“Enough!” said Major Lopez. *Insubordinate and disrespectful spiders are a pain in the ass*, thought Lopez to himself, as he tore up Mountain Claw’s driver’s license. “Load this spider and fly him to the hospital!”

“What about the ATM?” asked Private Wayne.

“Is there any money still in it?” asked Major Lopez, now interested in the ATM.

“Don’t even think about it, Major Lopez,” said the ATM. “You have come a long way. You do not want to end your career on federal theft charges. By the way, aren’t you about due for reenlistment?”

“Throw that mouthy ATM in the river,” ordered Major Lopez. “It’s damaged beyond repair.”

“What about the money inside?” asked Sergeant Green. “We can’t just leave it.”

“Fine!” said Major Lopez. “Bring in a salvage tanker and pull it out of the canyon.”

“Thank you,” said the ATM. “You are too kind. You’re an officer and a gentleman.”

“And shoot its squawk box. This one talks too much.”



