

ARES ASCENDING
Episode 01 "STEEL SOLDIERS"

by
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Draft 2
April 1/08

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FADE IN

TITLE CARD:

1993 NEW YORK, USA WTC BOMBING - Struck by Terrorists
1995 OKLAHOMA, US FEDERAL BUILDING - Struck by a Domestic Terrorist
2000 USS COLE - Struck by Terrorists
2001 NEW YORK, USA WTC TWIN TOWERS - Struck by Terrorists
2002 BALI NIGHTCLUB - Struck by Terrorists
2004 MADRID, SPAIN TRAIN - Struck by Terrorists
2005 LONDON, ENGLAND TUBE - Struck by Terrorists
2009 TORONTO, CANADA PEACE BRIDGE - Struck by Terrorists
2011 SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA HARBOR PORT - Struck by Terrorists
2013 NORTHERN B.C., CANADA FRESH WATER SUPPLY - Struck by Terrorists
2016 NEW YORK, USA SEABROOK NUCLEAR POWER STATION - Struck by Terrorists

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A PROFESSOR (50's), sits behind a desk. He leans forward, speaking emphatically.

PROFESSOR

(to Interviewer, O.S.)

Examine our history. Man tames the horse and we get the cavalry... With the industrial revolution, man creates the automobile and develops mechanized infantry... With the birth of the airplane, the Wright brothers discover flight and within a few short years, the military had developed the first aerial bomber... Soon we have a proliferation of purpose-built aircraft tailored for death and the destruction of infrastructure. We harness the power of the atom and suddenly we can vaporize entire cities. Just like that.

He snaps his fingers.

INSERT FOOTAGE:

- Wild horses dissolve into cavalry
- Model T dissolves into early era tank
- Wright Flyer dissolves into WWI fighter planes
- Spitfire and Lancaster
- Nuclear bomb dissolves to destruction of Hiroshima

PROFESSOR

Then we develop artificial intelligence.

INSERT FOOTAGE:

- Holographic face hovers over an ATM
- Holographic face hovers over a fast food drive through speaker

He leans back.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

I'm not about to say that every time you fill up your car with petrol, you are killing someone on the other side of the planet... I'm not going to say that every time you buy a new piece of technology, you're helping to fund research and development that will create the next generation of automated weapons... These are not quantifiable facts.

INSERT FOOTAGE:

- Iraqi oil fields on fire, soldiers
- Radio control helicopter dissolves into 'Firescout' (or use RC glider/Predator)

He pauses again.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

But there is a quandary here. While history shows us that all things have the potential to be adopted, adapted, and exploited it also warns us that in the arena of human conflict, with every new weapon, the 'enemy' will develop something worse... Something that will eventually be used on your own soil, your own people. On January 17th, 1961 departing President Eisenhower warned of the military industrial complex.

INSERT FOOTAGE:

- (Smash Cuts)RAF biplane, ME 109, Corsair, Chinese Mig, F4, Russian Mig, US JSF
- Oliver North trial footage
- President Eisenhower's departure speech

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

This unholy alliance between corporations, defense contractors and the government has gone on to flourish unabated. Today, conflicts are fought to simply construct and test new military hardware that defense contractors and corporations spend billions of your tax money on developing. Operational effectiveness is the only true measure of success. That means people will die. With that as a known constant, one might be inclined to ask why the public supports such apathy toward the death of their fellow men and women? Fear and the manufactured threat of terror. Enter the media. Piped directly into each and every household courtesy of your local broadcast and broadband service providers. With the birth of the internet, the truths behind these conflicts became known... Knowledge and resistance to the military industrial complex has lead to public outcry and civil unrest. Who do you think the government is going to rely on to quell the resistance?... The military industrial complex... The corporations who manufacture these weapons platforms. It is only a matter of time before we become prisoners to our own systems of 'defense'... slaves to corporations. Our tax dollars at work.

INSERT FOOTAGE:

- Satellite view: SUPERIMPOSE: GROOM LAKE TEST AREA
- News anchor raising the 'Treat Level' color
- Seattle riots including riot police 'tank'

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The black screen pops to life as the new image drifts in and out of focus slightly before finding STAFF SARGENT MIKE FISHER (38), sitting facing the lens. He wears full combat gear, equipped with unrecognizable pieces of equipment. An eye monocle is folded up against the side of his helmet. A cable runs to a small shoulder mounted pack. His rifle looks like something out of the advanced weaponry division. He motions to the helmet on his head.

SSG. FISHER
Should I take this off?

The INTERVIEWER'S voice is calming, her tone is caring.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)
Sure, if you like.

He removes his helmet, placing it on his thigh, then nods to the interviewer.

INTERVIEWER (CONT'D, O.C.)
Tell us about what it's been like
so far.

Sgt. Fisher shifts slightly in his seat.

SSG. FISHER
Well... You know... It's like any
other conflict zone... Difficult
terrain, a determined enemy... this
one has been tough, but you know...
We're winning, daily.

INSERT FOOTAGE:

-An urban combat environment.
- Soldiers lined up along the side of a building. The two at the corner are sporadically returning fire. The corner of the building pops and fragments as enemy fire hits the brickwork.
- Soldiers kick in a rickety looking wooden door.
Immediately, three men step through into the blackness of the room with their weapons raised.

SSG. FISHER (CONT'D)
(dispassionately)
I think we're winning.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)
How long have you been stationed
over here?

SSG. FISHER

How long?

He exhales, running a hand through his short hair.

SSG. FISHER (CONT'D)

Jeez... I dunno... Uh... thirty-seven... thirty-eight months I think... I was initially on a eighteen month deployment...

(beat)

SSG. FISHER (CONT'D)

(chuckling)

... but, you know, the war on terror isn't gonna end until we end it, so... I got my orders saying that my tour was going to be extended by three months. My wife flipped. I got to see her briefly at the end of that three month extension, then I was 'stop-lossed', recalled. Been here ever since.

(beat)(beat)

SSG. FISHER (CONT'D)

We're divorced now.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Through the lens, we see a beautiful woman, CORPORAL MARINA SANDERSON (23) sit down in front of the camera. She looks nervous, excited.

She leans her weapon against the arm of the chair and clasps her hands in her lap.

CPL SANDERSON

Is this okay?

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)

Sure... Whatever you're comfortable with.

She fidgets a bit.

INTERVIEWER (O.C., CONT'D)

Ready?

She bites her lip, and with a nod, the interview begins.

INTERVIEWER (O.C., CONT'D)
How old are you Corporal?

CPL SANDERSON
I'll be 24 in two months.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

SARGENT JONATHAN AIMES (28) drops into the interview chair, pulling the lit cigarette from his mouth. His finger pokes the air emphatically.

PVT. AIMES
Sanderson? She is one badass girl... I mean, you look at her, what do you see? This cute little blonde thing weighing in at one-oh-five... one-ten soaking wet? Yet I've see that package run over a berm and drop an enemy combatant over two hundred pounds. That is bad-ass, baby.

INSERT FOOTAGE:

Sanderson slowly, stealthily rises over the berm, a large knife in her hand. She's crouching as she approaches a large ENEMY COMBATANT(1) from behind. He nonchalantly pulls a lighter from his pocket to light the cigarette in his mouth. Sanderson strikes. With a kick to the back of knee, the man drops, bringing him down to her height. She wraps her arm around his neck, craning his torso back. In an instant, Sanderson buries the blade of her knife right to the hilt under his rib cage. Stunned, the man flails his arms in a vane effort to break free. But with each passing second, his strength is slipping away from him. She leans backward, pulling the man on top of her. It's a quick death. She drags herself and his body back down to the protection of the berm.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

CPL. Sanderson, sitting in the interview chair.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)
What has it been like for you as a woman, fighting... living... in these conditions?

CPL SANDERSON

No different from the guys, I expect... Forever dirty... Sometimes I just scream for a shower... You know?... Or a bath... A nice long hot bath.

She smiles wistfully.

CPL SANDERSON (CONT'D)

And there's really no privacy out here. Don't get me wrong... I'm no princess... It's just... Ya know, sometimes you need time to clear your head. That can be tough sometimes... Getting time to think.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

PVT. Aimes sitting.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)

Where are you from?

PVT. AIMES

The Pacific Northwest... Near a beautiful lake full of trout this big.

He throws his arms wide open.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)

How long has it been since you were home?

PVT. AIMES

(without hesitation)
Twenty-six months, two weeks, five days.

He says it without bragging.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)

What do you miss the most?

PVT. AIMES

All of it.

He sinks into reverie for a moment, then snaps his attention back the Interviewer.

PVT. AIMES (CONT'D)
 You know... All the stuff that
 'home' is. A warm bed, the love of
 a good woman... Kids... Just
 playing in the yard. Meatballs
 cooked from scratch... Waffle
 cones. My daughter's all about the
 waffle cones right now... Well,
 last time I saw her she was anyway.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

SSG. Fisher sitting in the chair.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)
 Do you get much chance to talk to
 him?

SSG. FISHER
 My son?... Once in a while.
 Communication can be kind of
 sporadic out here. I got sent home
 for a week rotation. I took him to
 Hawaii for a bit... Just the two of
 us. It was nice... Really... Nice.
 Definitely hard to come back here.

INSERT FOOTAGE:

SSG. Fisher is sitting on the ground beside an Armored
 Personnel Carrier. He's using a phone, seemingly lost in the
 conversation; a loving father and son. Suddenly, bullets
 spark off the vehicle and a ricochet destroys the small
 transceiver dish mounted on top. Immediately, he and the rest
 of his squad are on their feet advancing in formation on the
 firing position behind the camera.

He looks around bleakly.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

PVT. Aimes sitting in the chair.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)
 In a speech last week, the Joint
 Chief stated, and I quote, "The
 morale of our fighting men and
 women is of the utmost importance
 to this administration."

PVT. AIMES holds out his hand off camera. It returns with a
 piece of paper. He reads aloud.

PVT. AIMES

"We care about their physical state, mental state, and emotional state. We're confident that our soldiers have the fortitude to win this fight."

He hands the paper back.

PVT. AIMES (CONT'D)

... I'll tell you about fortitude... I didn't sign up for this, I got 'volun-told' by the infamous blue Suit-O-Gram that the dear old Uncle was shipping me off for the good of the country... but I'll tell you this... I ain't here for no Joint Chief's or anybody else in this backward administration. I'm here for my family... For my country. Sure as hell not for those corporate-level-yacht-cruising-martini-sippin'-tycoon-types.

INSERT FOOTAGE:

An unmarked sedan pulls to a stop in front of a house. TWO BLUE-SUITED MILITARY MEN exit the vehicle and approach the door. With his DAUGHTER (3) in his arms, Pvt. Aimes answers the door. The men hand him an envelope containing his draft notice. Pvt. Aimes' young SON (5) wraps his arms around his father's leg. The two men return to their vehicle leaving the soldier to open the envelope.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)

What about the people here, in this country, in this part of the world, don't they deserve your help?

PVT. AIMES

Our help? I'm here for my blood. These people have been fighting for generations... Of course I'd love to say we're here to help, but let's face it... with the kinda help we've given them so far? Man, I'd be pissed if someone came to my town and helped me that way.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)

So you don't think we should be here?

PVT. AIMES

It doesn't matter what I think, I was sent here. What do you think? What do the people back home think?

EXT. FOREST - DAY

CPL. Sanderson shifts in the interview chair.

CPL SANDERSON

Ya, I think it's good that we're here. I mean, these people have nothing, which is hard enough... But then to be terrorized like they have been for so long... They deserve some peace... A rest from all this crap - oops, sorry... Can I say that?

She chuckles, glancing off camera. The answer to her question is inaudible.

CPL SANDERSON (CONT'D)

... A rest from this chaos.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

SSG. Fisher is again in the interview chair.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)

You're the first unit with a Special Warfare Combat Robot... What has that been like?

SSG. FISHER

The Special Warfare Combat Robot, or 'SpecBot', has proven invaluable over the past three weeks in a number of situations.

INSERT FOOTAGE: SpecBot stands behind the cover of a tree trunk with the rest of the team crouched behind their robotic squad member. Bullets splinter the bark as enemy rounds pepper the area. The SpecBot steps out from behind the cover of the tree and fires three precisely aimed rounds. Immediately the opposing fire stops. The robot proceeds in the confidence that it has neutralized the threat. The rest of the team slowly rises, following cautiously.

SSG. FISHER

It is absolutely worth every penny
of its development budget.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

CPL. Sanderson, sitting.

CPL SANDERSON

Amazing... I mean, he is exactly
where he needs to be at exactly the
right time.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)

He?

CPL SANDERSON

I'm sorry?

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)

You said "he is exactly where he
needs to be"...

CPL SANDERSON

I did? Oops... Haha, 'it', I meant
'it'.

She trails off, embarrassed.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

PVT. Aimes is in the hot seat.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)

Cpl. Sanderson called the robot
soldier a 'he'. I find it
interesting that she's already
beginning to humanize it. Have you
found yourself identifying with it?

PVT. AIMES thinks for a moment.

PVT. AIMES

You know, it's just a bucket of
bolts and wiring and programming
and what-not... But I swear, when
you're talking to it, there's a
little glimmer in there... There's
a personality...

(MORE)

PVT. AIMES (cont'd)
It's hard to keep yourself from
talking to him like he's just
another person... A very tall,
metal person...

INSERT FOOTAGE:

The squad has made camp. The SpecBot is sitting with a very human posture, elbows resting on knees. Pvt. Aimes approaches the robot and hands it a pair of magazines for its weapon. It's eerily natural motion betrays the fact that it IS a machine.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

SSG. Fisher answers the interviewer's question.

SSG. FISHER

Ya, I guess you could say it's grown on me. It has special software that implements natural human motion... Which is a major advantage in some situations. Body language and posture are huge, though subtle, indicators during communication and negotiation. As humans, even if it is simply on a subconscious level, all of these things help determine the perceived level of threat. By cataloguing and mimicking minor details like these, it is as capable of projecting its unspoken intent as any person. By understanding and being able to use that to its advantage, it can project one thing to disguise its true intent. That is a powerful example of something, and it seems like such a minor thing, becoming a construct used to control situations without the use of conventional weaponry... Really, if in the end that ability is only used as a decoy leading to the use of conventional weaponry, it is a very valuable tactical asset... And it is very good at it.

(beat)

One of the local kids even named it... 'Ocel'... I don't know what that means though.

CAMERAMAN (O.C.)
 'Ocel'... I'm pretty sure it means
 'Steel'

Ssg. Fisher looks above the camera.

SSG. FISHER
 Steel, huh? Well, I guess you can't
 argue with that. Actually, it's
 titanium and composites, but that's
 semantics.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

CPL. Sanderson sitting.

CPL SANDERSON
 What are the operational advantages
 to having a robot on the team?
 Hmm... Well, there are tons of
 advantages. He can carry a lot more
 weight than any of us, he operates
 as a field medic if needed - knock
 on wood.

She raps her knuckles on the bare wood of the chair's arm.

CPL SANDERSON (CONT'D)
 He's got this special kind of paint
 that they're still trying to make
 work on our fatigues... He can be
 right in front of you and you
 wouldn't even know it. Oh... and he
 can even cook.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)
 Well?

CPL SANDERSON
 MRE's are MRE's... He's a robot,
 not a miracle worker. I guess they
 can build a better soldier, but a
 better lunch is still out of reach.

She giggles.

SUPERIMPOSE: Flashing red battery symbol

The screen goes black.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The black screen changes to SSG. Fisher. The camera's battery has been replaced.

CAMERAMAN (O.C.)

We're good.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)

Okay... Staff Sargent, can you tell us about the first time you were introduced to the SpecBot?

SSG. FISHER

The first time I saw it was about eight months ago. I was shipped home for an introduction with GENERAL WELLER, head of the project. He brought me to his office and told me we were the field unit that it was going to be assigned to. It was still undergoing testing at that point, but man... I can remember it running through some of it's late testing phases... Impressive. I mean, really impressive. It could jump clear over an Abrams from a standstill... At a flat out sprint, it could do 40 miles an hour... That's with all the add-on stuff like its med-pack, comm gear, weapons... the electro-camouflage paint is incredible. They were still working on it at the time, but let me tell you, when it dropped in, it was completely field ready.

INSERT FOOTAGE:

The SpecBot is running through its primary testing at an undisclosed military base.

- Outside, the robot does a standing jump, launching itself clear over a five ton troop carrier
- The robot runs on an oval track with full gear, while being paced by a SOLDIER riding a four-wheeled All Terrain Vehicle.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)

So you could use an invisible rifle?

SSG. FISHER

No... I couldn't... It could though. The camo-paint works if another painted object is making contact with the SpecBot because it carries the power source for the field that it generates. His weapon on the ground, or in my hands couldn't go invisible... But in its hands, it obviously needs to be hidden when it is.

INSERT FOOTAGE:

- Its torso mounted to a bracing harness in the lab with the exo-shell open as it is spray-coated by a mechanical arm. Its custom rifle is also sprayed down by the mechanical arm. A SCIENTIST(1) pushes some keys on a keyboard, while SCIENTIST (2) observes, and torso disappears. Scientist (2) makes a note on his clipboard. The robot's rifle is visible until it makes contact with the torso.

(beat)

SSG. FISHER (CONT'D)

It's a neat trick... I'm a bit jealous actually.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

PVT. Aimes sitting in the chair.

PVT. AIMES

For sure... I've seen him do things I never thought a soldier could do. We might be the test unit, but given time - these things are going to replace us all.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)

Don't you think that it's kind of dangerous to use a weaponized machine as a soldier?

PVT. AIMES

Don't you think we need him to be dangerous?

EXT. FOREST - DAY

SSG. Fisher in the chair.

SSG. FISHER

Dangerous? I don't think so...
We've had unmanned, weaponized machines flying, in active service since shortly after 9/11, with the Predator system and later with the Dominator system... that's over 20 years ago now without major incident. How is that any different?

INSERT FOOTAGE:

Various Armed Predator drones with Dominators flying in formation high over desert, city, and forest terrains.
- A PILOT at a control station.
- Missiles are fired from the Unmanned Combat Air Vehicle, a half world away.
- Video footage, complete with targeting cross-hairs on the images from the camera on board the Unmanned Combat Air Vehicle, of various targets being destroyed. A day shot of a canvas covered transport truck exploding from a missile impact; a pair of night vision shots showing buildings being destroyed.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)

Well, they still have pilots at the controls... there's still someone actually pushing the 'fire' button.

SSG. FISHER

I don't think there's much difference. This thing was programmed with definite guidelines for the use of non-lethal force... That's its primary concern and, for the record, it has more non-lethal options available to it than I have to work with in pretty much any given situation. Once it eliminates those options, only then will it switch to accept lethal force options... Unless it's given a direct command otherwise.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)

A command from you?

SSG. FISHER

It has voice recognition for everyone in the unit, and each unit member has an override code, and of course, SpecOps Headquarters...

(MORE)

SSG. FISHER (cont'd)
 the only other uplink capability is
 the R & D division at the
 contractor that built it. They have
 the ability patch in and do
 diagnostics for anything that we
 can't figure out on our end.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)
 How many enemy kills has it made
 since it joined you three weeks
 ago?

EXT. FOREST - DAY

PVT. Aimes sitting, shifts slightly as he thinks.

PVT. AIMES
 Confirmed?

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)
 Sure.

PVT. AIMES looks off to his right.

PVT. AIMES (O.S.)
 What's he at now? Forty-five? Forty-
 six?

The camera pans to find Ssg. Fisher standing nearby.

SSG. FISHER
 Forty-six as of last night.

The camera turns back to PVT. AIMES.

PVT. AIMES
 Forty-six... Mother' can shoot...
 Six of those kills were from over
 twenty-six-hundred yards using the
 new self-propelled rounds.

INSERT FOOTAGE:

- An olive-green matte painted Army truck approaches a shack
 on a forested hillside as seen through the scope of a rifle.
 - The squad flanks the prone SpecBot in the woods overlooking
 a cliff. Due to the robot's advanced vision system, Its rifle
 DOES NOT have a scope. The bullet leaving the SpecBot's rifle
 barrel. As it streaks over the terrain, small fins extend
 from the round and a thin line of smoke extends from the
 rear.

He leans in slightly sporting a cocky smirk.

PVT. AIMES (CONT'D)
Which is kinda cheating, if you ask
me...

INSERT FOOTAGE:
The target, a MALE, is struck in the head.

Leaning back again.

PVT. AIMES (CONT'D)
Unconfirmed brings it closer to
seventy, seventy-one.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)
Wow... Doesn't that seem like a lot
for only three weeks?

PVT. AIMES
Hell ya, it's a lot... Sgt. Chuck
Mawhinney is the long-standing
record holder with the U.S. Marines
at one-hundred and three confirmed
kills in Vietnam... and he was
there for sixteen straight months
to do it.

INSERT FOOTAGE:
Black and White picture of Sgt. Mawhinney.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

CPL. Sanderson's face lights up.

CPL SANDERSON
Ya... He's an incredible shot. I
sure wouldn't want to be on their
side if I saw him comin' toward
me... Of course, with his
camouflage activated, I probably
wouldn't see him at all.

She's pensive for a moment as she puts herself in her enemy's
shoes.

INSERT FOOTAGE: The SpecBot runs across the open area of a
forest clearing toward an entrenched machine gun position on
the other side with its adaptive camouflage turned on.
MACHINE GUNNER(1) notices slight PUFFS OF DUST in the open
area in front of them. The PUFFS are getting closer and his
level of alarm is steadily rising. He points it out to
MACHINE GUNNER(2), who aims the machine gun in the direction
of the approach dust clouds.

He FIRES just as the SpecBot launches into the air becoming visible. It lands beside the barrel, gripping it and twisting it into a gnarled mess. The trapped rounds explode out the back of the weapon injuring MACHINE GUNNER(2). The SpecBot uses lethal force, dispatching the men in a display of total close quarter combat dominance.

Quietly, she continues.

CPL SANDERSON (CONT'D)

They really don't have a chance anymore, do they?

EXT. FOREST - DAY

PVT. Aimes sitting in the chair.

PVT. AIMES

No way man... There's no way I'd even consider going up against one of those things. Man, I'd have better luck crossing a minefield on a pogo stick... Luckily, I'm one of the good guys, so I know he's got my back.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

SSG. Fisher sitting, answers a question.

SSG. FISHER

It's a matter of collateral damage. We can reduce our casualties with this system. We can reduce civilian casualties in hot zones with this system. This model is the first of many that are waiting for operational experience. It's out here with us to learn... That's one of the great things about this platform... Collective Learning Ability... Once you train one, you've trained them all. Its memory banks will be uploaded to the ones waiting to go into service, and they'll be fully operational and transported to support various combat and recon units within 24 hours of that upload.

(MORE)

SSG. FISHER (cont'd)

Eventually, with a full scale launch of the system, they'll be sent to relieve overextended soldiers in field units around the globe, leading to fully robotic units. Every operation gains experience that is then uploaded to every SpecBot in the field. Why risk the lives of our countrymen, when we can send in thousands of SpecBots. They can be air-dropped. Their gear and re-supply stations can be air-dropped... Either on target or along an infiltration route. They're also networked in real-time to other military systems. If we need an air strike called in, we tell it and it can have any number of a variety of mission specific aerial support platforms with us in minutes.

INSERT FOOTAGE:

- In a lab, rows of SpecBots come to life as the camera trucks down the line.
- An airdrop out of a C-130. SpecBots parachute over various types of terrain.
- Dominators also stream out of the back of the C-130 to provide air support. The Dominators spread their wings and glide into a flying wedge formation between the two rows of falling SpecBot paratroopers.

SSG. FISHER (CONT'D)

Future models will be modified to maintain urban security in unstable regions around the world. It's a fantastic technology that is definitely here to stay.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)

Staff Sargent Fisher, were you aware that three days ago a thirty-two member unit comprised solely of SpecBots were used to suppress a political rally in the downtown core of your own hometown?

INSERT FOOTAGE:

Civil unrest in North American cities, parachutes opening above the skyline.

Ssg. Fisher looks dumbfounded, unnerved.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Cpl. Sanderson looks gutted.

CPL SANDERSON
One-hundred and seven?

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)
Dead... Sixty-three of those died
from injuries sustained by
supposedly non-lethal methods...
another two-hundred eighty-seven
severely injured. They've just
announced the immediate activation
of another fifty-five hundred
SpecBots in numerous cities to
contain the public backlash.

She covers her mouth as her eyes well up.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

PVT. AIMES
Damn... You're kidding right?

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)
No Sargent. The weapon that you are
training out here has a bunch of
little brothers standing right now,
on streets of your own country.

His shoulder drop like the wind has been knocked out of him.

INSERT FOOTAGE:

- Civil unrest. RIOTERS are throwing objects, Molotov cocktails, rocks, and anything else capable of being hurled at the opposing line of RIOT POLICE.
- Tear gas canisters bounce on the ground in front of a scattering group of RIOTERS.
- Innocent bystander struck down by non-lethal riot gun.
- A riot police water cannon hoses down the unruly mob.
- Three SpecBots drop into their place, weapons in hand. Their parachutes billow to the ground behind them. Each automatically severs its own parachute lines without using their hands. The robotic units form their own defensive line, marching in unison a few paces in front of a shoulder-to-shoulder row of riot police wearing their full riot gear.

PVT. AIMES

Man... That is messed up... I don't even... I don't... know what to say... That is messed up.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Ssg. Fisher stands up, placing his hand over the lens of the camera. His voice is firm, commanding, completely devoid from any warmth or candor.

SSG. FISHER

This interview is finished. Turn that off. We're done here.

CUT TO BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. OFFICE - DAY

PROFESSOR

Removing people from the war process signifies a distinct shift. There is no honor in the duel, so to speak... Hundreds of years ago when two men fought... Each had a sword or a musket... Each had a fighting chance. With the way things are going, one might as well have a stone, the other a Howitzer.

(beat)

The bottom line? War, like anything else, is a product of man's choices... Of free will. Behind every finger that pulls a trigger is a man or woman who can, for whatever reason, justify his or her actions. Take that away, and we are no longer at war with one another, we are at war with machines. And as any rational mind already knows... We don't stand a chance.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Candid interview responses on the street with random people.

1 - SPORTS FAN (MALE)

Look, I say use every advantage. We're talking about keeping our boys out of harm's way and keeping our cities safe while being able to cause maximum damage to the enemy... You know what they say, 'All's fair in love and war'.

2 - COLLEGE STUDENT (FEMALE)

Instead of using the billions of dollars spent to develop better ways to kill people, how about spending that money on cures for diseases...

3 - POSTMAN (MALE)

I have no comment on that... Thank you.

4 - SHOPPER ON STREET (FEMALE)

Do you really think that they deserve a chance? I mean, they're trying to kill us... Make us live in terror... I say give it right back to them.

5 - MUSLIM (MALE)

What's the biggest threat to us right now? Well, besides apathy I think most people would say a dirty bomb... Something developed for war, be it a gas or heaven forbid, a nuclear payload. I mean, it could fit in a suitcase. Any suitcase could be that bomb waiting to detonate. And it doesn't have to be an exploding bomb... It can be the *threat* of an exploding bomb. What if a terrorist group gets hold of one of these robots and turns it... Or hundreds against us? What then?

6 - PRIEST (MALE)

What kind of people would use autonomous machines to destroy and suppress other people? In a long line of inhumane acts by humans, this one is the most depraved.

FADE OUT