

## Sky Raiders

### 3.1 History

Colonel Virgil Duray served his country with distinction for close to two decades. First as an Army Ranger and then in the elite Meta Force anti-super villain unit, Col. Duray led his men into countless dangerous situations and always came out victorious. A fervent traditionalist and devout believer in codes military honor and traditional American values, Virgil Duray is that last person you'd expect to go rogue. But then again, it's often the zealous traditionalists who are among the first to crack when the world takes an unexpected turn.

The Joint Command Special Threat Response Battalion (JCSTRB), nicknamed Meta Force by its members, was the U.S. military's most recent response to the threat posed by super powered villains and other so-called high power-concentration threats. They received special training, the latest advanced equipment, and worked along side some of the most powerful super powered heroes in the military. From its inception in 1995, Col. Duray was a part of the unit and personally led troops into battle on over 100 missions from 1995 up until the Rikti Invasion. During the Rikti war the Meta Force was at the forefront of the fight, and consequently it suffered terrible losses. Its 85% casualty rate was the highest in the armed forces during the war, including 100% of the team's super powered members.

After the war the survivors, including Col. Duray, were weary and depressed, but ready to fight on. Their unit received upgraded equipment, including newly designed jump packs that would help them fight the Rikti in the air. They were re-imagined as a rapid response force to counter remaining Rikti forces. The unit was now much smaller than it once was, but all the members were combat tested veterans who had fought together throughout the war and were all fanatically loyal to Col. Duray. As for the Colonel himself, he accepted his new assignment stoically, but he was growing uncomfortable. He resented the fact that the world had to rely on heroes, not the military to win the war against the Rikti. He also despised the idea that non-U.S. agencies like the Vanguard and other foreign influences. The Colonel was very uncomfortable trusting so much to foreign nationals and civilian heroes with no chain of command or discipline. The night before Duray's new squad was set to deploy he received a knock at his door. He woke up to find a package of files, photos, and computer disks on his front stoop. He spent the next six hours pouring through every document, horrified at what he saw. The package contained seemingly incontrovertible proof that the Freedom Phalanx had been responsible for starting the Rikti War and that they had done so as a conscious grab for power. Over the next two weeks Duray followed up every lead he could, and always the package's information proved accurate, even about the most top-secret information. Duray had no choice but to believe it was true. Finally, he shared his findings with his top officers and NCO's. They all agreed, their country and the entire world had been betrayed, sold out to the super powered men and women who had now set themselves up as the ultimate power in the country. When, a day later, the order came down that Duray's unit was to be transferred under the direct command of the hero controlled Vanguard, that was the final straw.

Duray and his men never reported to their new duty station. When the commanding officer of the base sent someone around to find the colonel, she discovered that the entire unit had disappeared, along with all of their equipment. Duray and his men had gone AWOL, taking several billion dollars of experimental high tech weapons systems with them. Thus the Sky Raiders were born, and soon made their presence felt in the city.

Duray retained a network of both retired and active military contacts, many of them sympathetic to his new situation. Duray and company picked pseudonyms and took to calling themselves the Sky Raiders. Through Duray's contacts they began hiring themselves out as mercenaries, specializing in working for conservative and corporate interests around the country. These mercenary activities funded their continued existence and allowed them to pursue their more personal goals: the elimination of any foreign military or super powered presence in America

and the cowering of the costumed heroes who did not work directly for the government of the United States, particularly the vigilante heroes that plagued the skies over America's great cities.

The Sky Raiders' first few raids on heroes were deadly affairs. The strike teams used their jet packs and sky skiffs to tremendous effect, shooting down a number of flying heroes before they knew what had hit them. For several days no one knew for sure what was going on, but the skies were certainly no longer safe. At this point Col. Duray made a rare mistake and overextended his forces. When a large group of flying heroes banded together to "take back the sky" they managed to catch the Sky Raiders spread across the city and defeated large number of them piecemeal. This disaster probably would've ended the Sky Raiders then and there. Without any capacity to train, and more importantly, equip new soldiers, they were doomed to die out. But of course there was no way for them to make their own jump packs, sky skiffs, and other ultra-modern weapons systems. To do that they needed help.

It was then that a backer stepped forward, a man named Tyrone Lockhart. Mr. Lockhart came to the Sky Raiders through one of Col. Duray's less savory military contacts. He said that he had used intermediaries to hire the Sky Raiders as mercenaries on several operations and was greatly impressed with their performance. He also hinted that he had read some of the same documents that Col. Duray had read about the Freedom Phalanx's involvement in starting the Rikti War. Most importantly however, Tyrone Lockhart owned Lockhart AeroTech, one of the largest and most important defense contractors in the United States. He offered to covertly supply the Sky Raiders with replacements and spare parts for their equipment as well as access to new technologies he was developing. In return they would help him to continue the fight against the corruptive foreign forces that were so intent upon tearing America apart.

Col. Duray and his men were very impressed and fought on with renewed commitment to their cause now that they had such a powerful and firm base of support. They have since grown into a significant threat to Paragon City, which they still consider to be their home base and primary target zone. It has the highest concentration of heroes and Rikti, the two things they hate most in the world. It has also proven very easy for Mr. Lockhart to supply them with new weaponry and recruits as long as they operate out of Paragon City, since he apparently has many ties there. The Sky Raiders do still perform mercenary missions all over the world, usually on the behalf of some corporation or small government that is having a super powered problem of some sort. They always return home though, and continue to haunt the skies over Paragon City, looking for prey.

When Lockhart first approached him, Duray was obviously wary, and did an extensive investigation of the man and his history. Everything checked out and now the two have become good friends. What his research did not reveal is that Lockhart is in every way a servant of Nemesis. The villainous mastermind planned the entire thing from the beginning. Nemesis keeps a close eye on all military and political leaders and marks those who are discontent or who have strong scruples that can be easily manipulated. He saw great potential in Col. Duray, and engineered both his unit's transfer to Vanguard direction and provided him with the package of information about the Freedom Phalanx starting the Rikti war. After all, it was Nemesis himself who set the invasion in motion, so he was ideally placed to frame another.

Nemesis has had control over Lockhart AeroTech since World War II and has always maintained an iron hold over the entire Lockhart family. Tyrone Lockhart, the current owner, is devoted body and soul to serving his master and will do anything asked of him. He provides Nemesis with the perfect lever for controlling the Sky Raiders. For now he lets the group do what it wants – because what it wants is what Nemesis wants. He wants the heroes diminished in power and stature. He wants a renewed vigor for the government and the military industrial complex because he feels he can control them. And when the time comes for his big move, he will fold the Sky Raiders into his own ranks for the final strike on the heroes of Paragon City.

### **3.2 Goals and Beliefs**

The Sky Raiders have one overarching principal: loyalty to each other and to True American Values. True American Values are of course defined by Duray and company and comprise a disturbing mishmash of right wing beliefs and patriotic prattle. They feel that the government has betrayed the people and that the United States has divested itself of its authority and handed the reins over to foreigners and unruly costumed avengers. To them this is a betrayal over everything the American Flag stands for.

The group's main goal then is to eliminate all these evil influences upon America, and as far as they're concerned, the ends justify almost any conceivable means. They are willing to lie to anyone, including themselves, if it helps get the job done. They live in their own little world of conspiracy theories where logic has no place and where only those who agree with them deserve to live.

First among the many targets that they have chosen for themselves are the heroes with super powers. While there might well be some justification to worrying about super powered individuals who answer to no authority when exercising duties commonly regarded as police work, the Sky Raiders have blown these concerns well out of proportion. They think all heroes are bad for America unless they specifically work for the United State Military. But since the whole government and military have been corrupted by foreign influences, even those heroes are now fair game as far as the Sky Raiders are concerned.

Second on the hit list are foreigners. Anyone not born in America to American parents is considered a foreign influence and therefore fair game. The rabid, xenophobic streak in the Sky Raiders' rhetoric is a relatively new development, but it has become an important part of the group's ideology. This belief has been fostered to a certain degree by the group's operations overseas, where they earn a great deal of money by killing peasants and revolutionaries at the behest of dictators and multi-national corporations. The Sky Raiders have had all their prejudices reinforced about the third world and many have taken the horrifying stance that non-Americans are little better than animals.

Third on the hit list are of course liberals. Anyone who is even vaguely left of center is liable to come under direct and deadly attack from the Sky Raiders. They have in the past assassinated several journalists and at least one politician. They are also notoriously loose in their definitions of "liberal" and have attacked individuals that mainstream society would consider very conservative, but who the Sky Raiders see as still too liberal based on their fanatic standards. The Sky Raiders have been particularly vehement in their attacks on anyone proposing peace treaties with the Rikti or any other enemy of foreign origin.

Fourth comes anyone else that they get paid to kill. The Sky Raiders are mercenaries and they have expensive needs. They will, in fact do just about anything to make an easy buck, throwing their principals aside and lying to themselves about the ends justifying the means once again. Their mercenary work mainly involves political assassinations, large scale industrial sabotage, and the suppression of disruptive forces in other countries.

One of the most disturbing recent developments is the strengthening of ties between the Sky Raiders and certain radical elements within the US armed forces. Col. Duray still has many friends in the military, some of which hold similar political views and others who are more concerned about results than politics or morals. The unscrupulous generals find money in their black ops budgets to hire the Sky Raiders to do all the dirty little missions they'd love to do but can't. With each success, the rogue military leaders grow bolder, using the Sky Raiders to not only carry out military ops on American soil, but sometimes even against civilian targets. Duray is especially happy at this development, since he sees it as the first step in a military coup that will some day take back the nation from the liberal traitors who have sold it out.

### **3.3 Behavior Patterns**

The Sky Raiders are at their best in the out doors, where there's plenty of space for them to maneuver around in. But of course the down side to being outside is that everyone can see you if you're not careful. So the Sky Raiders make their bases of operations within tall buildings and sometimes even warehouses with easy access to the air. They avoid underground regions as much as possible, both because of the enclosed spaces and because so many hostile groups are active in the subterranean regions of Paragon City.

As their name suggests, the Sky Raiders are masters of the quick strike raid. They are not interested in holding territory for long periods of time or establishing permanent bases of operation. Their tremendous mobility, recently augmented by long-range teleportation capabilities within Paragon City, allows them to move in and out of the urban environment with relative ease. Even the radar systems built into the war walls have a hard time tracing their stealth equipped aircraft and jet packs.

Whenever possible, the Sky Raiders opt to catch their targets out of doors, where they can use their flight and maneuverability to the greatest advantage. When operating indoors, they usually shed their jetpacks and rely on their teleportation troops and new jump bots to give them the element of surprise. Although they're certainly not cowards, they are not brave to the point of foolishness and will always make a tactical withdrawal when it's appropriate.

When carrying out missions for a paycheck, the Sky Raiders are much more, well, mercenary. They only fight when the odds are in their favor if at all possible. They seldom wish to risk their lives for another's cause. This seldom gets them in trouble, since they rarely take on jobs where they think they might have real difficulties. After all, they're one of the most advanced fighting forces in the world and unless their enemy is alien or has super powers, there's not much they can't defeat.

### **3.4 Friends and Enemies**

The Sky Raiders have very strong feelings about some of the other villain groups operating in Paragon City. They of course hate the Rikti with an burning passion, but they know all too well that they're not strong enough to challenge the aliens unless they catch them in a strategically viable situation. They reluctantly steer clear of the aliens unless an opportunity presents itself. They're unaware, like most people, that the Lost are in fact part of the Rikti hierarchy and so have not brought their animus to bear against the vagrant monsters (although they certainly have no love for them).

The Sky Raiders also hold a special hatred for the Freakshow, which they see as one of the most dangerous and disruptive forces in the city. Their anti-social, often ultra-liberal politics clash violently with the Sky Raiders' own belief system. The two tangle fairly often, although their behavior patterns seldom lead them to cross one another directly.

Criminal groups in general, like gangs and particularly the Tsoo are also seen as a plague by the Sky Raiders, but they are not above working with the syndicates when it suits their purposes. They of course distrust the Tsoo's foreign background and large immigrant membership, and the two clash more often than not.

The Banished Pantheon and the Devouring Earth are viewed as utterly alien and horrifying. They're monster and pests and should be destroyed, but the Sky Raiders are not going to go out of their way to involve themselves in such matters. Far better to let the traitorous heroes spill their own life's blood fighting such monstrosities. Let the two groups kill each other off.

The 5th Column offers an interesting conundrum for the Sky Raiders. Their history of anti-American activities makes them a logical enemy for the Sky Raiders, but these days the two groups seem to have a lot more in common than not. The Sky Raiders have begun to come around to the idea of working with their fellow right-wingers.

Crey Industries probably has the closest ties with the group, although they seldom use them in Paragon City. They do however hire the Sky raiders for numerous missions abroad, especially

in Africa and Asia where Crey has many developing interests. The Sky Raiders respect Crey and are always happy to work for the mega-corporation. As for Nemesis, well, the Sky Raiders have little contact with him, at least as far as they know. Of course he's the one who's really pulling all of the strings, but the Sky Raiders don't realize it. Nemesis' tremendous influence over the group allows him to ensure that their interests never seem to conflict.

The Circle of Thorns is a total mystery to the Freakshow and is, frankly, something they don't think about. Being at their best under an open sky, they have no interest in going down into the depths of some mysterious underground city.

### **3.5 Future Developments**

In the future, once teleportation devices become more commonplace in teams of heroes, the Sky Raiders will come to play a more significant role in the ongoing war to control the teleportation slipstream. They will also develop a new type of unit from accidents that take place in the teleportation process – mutant like creatures who were once soldiers but who have been warped by the imperfect teleportation mechanisms used by the Sky Raiders.

Also at some point in the future the Sky Raiders' close ties to Nemesis will be revealed. This will no doubt cause extreme turmoil within the group, but it should end up with the group being rolled up into Nemesis' organization, much as the Lost are part of the Rikti.