

Preface

Adam Peterson was one of the richest and most powerful men in the United States, but because he craved anonymity, he was not well known outside his circle of close associates. He lived in a modest home in Palo Alto and drove his five-year-old Ford to his office in San Jose every day. Adam was forty-three years old, and spent most of the last twenty years building his business empire. He was six feet tall, balding, and at least twenty pounds overweight. He felt his personal appearance was unimportant, so he always wore jeans and polo shirts to work. When he wasn't busy, which was rare, he thought about his personal life and realized he never spent much time building relationships. He never married, and never had a serious relationship with a woman.

When he was twenty, he started a software company that produced games for handheld devices. But his games were different. They were fun to play and never became so difficult that they became frustrating. He charged a dollar a month for access to all of his games. After six months, he had over a million subscribers, and by the end of his third year that number had risen to more than twenty million. Then he convinced two of the major cell phone service providers to include his games on all their cell phones. He paid them a dime for each dollar he received from their users, and just a year later, Peterson Gaming was pulling in almost a hundred million dollars a month. It was the largest privately held company in the United States.

Adam began buying other companies, including a controlling interest in several smaller cell phone providers. Ten years after he started his company, he owned or controlled more than thirty companies with combined annual sales of more than fifteen billion dollars.

He dreamed about using his wealth to buy political influence, and when he had the money, that's exactly what he did. Because he wanted to remain anonymous, he employed a group of operatives to spread his wealth around, never contacting any politicians directly. He discovered it was fairly easy to influence politicians with cash, and at the age of thirty-seven, he had the ability to control the California legislature. He decided to extend his reach to the federal government as well. It was a little more expensive to influence members of the House and Senate, but not substantially so.

Now he had achieved his dream. But he still wasn't happy. He had always been liberal, and despite the fact that capitalism allowed him to realize his dream, he believed socialism was a superior form of government. His party lost the 2020 election and the republicans regained control of the house. In 2022, the democrats regained many of the seats they lost in 2020, but the republicans had maintained a slim majority. He was sure the country was turning more liberal, and was positive with sufficient financial backing, a socialist could win in 2024.

He used his influence to get Cathy Mitchell, the socialist senator recently elected in a special election in Oregon, the nomination for president from the Democratic party for the 2024 election. He spent more than three hundred million dollars to promote her to the American electorate, but she lost in a landslide. She only won five states; California, New York, Illinois, Oregon, and Washington. To make matters even worse, the Democrats lost all of their gains from the previous election. In the House, the Republicans now held a forty-seat majority, and controlled sixty-eight seats in the Senate.

The election was ten days earlier and he had been thinking about what action he could take that would help the situation. He decided there was only one possible course of action. He called his assistant, Ellen Miller, and told her to set up a meeting with all of his political operatives within the next forty-eight hours. The meeting was scheduled for Monday, November 18 at 10:00 AM.

He arrived at the meeting room at precisely 10:00 o'clock, walked in, and received a standing ovation from his employees. He smiled and walked to the podium in the front of the room.

“Good morning. To get right to the point I, like all of you, am very upset about the election results. I've been thinking about what course of action we could possibly take that would help with our situation. I realized late last week that there is only one thing we can do. That is to secede from the United States. We will become our own country, with our own laws, and more importantly, our own government. California's economy is the fifth largest in the world. There's no reason we couldn't make it on our own.”

Adam paused to wait for a reaction. For a few seconds everyone was silent. Then someone stood and began to applaud. Moments later everyone in the meeting room was standing and applauding as well.

Adam smiled and nodded indicating for them to sit. When the room became quiet, he continued. “Obviously we must plan this very carefully. The United States government is not going to sit idly by when they find out what we plan to do. We must be prepared to fight for what we believe in. We don't have an army, but we do have the ability to put an economic stranglehold on the United States Government. I want each of you to contact the politicians you work with and ask them how they feel about the idea. Feel free to threaten them if necessary. While you are working on that, I will put together an economic plan to bring those assholes in DC to their knees.”

Everyone stood up and began to applaud again. Adam smiled, then left the podium and walked out of the room.

I The Plan

After the meeting, Adam went back to his office. As he passed Ellen's desk, he asked her to come with him. She wasn't at the meeting, but she knew what Adam wanted to do. She told him bluntly that his plan would never work, but she would help him anyway.

Ellen joined Peterson Gaming shortly after Adam formed the company. She was twenty-three at the time and had just graduated from U.C. Davis with a degree in computer engineering. She started her career as a programmer, but Adam quickly realized she had some great ideas for marketing. So, when he formed a marketing department, he put Ellen in charge.

Two years later, Adam promoted her and she became Vice-President, and his assistant. That was almost fifteen years ago, and he knew he needed her. She was a voice of reason and had the ability to calm him down when he lost his temper, which was a fairly frequent occurrence.

Ellen walked in and said dryly, "I'm sure they were all thrilled with your idea."

"Yes, it appeared that way. Now, if I could only convince you that it's a good idea, I would be a happy man."

"Sorry to burst your bubble; you know how I feel about it."

"Yes, I do. Anyway, I want you to compile a list of California based companies that have large federal contracts to supply goods and services. I'm specifically interested in companies that are the sole supplier of the products they sell."

"Are you going to ask them to stop selling to the feds?"

"No, I want them to continue to supply their products, but at substantially increased prices. Then we'll take the increased profits from them to fund our new country."

"What will you do if they refuse?"

Adam smiled and said, "That's easy. We take control of the company. I'll make that abundantly clear when I meet with them."

"So, you're going to give up your precious anonymity?"

"I have no choice. How long do you think it will take to compile the list?"

"Give me a week."

"Okay, but not a day longer."

Ellen wanted to say, "Do it yourself. I quit!", but instead she said, "Yes, sir."

During the next few days, all of his political operatives called to give him a report about how things went with the legislators. Almost all liked the idea, but the general consensus was that they wanted to have a detailed plan before they would consider supporting it publicly.

Ellen had the list completed right on time. It was sitting on Adam's desk when he arrived at his office on Monday, November 25th. He quickly read through the list. There were seventy-three companies listed. Most of them supplied parts for the military. The companies varied in size from as few as twenty-five employees to an electronics company with over thirty thousand employees.

Next, he had to figure out how to approach them. He decided to start with the smaller companies. He selected Becker Aerospace for his first contact. The company had fifty-seven employees. They manufactured several key components for jet fighters used by all of the branches of the military.

He spent the next several hours researching the company. Their sales in 2023 were almost two hundred fifty million dollars, and all of their sales were to the federal government. His research revealed that the sole owner of the company was Harold Becker. He graduated from UCLA with

a degree in mechanical engineering. After he graduated, he joined the Air Force. During his four-year stint in the Air Force, he spent his time managing aircraft maintenance people. When he left the Air Force, he borrowed money to start Becker Aerospace. Somehow, Harold Becker managed to acquire the rights to the products they were currently manufacturing, and his company is the sole supplier of those aircraft components.

Adam began to have second thoughts about contacting Becker Aerospace because he was concerned Harold Becker might be a conservative. However, he decided that if he could convince Becker to support secession, he could probably convince anyone.

He called Becker Aerospace. When the receptionist answered the phone, he asked to speak with Harold Becker. The receptionist asked who was calling, and then she put the call through. The next thing Adam heard was a man saying, "This is Harold Becker. How can I assist you, Mr. Peterson?"

Adam replied, "Thank you for taking my call, Mr. Becker. I have a matter of some urgency I would like to discuss with you in person. Could I stop by your office tomorrow morning?"

"I believe you are the owner of Peterson Gaming. Is that correct?"

"Yes, it is. However, this matter has nothing to do with my company. I need your help with something that I don't feel comfortable discussing over the phone."

"Okay, how about 10 o'clock?"

"That will be perfect. I'll see you tomorrow."

Peterson Gaming owned a small business jet and Adam was a licensed pilot. He arrived at the San Jose Airport few minutes after six, filed a flight plan to go the Burbank Airport, and left shortly before seven. After landing, he rented a car and drove to Becker Aerospace. He was standing at the receptionist's desk at five minutes to ten. He gave the woman at the desk his card and said he had an appointment with Mr. Becker.

Adam was wearing a blue business suit instead of his usual attire. He was pleased when, a few minutes later, a tall, thin man, dressed in jeans and a polo shirt, walked into the reception area. He smiled at Adam and said, "Good morning, Mr. Peterson. I'm Harold Becker. Please come in."

Adam stood, shook hands with Harold and said, "I'm pleased to meet you. Thank you for taking the time to meet with me."

"I must tell you that I'm really curious why you wanted to meet with me. I don't believe we have common interests."

"I'll explain everything. Can we meet somewhere private?"

"Sure, the conference room is empty. Would you like some coffee?"

"No, thank you."

They walked to the conference room and sat on opposite sides of the table. Then Adam put his briefcase on the table and removed a device that looked like a cell phone. He turned it on, waved it around a little, and put it back into his briefcase. Harold smiled and said, "There's no reason to check for bugs."

"Mr. Becker, I need your assurance that the information I'm about to discuss with you will remain confidential."

"You have it. So, tell me, why are you here?"

"I represent a group of people who were devastated with the results of the election. We believe some action must be taken in order to be sure we maintain our goals for California."

"I'm sorry to inform you that I'm not the least bit upset with the results of the election."

“You are, of course, entitled to your opinion. However, because your company is based in California, you will be affected by the actions we are about to take. We plan to secede from the United States and form our own country.”

Harold stared at Adam for several seconds before saying, “You’re serious, aren’t you?”

“Yes, I’m absolutely serious. This is going to happen. The legislature will vote on the plan within the next month.”

Again, Harold paused before he replied, “Aside from the fact that I think that’s a really awful idea, do you really believe the United States government is going to let you do that?”

“Mr. Becker, your company is one of many that are the sole supplier for items the United States government needs. If they try to stop us, they will suddenly find themselves unable to purchase the goods and services they need. Additionally, we will not allow goods destined for the United States that arrive at our ports to move through our new country. We believe those two factors alone are sufficient to keep the United States military at bay. Of course, we’ll need a lot of money to make this plan a success, and the only way we can do that is to get it from the United States. So, we’re going to ask all of the companies based in California to raise their prices substantially, and send the excess profit to the California treasury. That includes your company, Mr. Becker.”

“And if I refuse?”

“Then the California government will simply nationalize your company.”

“So, you plan to model our new country after Nazi Germany?”

“No, but I won’t allow anyone to stand in the way of our ultimate success. If you do as we ask, you will continue to operate Becker Aerospace as you see fit.”

“Until California makes additional demands. Then the threats will start again. Don’t you think you should at least allow people the opportunity to vote for or against secession? After all, they did that in England when they left the EU.”

“We don’t believe that’s necessary. The residents of California elected people to represent them in the legislature, and they have confidence in their ability to govern.”

“Mr. Peterson, I gave you my promise that I won’t discuss this with anyone, and I will abide by that. However, you have worn out your welcome. Please leave.”

“Okay, I’m leaving. But rest assured, we’ll be speaking again.”

Adam closed his brief case, stood up, and left the conference room. The meeting went exactly as he suspected it would. He was positive that when the time came, Becker would acquiesce to the California government’s demands.

Over the next few days, Adam met with several more companies based in the bay area. In every case, the companies agreed to provide whatever assistance was needed to make the secession a reality.

Adam set up another meeting with his political operatives. The meeting was held in a large conference room at a nearby hotel. When everyone was seated, he asked each of them to give a report. The general consensus was that the legislature would do whatever Adam felt was needed. Then he told them about his meetings with the California based companies. So far, everything was moving along smoothly. Then he told them he wanted checkpoints built at every place a major highway crosses the California border.

Someone asked, “Won’t that give away our plan?”

Adam replied, “There’s nothing to give away. I guarantee you; the President is already aware of our plans. I’m sure that if I can buy legislators, the feds can buy them too. But that cannot deter us from our goal. They won’t do anything until we make our secession public, so we must

be prepared to act decisively. The purpose of the checkpoints is to prevent goods from being shipped out of California by truck without the payment of fees. We will also be checking ships and planes before they will be allowed to leave. Additionally, any banking transaction that exceeds one hundred thousand dollars will have to be approved by a banking regulator.”

“Will we allow people to leave?”

Adam answered, “Of course, but we will limit what they can take with them.”

“So, if someone sells their house, they won’t be able to leave the state with the proceeds from the sale. Is that right?”

“Exactly. Real estate transactions for people leaving California will be heavily taxed. The same thing will apply to the sale of businesses. The whole idea is that money generated in California stays in California.”

“Don’t you think the United States will reciprocate and prevent us from buying the things we need from them?”

“That’s a definite possibility. So, if we need something we don’t make here, we’ll purchase it from countries other than the United States. However, I believe we can be largely self-sufficient. We can grow our own food, supply our own energy, and manufacture the things our people need. Initially there’ll probably be some shortages, but I feel confident they will be short term. Remember, the United States does not manufacture nearly what they used to. They import far more than they make.”

“Do you plan on us having our own currency?”

“No, we’ll continue to use the United States dollar. If they give us a hard time, we’ll switch to the Chinese yuan. It’s as widely accepted as the United States dollar.”

Adam paused for a few moments and then continued. “These laws I just spoke about, and much more, will be sent to each of you in the next ten days. I want you to make sure they’re submitted to the legislature and put into the proper format so they can be voted on immediately after secession. Also, if your contacts don’t feel comfortable with this move, feel free to apply whatever pressure is necessary to insure these measures pass.”

Someone asked, “After secession, who will be in charge? Will Governor Nelson assume control of our country?”

“There will be a special election within sixty days after secession to elect a president and vice-president. Governor Nelson will become interim president and retain that position until the results of the election can be determined.”

“Are you going to run for president?”

“I haven’t made that decision yet. If any of you have any questions or problems, please contact me. The next few months are going to both hectic and very exciting. I’m sure there will be some roadblocks along the way, so it’s imperative that I’m informed about them as soon as possible. Thank you all for coming. This meeting is adjourned”

II

The Oval Office

April 7, 2025

President Nancy Haskell was sitting on the sofa. Her chief of staff, Roy Stuart, sat directly across from her. He said, “It would appear the California legislature will have the secession vote within thirty days and it will pass easily. I know we’ve discussed this before, but I feel strongly we must take some action to prevent that from happening.”

“I know how you feel, but the only overt action we could take to prevent secession would involve the use of the military. I don’t want to start a civil war, or at least not one that has us shooting at each other. I believe the best approach would be to have an economic war. We already know what actions they’re going to take, so we have to counter them with actions of our own.”

“I understand, but I think we have to make it so painful for them, no other state will ever try it. I think that may involve more than economics.”

“Perhaps, but we will have to wait to see what effect our economic sanctions have. Did you get any response to your request to find additional vendors for all of the single source items used by the military?”

“Yes, they all thought it was a good idea, and agreed to do that as quickly as possible. I didn’t tell them about California possibly seceding. I just told them it wasn’t a good idea to have a single supplier for anything they purchase.”

“Did you contact the shipping companies and request they reroute their ships to ports in Oregon and Washington?”

“Yes, but there’s a problem. Most of those shipments contain products for California. To do what you asked would be very expensive for them. They want us to pay for any additional expenses they incur as a result of our request. I’m sure you’ve thought about this already; what happens if Oregon or Washington follow California and secede too?”

“They may be thinking about it, but I’m positive they won’t take any action until they see how we handle the California situation. Find out what the shipping companies think it will cost to reroute their ships.”

“Okay. By the way, I was just informed that construction of the border checkpoints will begin next week. Once that happens, everyone with half a brain will realize what’s going on.”

“Yeah, I’m sure you’re right. I think one other action we may have to take would involve support for groups within California that are less than pleased with the idea of becoming an independent country. We should help incite incidents of insurrection and see how they handle it. Perhaps some former military personnel would like to handle that for us. Could you look into that as well?”

“That’s a great idea,” Roy said with a big smile on his face. “I should have thought of that before. I have some contacts who may be able to help us. I’ll get on it right away.”

“Good, please keep me informed.”

“Of course.”

III

Sacramento, California

April 24, 2025

The Governor of California, Gary Nelson, was sitting at his desk. In front of him were TV cameras from every major television network. At precisely 7:00 o'clock he began to speak.

“Good evening. Tomorrow the California legislature will vote on the most important piece of legislation in our state’s history. As you are all aware, our values and ideals are not the same as those of the federal government. In fact, there are very few issues where we are in agreement. It was my hope, and yours, that the last election would have resolved the problem. However, it only served to make the situation worse. Our differences are irreconcilable, and so our only choice is to sever our relationship with the United States.

“Tomorrow, the legislature will vote to determine if we remain part of the United States, or we become an independent country. However, I can tell you now that by this time tomorrow we will no longer be the State of California, we will, instead, be the country of California.

“We have been planning this action for months, and although we have tried to make the transition as smooth as possible, we are certain there will be some problems. We will do our best to minimize the effect these problems have on our citizens, but we ask for your patience during the next several months.

“First, I want you to be aware that I will assume the position as president on a temporary basis. There will be an election held within sixty days to elect a president who will serve a four-year term.

“Starting a new country is a daunting task. We must make sure California is solvent, and remains that way. In order to do that, the legislature will be passing new laws and regulations that will increase our revenues. A list of these measures will be published after the vote tomorrow. But I can assure you, your tax burden will not increase. The money you previously paid to the federal government will now be paid to the country of California.

“The United States government owns buildings and vacant land in California. Those holdings will all be annexed by California. We will give them ninety days to vacate all their properties, including military bases. Many of these properties will be used to house the influx of immigrants we are expecting.

“Our goal is to have an open society. To that end, the walls that have been built on our southern border will be demolished, and our border with Mexico will be open. Many of you are probably aware that we have built border checkpoints along all major highways that connect California with the United States. Those checkpoints are not to keep people out of California. They were built to collect fees from trucks transporting goods out of our country. We will be building similar checkpoints on rail lines. We believe these fees will become a major source of revenue for us.

“Many of you have requested a single payer health system. To make that happen, all private health facilities will be nationalized, and all medical personnel will become California employees. You will be able to go to any doctor, or any hospital, and receive free medical care.

“We will also be taking control of all federally chartered banks. We will relinquish that control when they agree to abide by new banking rules that have been drawn up by the legislature. Additionally, we will be nationalizing all utility companies in California. Your electric, water, sewage, and natural gas bills will now be generated by the government. We are doing this to make sure you pay a fair price for the services you use.

“Our colleges and universities will also be tuition free for our residents. None of our citizens will graduate from college with debt that will take them decades to pay.

“This is only the beginning. California is destined to become a utopia. We will be the envy of the rest of the world, and all of you will be a part of it.

“Thank you. I will speak to you again soon.”

IV

The Oval Office

April 25, 2025

Roy Stuart walked into the President Haskell's office and said, "Good morning, Madam President. I assume you saw Nelson's speech last night. Is your response ready?"

"Yes, I've called a press conference for two o'clock. There was nothing unexpected in the speech. We've already begun drawing down our military presence in California. My concern is the number of people who will be out of a job as a result of this ridiculous move. I assume congress is going to vote today on the Federal Employee Relief Act?"

"Yes, the House will vote on it this morning, and the Senate will vote on it this afternoon. It will be on your desk before six o'clock."

"Good, we need to let them know we will help them through this mess. Have we resolved the issue of single source military components?"

"Yes, every contractor based in California sent us a letter terminating our existing contracts indicating that prices for the products they were making for us would increase by two hundred percent. We replied to everyone and told them we have contracted with another supplier. They were not pleased, to say the least. As a result, many of these companies will go out of business. One of those companies is owned by someone I worked with when I was in the Air Force. His name is Harold Becker. He called me yesterday and told me he was going to be forced to close his business. He was not concerned for himself. He lives alone. His wife died a few years ago and he never had any children. But he is worried about his employees. He also indicated that he would be willing to help us if we decide to take any covert action against the California government."

"That could be very useful. Let's get some people working on this. I don't want anybody hurt, but I want any action we take to cost California a lot of money."

Roy smiled and said, "Of course. However, I want to do this on my own. I don't want you directly involved. I want you to be able to deny any knowledge of the actions we take."

"I appreciate that. Also, I've been thinking, as we vacate the buildings and military bases, I want every piece of useful equipment removed. I want to leave them just the bare structures."

"That seems reasonable, and I'm sure it will be unexpected. Anything else?"

"Yes, I want armed guards at all military bases and federal office buildings. I don't want anybody from the California government on those premises before we're ready to vacate them."

"That's an excellent idea. I'm sure we can arrange that within a day or two."

"Then, let's meet again in two days."

V

The White House Briefing Room April 25, 2025

After a brief introduction by her press secretary, Mark Dickenson, President Haskell walked up to the podium and began to speak. “Thank you all for coming. Please understand that I will not be taking any questions during this briefing. However, I believe that your questions will be answered by my prepared statement.

“Yesterday, the State of California made the decision to withdraw from our union and become an independent country. I realize we have very little in common with California at this time, but becoming an independent country is an act of total incompetence. However, the only way to prevent them from seceding would be use of military force. I don’t wish to have a second civil war, and I want to avoid casualties on both sides. So, no military action will be taken at this time. We have been aware of this possibility for several months, and are prepared to take actions that will isolate California economically.

“First, we have found new suppliers for items we previously purchased from companies located in California. We took this action because they cancelled the contracts they had with us, and attempted to increase their prices substantially. Also, they’re planning on charging shipping companies for shipping goods out of California. Those charges would be passed on to our consumers, and could hurt our economy. To minimize the effect of these fees, all goods that were to arrive at California ports destined for other locations will be routed to ports in Oregon and Washington. Obviously, if consumers wish to purchase goods made in California, they are welcome to do so. We will not impose tariffs on California products, unless they impose them on products we manufacture.

“They have ordered us to vacate all federal buildings and military bases. We will do that, but we will leave nothing useful behind. Items we can’t use or would be too expensive to move will be destroyed.

“We began reducing our military presence in California three months ago, and the number of current military personnel stationed there is already down by almost fifty percent.

“They have implemented a number of new laws that make it very difficult for their current residents to move out. The most onerous is a tax on real estate sales that allows the state to collect up to fifty percent of the sale price. For most people, their home is the most expensive thing they will ever buy, and many are dependent on the increased value of their homes to provide them with financial security. To counteract this, we will be offering financial incentives for people who leave California and relocate to the United States.

“There are thousands of federal employees in California, and they will probably find themselves out of work shortly. By the end of the day I will sign the Federal Employee Relief Act. This legislation will provide funds to help federal employees relocate to the United States. We will also make every effort to find jobs for these displaced workers.

“I want to make it crystal clear; we will not allow California to take advantage of us. They will have to make it on their own, or at least without any assistance from the United States. We will have another briefing in a few days, and at that time, I will take questions if you have submitted them prior to the briefing. Thank you for coming.”

Several of the members of the press began shouting questions at the President, but she ignored them and left the room.

The following morning, Roy Stuart was sitting at his desk. He was reading a poll taken after President Haskell's new briefing and was pleased to find that she had the support of seventy-two percent of the people questioned. That was particularly good news since the poll was taken by the New York Times. His phone rang and when he answered it his secretary said that Harold Becker wanted to speak with him. He told her to put the call through.

"Good morning, Mr. Becker, how are things going?"

"Not great, Becker Aerospace is now out of business. Although the factory is still open and I'm paying my employees. I wanted you to know that all of my employees are ex-military and every one of them wants to help bring down the California government."

"I don't think we should be having this discussion on an open line."

"We're not. I have a friend who works at the FBI office in LA. I'm using his phone which is a secure line."

"Good, have you given any thought regarding my request for covert action?"

"It has been on my mind constantly. I've been discussing this with my employees and we've picked out more than a dozen potential targets, but we need something from you."

"What would that be?"

"Explosives. I have two former Army Rangers who have been thoroughly trained on the use of explosives, but we have no way to acquire what we need."

"I can take care of that. I'm glad you're keeping the factory open. If you need any financial assistance, let me know. We'll pay you and your employees. Send me a list of what you need and I'll have it delivered from one of the local Army bases."

"I think we're being watched, so don't send an Army vehicle. I don't want to raise any suspicions. Thank you for offering to pay me and my people, but it really isn't necessary. I have enough money to continue to pay them for several months. I hope this will all be over by then."

"It's a nice thought, but I am fairly sure it will take longer than that. I heard a rumor that they have substantial cash reserves, possibly as much as three hundred billion dollars. It could be enough to keep them going for a year or two."

"Where would they get that much money?"

"My guess is the Chinese. But I wouldn't put too much faith in the rumor. China will want something in exchange for that much money, and it won't be anything small. I'm sure you would know about it before it happens."

Harold was silent for several seconds while he thought about the situation. Finally, he said, "Still, that could be really bad news. If the Chinese have a financial stake in California and the government collapses, is there a possibility they will take over?"

"I suppose so. I've been worried about that too. But I don't think it's anything to be concerned about now."

"To be honest, I'm not positive the Chinese would be any worse than the gang of morons currently running California."

"Yeah, you may be right. Anyway, send me that list and call me in a few days. I'll let you know when the materials will arrive."

"I'll e-mail it to you shortly."

Roy ended the conversation. He hadn't thought seriously about the possibility that China could take over California, but now he couldn't get it out of his mind. They would need a plan to deal with that situation in the unlikely event it actually happened.

Roy received the list of materials Harold wanted two hours later. He read it and decided it was reasonable, so he forwarded the information to his contact at the Pentagon. A few minutes later he received a short message that said, "Materials requested will arrive in five days."

The following morning, Roy had a meeting scheduled with President Haskell. When he walked into her office, it was obvious she wasn't happy. He asked, "What's wrong?"

"As you know I'm trying to avoid armed conflict, but those idiots in California may force us into it. I received a message that stated, "No goods may travel out of California without the payment of fees based on the value of the items." I have no intention of paying them a dime. Any suggestions?"

"Yeah, we already have plans to move our stuff out in truck convoys. The lead truck will be an armored personnel carrier, and it will be filled with heavily armed personnel. They will ignore the barrier and stop just on the other side of the border. Then they will simply watch as the convoy crosses the border. They will take no action unless they are provoked. My guess is, the people manning the border stations will not make a move to interfere."

"And if they do?"

"We will use the minimum amount of force required to resolve the situation."

"When is the first convoy scheduled to leave California?"

"The day after tomorrow. I'll take care of everything. I guarantee you they don't want an armed conflict, because they know they'll lose."

"Okay. Have you heard from our friend, Harold Becker?"

"Yes, I spoke to him yesterday. As it turns out he only hired ex-military people as employees. Two of them were Army Rangers. They have already selected their targets. He has requested some supplies that will be required. I forwarded the list to my contact at the Pentagon. All of the requested items will be delivered to Harold's factory in five days."

"What did he ask for?"

"Do you really want to know?"

"No, I guess not. Did he tell you what he plans to do?"

"No, like you, I really don't want to know. I'd rather be surprised."

"Roy, do you think we should establish diplomatic relations with them? They have made the request."

"Not at this time. Perhaps after their election. I have a feeling the President will not be Nelson. I think it's going to be Adam Peterson."

"Is he any better?"

"Yeah, I think he'll be easier to deal with. He's a businessman, not a politician. I know he is an avowed socialist, but he deals with situations logically, not emotionally. On a totally different subject, during my conversation with Harold I had a horrible thought. We think the Chinese are considering giving California a lot of money. I'm sure it will be a loan, not a gift. If California is unable to pay them back, they're going to want something in return. Perhaps ownership of California."

"We can't let that happen! I'll discuss this with Secretary Crenshaw. We have to take some kind of pre-emptive action to prevent it."

"I agree."