

**FRONT MISSION: AN ANALYSIS OF A TRANSMEDIA  
BY FRONT MISSION: SERIES TRANSLATION TEAM**

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## INTRODUCTION

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The tale of Front Mission and its overseas experiences is an unfortunate one. Toshiro Tsuchida and those who have worked with him since the Masaya and G-Craft days did all that they could to prepare Front Mission for the English-speaking world. Despite their best efforts and planning, Square Co., Ltd. and Square Enix Co., Ltd. never followed through with these golden opportunities handed to them on a silver platter. And when they actually tried to, the effort was too little or too late. The damage had already been done and the West will never fully be able to experience Front Mission in its entirety. Doesn't it seem sad that of the 13 video game titles (including the remakes) produced, only four of them have made their way outside of Japan?

If you think it does, you might want to reserve some judgment on how much of Front Mission stayed hidden from the eyes of the world. There's a lot more to the story than anything you've read about Square Co., Ltd. and Square Enix Co., Ltd. on their treatment of the Front Mission franchise overseas.

## STORYTELLING – THE MAGNUM OPUS OF FRONT MISSION

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If you are reading this, chances are that you are aware of Front Mission’s reputation as a series of video games with good storytelling. It’s not hard to search around the Internet and find online posters singing praises of the story quality in the Front Mission video games. “Geopolitical drama based on real-life world affairs”, “Mature plot with political and military themes” or “Not your ordinary mecha-based storyline” are some comments that can be found in various forums. These praises are accurate and are universally shared among Front Mission fans around the globe. However, the depth of these praises differs in a significant sense if you talk to a fan from Japan versus a fan from Western countries.

If you talk to the said fans from Japan and say Canada about the strengths of Front Mission, both likely will point out the storytelling as a strong point. Yet, there’s something that the Canadian fan will likely be unaware of that the Japanese fan can easily point to outright – the serialized nature of the story. Furthermore, the Japanese fan will more than likely place storytelling as **THE** selling point for the franchise, whereas the Canadian fan might see things differently and place it on a lower level. This distinction can be attributed to how Front Mission was marketed to these audiences.

Japan got to see the franchise start off properly and with its publishers aggressively marketing it to the audience, fans over there have a clear, unified perception of the storytelling. As some of our team members who spent time working and living in Japan put it, Front Mission is the **“24 of Japan – it may not be a blockbuster of mythical proportions, but it has been a major success and commands an extremely loyal audience that follows it religiously.”** And this is because they are aware of what Front Mission’s story really is – a serialized drama. Serial dramas are arguably the most immersive kinds of stories that exist, and as screenwriter Ron Moore of *Battlestar Galatica* fame puts it, cultivate very dedicated fans who want to explore the story beyond its original source material:

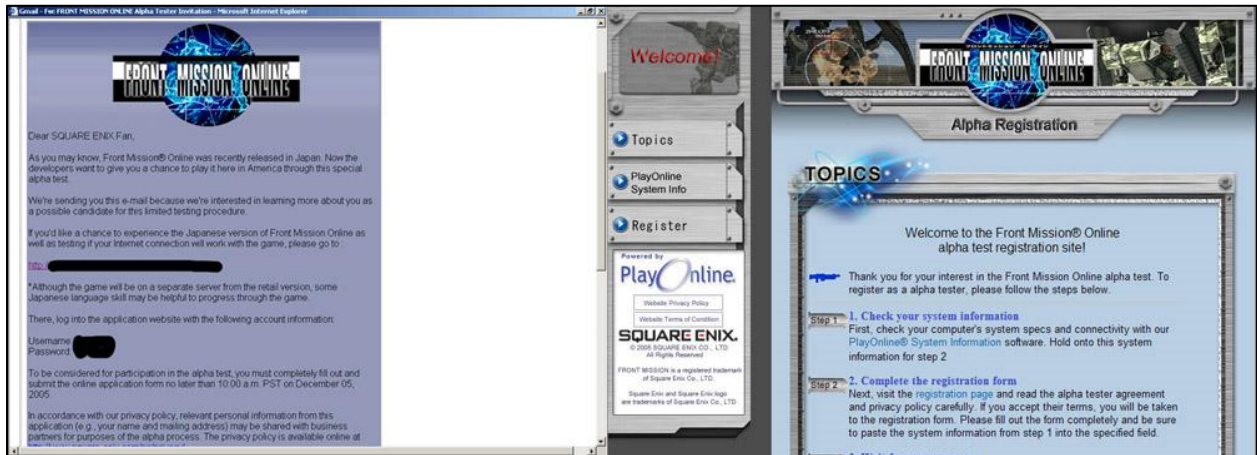
*THR: There’s a push among broadcast networks toward close-ended, non-serialized shows -- like crime procedurals -- the idea being that serialized dramas are increasingly high-risk.*

*Moore: I think they’ve always been high-risk and networks have always had an aversion to it. Network executives generally live in fear, and their fear is always that (the viewer is) going to be confused. It’s unfortunate because some of the greatest shows have been serialized and featured continuing characters. Audiences of serialized shows tend to become avid and dedicated viewers interested in exploring the show’s universe online and consumers of additional merchandising.*

(Hibberd, 2010)

Conversely, the common Western perception of Front Mission is that the stories are largely procedural and standalone. “Although this entry takes place within the same world, you do not need to play the last one in order to enjoy it” is the general impression that the Western Front Mission audience have about the franchise. Some people might notice a greater story connection between the entries than most, but as a generalization, this is an accurate deduction. Now why would fans in say Canada, the United States, or Europe feel this way about the franchise? Are you curious for an answer?

Well, it really comes down to this...Square Co., Ltd. and Square Enix Co., Ltd. never really tried to sell Front Mission overseas! They cancelled in-development localizations of several Front Mission entries, ignored the vast majority of titles, and censored scripts for the ones that did make their way to North America and Europe. (Boulette, 2007) (McCarroll, 2007) (ASCII Media Works, 2008) Consequently, the average North American or European fan would not have as much incentive to check out other Front Mission titles because they would think that there was no real continuity between them! Sure, these fans would have incentive to play through Front Mission titles as video games but to find out what happens next in the story? Not likely.



The Front Mission Online alpha test showcased an in-progress English localization...until Square Enix Co., Ltd. pulled the plug.

## SERIALIZED! THE BEAUTY OF A CONTINUING STORYLINE

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Unlike procedurals, serials put a tremendous emphasis on “cause-and-effect” as the storyline is revealed piece by piece. For example, television (TV) serials employ the usage of recapping segments during the beginning of an episode, and cliffhangers at the end. They are known for having an overarching storyline that spans seasons or the entirety of the show itself. In all cases, TV serials also contain smaller plot arcs which might span some episodes or seasons. Although they are hard to get into if you don’t start from the beginning, TV serials boast some of the strongest writing ever seen in the medium. (O’Neil, 2008)

Front Mission is no stranger to this formula as it employs both a grand overarching storyline and smaller, yet interconnected plot arcs. It also contains standalone plots which function more closely to procedurals, for the sake of not scaring off newcomers to the franchise. So, now that you know the terminology of a serial drama, how about some examples of it? Let’s start off with a few...

### O.C.U. Domestic Conflicts

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#### ACT 1 – Front Mission (O.C.U. Campaign)

#### ACT 2 – Front Mission 2

#### ACT 3 – Front Mission 3 (DHZ and U.S.N. Campaigns)



Figure 1: The internal conflicts which the O.C.U. witnesses in its member-states inevitably push it to the breaking point.

This multi-entry plot arc is the first major one introduced in the video games, and might be something you may notice if you played the O.C.U. campaign in Front Mission First for the Nintendo DS (or the fan translation of the original Front Mission) and Front Mission 3. This plot arc revolves around the Oceania Cooperative Union (O.C.U.), and its constant struggles to maintain stability and order within its territories. Long considered an equal to the United States of the New Continent (U.S.N./Unified Continental States or U.C.S. in localized releases), the O.C.U. begins to experience a strong wave of civil uprisings within their member-states. Although they appear to be united since their formation in 2026, the supranational union starts to show signs of unrest during the Second Huffman Conflict in 2090. The unrest continues to build, as economic disparity between the richer and poorer O.C.U. states becomes visible. Coupled with the O.C.U. Central Parliament’s neglect and failure to provide aid packages to their worst-off, a rise in anti-O.C.U. sentiments and nationalist movements manifests within the region.

This plot arc can be broken down into three acts:

**ACT 1:** The O.C.U. military's weak response to the initial U.S.N. offensive during the outbreak of the Second Huffman Conflict becomes criticized by O.C.U. citizens living on Huffman Island. This sentiment remains unchanged until the O.C.U. military begins to reclaim their former territories and starts winning the war. However, months after the end of the war, public opinion of the O.C.U. turns sour when war correspondent Frederick Lancaster reveals the true nature of the war in an article on August 12, 2092. Anti-O.C.U. sentiment grew in 2094 when the O.C.U. and U.S.N. governments succumb to international pressure, admitting that a portion of the article's reported content was indeed factual.

**ACT 2:** Since the aftermath of the Second Huffman Conflict, the O.C.U. Central Parliament initiates a series of reforms to weed out its corrupt elements. In the process, they fail to respond the needs of their poorer member-states such as the Alordesh. The Alordeshi economy, which thrived during the Huffman Conflicts, begins to wane as businesses pull out of the country. Feeling betrayed by the O.C.U., the Alordesh military stages coup attempts in 2098 and in 2102. Alordesh soon achieves independence when Burg Transportation CEO Saribash Labra presents incriminating evidence that the O.C.U. used the coup d'état situation to covertly test a secret weapon codenamed "FENRIR".

**ACT 3:** The successful secession of Alordesh from the O.C.U. leads to a rise in independence movements across the supranational union. Countries such as Indonesia and Singapore begin voicing anti-O.C.U. sentiments, both through peaceful and non-peaceful means. In 2106, pro-nationalist forces in the Philippines wage war on the government. Desperate to maintain stability in the region, the O.C.U. Central Parliament allows the U.S.N. to send in peacekeeping forces to help resolve their domestic conflicts. The supranational union is eventually pushed to the breaking point when coup attempts occur in Japan and the Philippines in 2112, both involving a stolen U.S.N. weapon codename "M.I.D.A.S.".

## NOTABLE QUOTES

*Is the Union Army asleep? Why couldn't they stop the Statesmen from entering the city!?*

### **Front Mission**

*Hm, your hometown eh? ...it's like a microcosm of this whole country. Rusted out buildings, lifeless markets, streets filled with the poor...everyone at a loss for what sort of future they might have...*

### **Front Mission 2**

*The O.C.U. right now, especially South East Asia, is hanging in a balance. If this balance is disturbed, the O.C.U. will break up for sure. Japan must maintain its current situation for the O.C.U.'s stability.*

### **Front Mission 3**

### ACT 1 – Front Mission Online

### ACT 2 – Front Mission (O.C.U. and U.S.N. Campaigns)

### ACT 3 – Front Mission 4 (E.C. and U.S.N. Campaigns)



Figure 2: The Republic of Zaftra's desperate attempts to resuscitate their battered economy attract the world's suspicions.

Also introduced alongside the aforementioned plot arc, this multi-entry plot arc might be another thing which you may have picked up if you played Front Mission or Front Mission First and Front Mission 4. This plot arc revolves around global conspiracies concocted by Republic of Zaftra. Formed out of the old Commonwealth of Independent States in 2015, the Republic of Zaftra is regarded as a formidable world power on equal footing with the European Community (E.C.). While experiencing rapid growth during the early years of their formation, Zaftra's fortunes soon begin to change. Since the African Conflict in 2034, the supranational union's economy starts to decline at an alarming rate. The E.C., their longest trading partner, stops importing raw materials from them when they discover an abundance of untapped natural resources in Poland. Additionally, poorly-implemented business policies and high taxation rates drive away foreign businesses. With economic recession declared in the 2070s, Zaftra begins to dabble in criminal and unethical activities in an attempt to revive their economy.

This plot arc can be broken down into three acts:

**ACT 1:** Investing resources into Sakata Industries' Bioneural Device (BD) Project, the Republic of Zaftra leads the development of a bio-computer application dubbed the Brain Type (B-Type) device. In an attempt to speed up the process, Zaftra conspires with elements inside the O.C.U. and U.S.N. militaries to stage an attack on a U.S.N. munitions plant on Huffman Island, leading to the Second Huffman Conflict in 2090. During the war, Zaftran agents on both sides kidnap countless soldiers, mercenaries, and war orphans for B-Type experimentation purposes. These irregularities are noticed by U.S.N. military intelligence, which then begins a complex investigation into these cases after the war ends.

**ACT 2:** After Zaftra's Peace Mediation Organization (PMO) orchestrates the end of the Second Huffman Conflict, Zaftran agent Michael Driscoll conspires with Sakata Industries CEO Koichi Sakata to advance to the next stage of BD development. He colludes with O.C.U. colonel Guri B. Olson in an attempt to use



the Canyon Crow mercenary outfit as experimentation materials. This plan goes awry when the Spirits of Huffman terrorist group informs the Canyon Crows of Sakata Industries' unethical activities, causing a chain of events leading to the conspiracy's exposure a year later. U.S.N. military intelligence then begins behind-the-scenes work to find the true masterminds behind the BD Project.

**ACT 3:** Since the revelations of the Second Huffman Conflict in 2092, nations around the world grow wary of the Republic of Zaftra. With an economy still in a heavy recession, Zaftrans migrating to foreign countries in search for better life, and growing distrust from the world community, a humiliated Zaftra disbands the PMO in 2094. With the E.C. refusing to import materials from them, Zaftra begins plotting a conspiracy to put them at war with the U.S.N. and force them to reopen trade routes. This conspiracy unravels when an E.C. research organization codenamed Durandal and deserters in the U.S.N. military discover a link between attacks on German military bases and a coup d'état in Venezuela in 2096.

### NOTABLE QUOTES

*Why are the Zaftrans here on Huffman Island again? They're not here to fight for our natural resources or territory...and they surely have no reason to get involved in a war that doesn't concern them...*

**Front Mission Online**

*The Zaftrans! They forced me to create the B-Type device! They needed the income to rebuild their broken nation...and they used Huffman Island as their testing ground!*

**Front Mission**

*'Peaceful'? You mean, 'deserted'. Many people left this city since I was last here. The Ukraine, Moldova, and Zaftra...these countries' economies have been on the decline for years. Zaftra was hit especially hard when it lost its income from exports to the E.C.*

**Front Mission 4**

**ACT 1 – Front Mission 2089**

**ACT 2 – Front Mission 2089-II**

**ACT 3 – Front Mission (U.S.N .Campaign)**



**Figure 3: Skirmishes along the Mail River border on Huffman Island bring the O.C.U. and the U.S.N. on the precipice of war.**

Formally introduced during the remake of Front Mission for the Sony PlayStation, titled Front Mission First, this multi-entry plot arc revolves around tension-filled border disputes on the fictional Huffman Island. A landmass in the Pacific Ocean discovered by the United Nations in 1995, Huffman Island is subject to dual colonization from both the O.C.U. and the U.S.N. in 2065. Tension builds up as both supranational unions fight over the island's territorial rights, giving way to the First Huffman Conflict in 2070. After two years of fighting, the war comes to an end through an agreement formulated by Zaftra's peacekeeping organization, the PMO. The agreement results in a permanent border running through Mail River, located directly in the middle of the island. An uneasy peace is maintained over the next 14 years. However, tensions begin to rise once again in 2086 as civil disputes flare up throughout the O.C.U. and U.S.N. territories on Huffman Island. With the shadows of war looming above their heads over the next three years, the O.C.U. and U.S.N. begin to prepare for the inevitable conflict which awaited them.

This plot arc can be broken down into three acts:

**ACT 1:** In 2088, the U.S.N. Central Government passes legislation that allows mercenaries to be formally integrated with the U.S.N. military. The O.C.U. Central Parliament responds to this act with similar legislation of their own, allowing private military contractors to serve with the O.C.U. military. Scores of mercenaries subsequently head off to Huffman Island by 2089 find employment within either world power. However, instead of waging all-out war, the O.C.U. and U.S.N. militaries assign these private military contractors to conduct espionage operations on the island. Rivalries between mercenary outfits soon erupt as these operations bring the O.C.U. and U.S.N. closer to war.

**ACT 2:** In the summer of 2089, word of an unknown mercenary outfit murdering mercenaries on both the O.C.U. and U.S.N. sides begins to spread around the island. With the name "Vampires" appearing in all of the destruction sites, the O.C.U. military assigns a mercenary outfit called the Chariots to

investigate the mysterious group. Their investigations put them on the front lines of the Mail River border struggles. Realizing the Vampires' intent to incite the fires of war, the Chariots embark on a crusade to eliminate the dangerous mercenary outfit. In the midst of their heated battles, the Chariots receive unexpected aid from elements within O.C.U. military intelligence.

**ACT 3:** Despite the destruction of the Vampires by the end of 2089, the threat of war still looms over Huffman Island. After botching an operation to surgically remove a South American guerrilla group called the Star of Freedom, U.S.N. officer Kevin Greenfield heads for Huffman Island in a last-ditch effort to remain in the U.S.N. military. On the island, Kevin begins his post with the U.S.N. military's special weapons research and development branch, codenamed the Nirvana Institute. Kevin participates in a series of espionage operations on behalf of the Nirvana Institute, as well as several border skirmishes by Mail River. These operations soon culminate in the birth of the Second Huffman Conflict.

### NOTABLE QUOTES

*As you know, the U.S.N. Central Government began recruiting private military contractors to defend their Huffman Island territories last year. Our own government thinks this is a ruse and that they are planning invasion operations with these hired guns...*

#### **Front Mission 2089**

*Those goddamn mercenaries need to be taken out before they unleash another war on this goddamn island! War-mongers like them are making our job of keeping the peace harder than it already is!*

#### **Front Mission 2089-II**

*We're preparing to go to war!?*

#### **Front Mission**

## OTHER UNTOLD STORIES

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Aside from the three aforementioned plot arcs detailed above, there are simpler cause-and-effect stories shown between two Front Mission titles. They may not be grandiose in scope, but these plot arcs serve to better bridge the gap from one Front Mission to another. Here are few noteworthy examples...

### South American Strife

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**PART 1 – Front Mission (U.S.N. Campaign)**

**PART 2 – Front Mission 4 (U.S.N. Campaign)**



Figure 4: South American countries fight against systematic oppression enforced by the U.S.N. Central Government.

Through the new U.S.N. campaign of Front Mission First, this plot arc was born. A relatively minor plot arc, this one revolves around the struggles faced by South American member-states of the U.S.N. Influenced by the formations of the E.C. and the Republic of Zafta, the nations of South America desire a unification of their own. Sensing an opportunity, the United States, Canada, and Mexico begin talks to unify the Americas. The dreams of unification become a reality when the U.S.N. is formed in 2020, with promises to eliminate the wealth gap between the poorer members of the supranational union and guaranteeing basic human rights for its citizens. Over the next few decades, the U.S.N. asserts itself as a world power and experiences an economic boom. Yet, while the quality of life in the U.S.N. is rated highly, the plight of the South Americans remains unresolved. As the U.S.N. Central Government's policies do little to reduce the economic disparity or provide a higher quality of life to Latin America, revolutionaries and independence movements begin to surface in various South American countries.

This plot arc can be broken down into two parts:

**PART 1:** In the early months of 2090, a U.S.N. Marines unit codenamed Black Hounds wages war against the Star of Freedom in Colombia. The battle tips in the favor of the guerrilla group when the Black

Hounds launch an assault on their headquarters in the Andes Mountains. The group's leader witnesses the assault, and shows it to their members via satellite broadcast, strengthening their resolve to fight for independence. Although the Second Huffman Conflict forces the U.S.N. to divert their attention elsewhere, former Black Hounds member Maria Paredes refuses to forget about the plight of South America. Having lived in poverty in South America, Maria makes a resolution to help her brethren.

**PART 2:** Six years since the war against the Star of Freedom, Venezuelan governor Bruno Diaz declares independence from the U.S.N. Citing the oppression of the Venezuelan people, Bruno demands that the U.S.N. recognize its sovereignty. Unwilling to accept his demands, the U.S.N. issues a response and declares that it will liberate the country within a week of the arrival of a U.S.N. army detachment. Complications arise during the coup when the revolutionary group known as la Alianza de Libertad Venezolana gets involved in the fight. The group receives aid from Maria, now an intelligence agent, who works with elements in the U.S.N. Central Government to ensure a peaceful resolution to the coup.

### NOTABLE QUOTES

*It turns out that the leader of the Star of Freedom was on the helicopter that got away. He used a broadcast satellite to show the world how we failed, and rallied his comrades into renewing the fight against us.*

#### **Front Mission**

*You must try to understand how we feel. We are tired of people from other countries doing as they please on our soil.*

#### **Front Mission 4**

**PART 1 – Front Mission 2**

**PART 2 – Front Mission 3 (DHZ Campaign)**



Figure 5: The CIU deploys its agents to investigate coup d'états and insurgencies occurring in O.C.U. member-states.

Front Mission 2 marks the entrance of this minor plot arc in the storyline. This two-entry plot arc revolves around the O.C.U. intelligence organization, the Central Intelligence Unit (CIU). Years after the formation of the O.C.U., the supranational union creates the CIU to oversee all intelligence operations within the region. Unlike the O.C.U. military intelligence whose loyalties lie with the O.C.U. military, the CIU works on behalf of the supranational union's best interests. To ensure this, the O.C.U. Central Parliament passes special legislation which grants the intelligence network the authority to freely investigate the activities of other O.C.U. intelligence organizations. Due to their unique position, O.C.U. military intelligence and the intelligence organizations of each member-state are wary of sharing information with CIU agents. The CIU's role within the O.C.U. grows in the wake of the Second Huffman Conflict and the conspiracies behind it. As the supranational union witnesses a rise of anti-O.C.U. sentiment among the populace, so do the CIU investigations into coups taking place in O.C.U. states.

This plot arc can be broken down into two parts:

**PART 1:** On June 12, 2102, the Alordesh military stages a nation-wide takeover on O.C.U. military bases and the Alordeshi diet, effectively ushering in the second Alordesh coup d'état. Overwhelmed by the surprisingly well-prepared Alordesh military, the O.C.U. military sends in a detachment to help liberate the country. Suspecting that the Alordesh military is receiving outside help, the CIU sends in agent Pike A. Reischauer to investigate the situation. In Alordesh, Pike works alongside Burg Transportation's revolutionaries and soon uncovers a complex O.C.U. military conspiracy. Reischauer also discovers the unwanted machinations of Intergehen, an arms maker that supposedly went bankrupt in 2089.

**PART 2:** After the allegations of the O.C.U. military conspiracy in Alordesh become public, the O.C.U. Central Parliament acts quickly to isolate the blame on the O.C.U. military. O.C.U. politicians enact new reforms to restrict the powers of the O.C.U. military and military intelligence. Coupled with the increased authority of the CIU, which was hailed for exposing the conspiracy, the government is able to offset the damage done to the O.C.U. However, the anti-O.C.U. movement continues to grow as domestic disputes arise throughout the region. The CIU is called upon once again to investigate a troubling development in Japan after the O.C.U. learns of their theft of a new U.S.N. weapon in 2112.

### NOTABLE QUOTES

*Intergehen was ruled against in an international court 13 years ago and went bankrupt. They were found guilty of selling technology they licensed from another company outside of the national restrictions in their contract.*

#### **Front Mission 2**

*Only the military leaders want M.I.D.A.S. The CIU has denounced M.I.D.A.S. The weapon is a threat to everyone. The CIU prefers Japan to remain the same. We don't want a JDF military dictatorship over the O.C.U.*

#### **Front Mission 3**

### PART 1 – Front Mission 2089

### PART 2 – Front Mission 2089-II

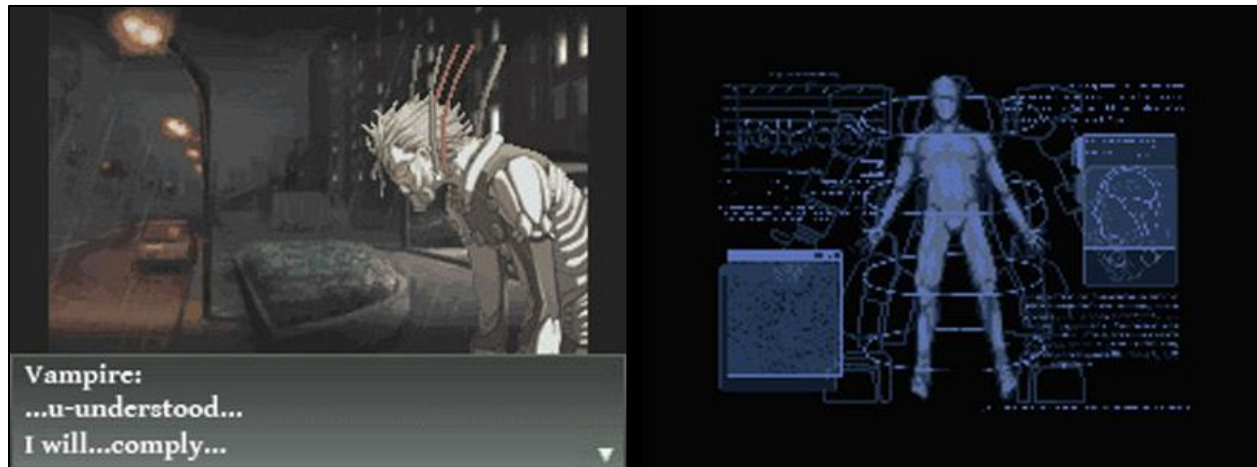


Figure 6: The B-Organization develops its own derivative bio-computer technology using live humans as test subjects.

Unlike the other two aforementioned plot arcs, this one plays a major role in the Front Mission titles it is in. Seen in Front Mission 2089 and Front Mission 2089-II (including the remake, Front Mission 2089: Border of Madness), the plot arc revolves around a shadowy project known as the Puppet Soldier (PS) Plan. In 2070, pharmaceutical company Sakata Pharmaceuticals merges with arms maker Heinemann Industries to form Sakata Industries. Attempting to catch up with wanzers development and make use of their medical base, the new company creates the BD Project to study how pilots can better interface with machinery. Upon seeing results of several bio-computer applications from BD Project experiments in the 2070s, a corporation known as the B-Organization begins their own research of the Bioneural Device. With a vast array of resources at their disposal, the B-Organization devises the Puppet Soldier (PS) Plan. The PS Plan has two purposes: to create soldiers that can “fuse” with machines, and to create a neural networking system in which the actions of said soldiers can be remotely controlled like puppets.

This plot arc can be broken down into two parts:

**PART 1:** In 2088, the B-Organization begins conducting experiments of BD technology at their Huffman Island branch. The corporation is approached by the Vampires mercenary outfit, who offer their services as test subjects and as security personnel. The B-Organization negotiates a contract with them, but with an added condition that the Vampires secure more test subjects for the PS Plan. In the following year, the mercenaries begin to conduct kidnappings across Huffman Island all while furthering their research of BD technology. These actions, combined with their indiscriminate killing of mercenaries from the O.C.U. and the U.S.N., eventually put them in the crosshairs of the O.C.U. military.



**PART 2:** Eager to destroy the Vampires, the O.C.U. military begins an investigation into the mercenary outfit and assigns the Chariots mercenaries to the task. Meanwhile, the B-Organization completes development of the networking system codenamed “Puppet Soldier”. The Vampires deploy the system out on the battlefield, testing it against both O.C.U. and U.S.N. border patrol forces. As the Chariots get closer to discovering the PS Plan with the help of O.C.U. military intelligence, the B-Organization orders the Vampires to assassinate the mercenaries. The battle reaches its climax when the Chariots prepare to assault the B-Organization’s facilities in the Larcus District on Huffman Island.

### NOTABLE QUOTES

*The core system is not quite ready for deployment yet. We still need to acquire more combat data before the system can be fully optimized to our client’s expectations.*

#### **Front Mission 2089**

*What an unholy piece of technology this is! For one individual to control the mind and body of its users...I shudder to think about what could happen if this invasive technology were applied on a grander scale...*

#### **Front Mission 2089-II**

### PART 1 – Front Mission 2089-II

### PART 2 – Front Mission (O.C.U. and U.S.N. Campaigns)



Figure 7: Two O.C.U. military units investigate a U.S.N. munitions plant in the Larcus District.

While not necessarily a plot arc in the traditional sense, there is one special story event that deserves an honorable mention here. And that story event is the one that started it all with a bang – the Larcus Incident from the original Front Mission! The Larcus Incident, the catalyst for the Second Huffman Conflict, was reported to have 62 casualties. Those who played Front Mission would know that only a handful of those kills were seen in the opening mission. So, where are the other 50 or so deaths? You can find out yourself in Front Mission 2089-II (or in the 2089-II campaign of the Nintendo DS remake Front Mission 2089: Border of Madness)!

### INTERESTING TIDBIT

The Larcus Incident holds a unique distinction among the numbered Front Mission video games. **It is both the very first story event in the storyline...and the very last event as well!** This event is the first thing a player sees upon starting Front Mission in 1995, and it is the final one they witness in the end of Front Mission 2089-II in 2007.

Major Entries Covered – Front Mission, 2, 3, 4

Minor Entries Covered – Front Mission Alternative, 2089, 2089-II, Online

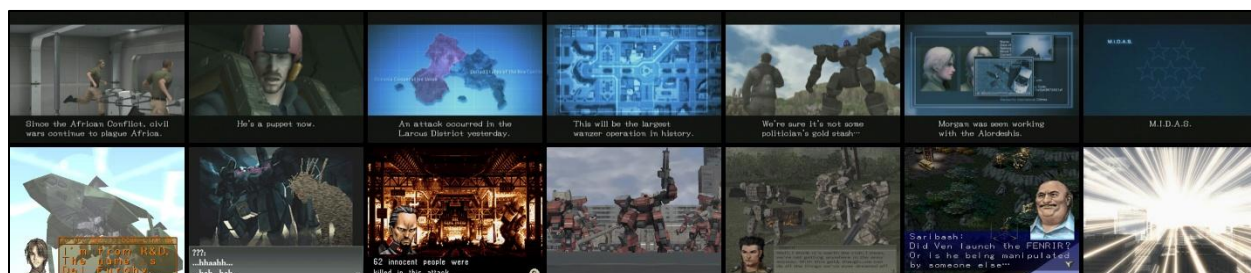


Figure 8: An encapsulation of Front Mission's history into one video game.

With all of these discussions of Front Mission titles, what about Front Mission 5 ~Scars of the War~? Well, as anyone who may have heard of it can guess, the story of the video game is a unique case. To put it in one sentence, Front Mission 5 ~Scars of the War~ runs the table. Rather than taking place during a period of time spanning a few months or years, the video game occurs in a time span of exactly 51 years. In those years, the video game goes through seven Front Mission titles: 2089, 2089-II, First, Online, 4, 2, and 3. Additionally, it also pays homage to Front Mission Alternative, which takes place decades before any of these entries do. So, what exactly is the video game about? In a word, it's an encapsulation of Front Mission storyline as seen under the eyes of U.S.N. soldier Walter Feng.

As a soldier for the U.S.N. military, Walter experiences an eventful life in which he participates in numerous conflicts and coup d'états around the world. As the subtitle implies, his life experiences are defined by the scars he received during the First Huffman Conflict. Likewise, Walter becomes a witness to hidden truths surrounding the nature of the great conflicts taking place over his lifetime. These truths pique his curiosity, and as the battle-hardened soldier starts to put the pieces together, he finds himself drawn to an ideological war between nationalism and globalization. The Huffman Conflicts, Alordesh coup d'états, domestic conflicts within the O.C.U., territorial disputes in the E.C. and the Republic of Zaftra, or the plight of South American countries...all of them lead right back to this war for the future.

### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

*Does mankind choose to learn from their mistakes and evolve their world into a borderless one? Or is mankind doomed to repeat history and regress back to a world with nation-states?*

## MORE THAN JUST VIDEO GAMES! THE EXPANDED UNIVERSE

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Now that the nature of Front Mission as a whole has been revealed, that's it right? It's just a video game franchise which could and should have performed better in the West if Square Co., Ltd. and Square Enix Co., Ltd. did their jobs and handled it properly, right? Wouldn't it be wonderful to have Front Mission, First, 2, 3, 4, 5 ~Scars of the War~, 2089, 2089-II, 2089: Border of Madness, Alternative, Gun Hazard, Online, and Evolved? No doubt, it would be amazing to have all of the Front Mission video games. **Yet, believe it or not, that wouldn't do the franchise any real justice.**

The full scope of the Front Mission storyline isn't exclusively restricted to the video game medium alone. Over its long 18-year tenure as of the time of this writing, the franchise has dabbled into the comics, films, novels, and even radio dramas. One could argue that all of these things have been done before in Japanese video game franchises such as Metal Gear, Resident Evil, Final Fantasy, or Castlevania. It could also be argued that these products in other media are generally just add-ons designed to make a quick buck, with non-canon stories not related to the video games themselves. This generalization is accurate for the most part...but a very inaccurate one for Front Mission.

During the initial planning stages of the Front Mission franchise by fall 1993 when he founded G-Craft, Toshiro Tsuchida sought to pioneer a new approach to handling video game franchises. Around this time, the young game developer was already committed to turning Front Mission into a serial drama due to his love for TV serials and serialized storytelling. However, Toshiro was not content with just "playing it safe" by developing video games and aimed for a more ambitious project. Being a communication studies major at Ritsumeikan University, he began to conduct research of Eastern and Western media which piqued his interests. While the developer had great knowledge of Eastern works such as *Ghost in the Shell* and *Rashomon*, his knowledge of Western ones were lacking. (Dengeki, 2004)

To remedy this, Tsuchida soon went on vacation to the United States of America for a few weeks to conduct his research. (NTT Publishing, 1995) What he found there was a new world of media which was far different from the one he knew in Japan. The man who once aspired to be a great filmmaker in the vein of Akira Kurosawa fell in love with the TV show *X-Files*, watching heralded war films such as *Full Metal Jacket*, learning about American literature classics such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Catcher in the Rye*, and reading *Batman* comics. (Media Works, 2004) Toshiro also saw the vast potential for the American video game industry to grow and realized that the future of the medium lied in the West, not Japan. Finally, in the midst of his flight back to Japan, Tsuchida found his eureka moment.

Realizing the importance of the Western market, the value of a serialized story, and the universal interest in traditional media, he decided that Front Mission would pioneer a relatively new concept which was coined "transmedia storytelling". Transmedia storytelling is a technique for telling stories across multiple formats, recognized for its use by mass media to develop media franchises. (Jenkins, 2006) **In the truest sense of the word, it implies that a story is designed for maximum immersion rather than simply diversifying a product line for merchandising purposes. The story does not employ**

**direct adaptations or gimmicky marketing tricks.** Such stories are generally serialized in nature, so it's accurate to say that transmedia storytelling is a more advanced form of serialized storytelling.

And so began the saga of Front Mission. Upon returning to Japan, he pitched the transmedia storytelling idea to his team and later on, to Square Co., Ltd. and its then-president Tetsuo Mizuno. Despite fierce resistance to the idea from conservative management executives, Mizuno was convinced and allowed Tsuchida to craft out his grand vision. (Media Works, 2004) Toshiro wasted no time in mapping out the Front Mission storyline, from video games to radio dramas. He enlisted the help of developer and Square Co., Ltd. executive Shinji Hashimoto to acquire resources for his planned works as well. The project was very risky, but it was also very ambitious. No one knew if the project could succeed, but as Square Co., Ltd. was not directly involved with the work, Tetsuo gave them the benefit of the doubt.

From that point onward, the rest is history. Front Mission became one of the key pillars for Square Co., Ltd. and **the company's main venue for mature-themed content.** Having seen commercial and critical successes in Front Mission products across various media, the franchise proved itself as a successful transmedia. (ASCII Media Works, 2008) Additionally, it proved that transmedia storytelling can work with video games under the right hands. By making it a viable option, Front Mission helped forge the path for the video game-based transmedia seen today. Before moving on to analyze the success of this high-risk, high-reward approach, let's look at examples of transmedia storytelling in Front Mission.

### A FINE EXAMPLE OF TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING



With an expanded universe covering films to novels, 24 also employs transmedia storytelling.

### Media Platforms – Video Games, Comics, Novels

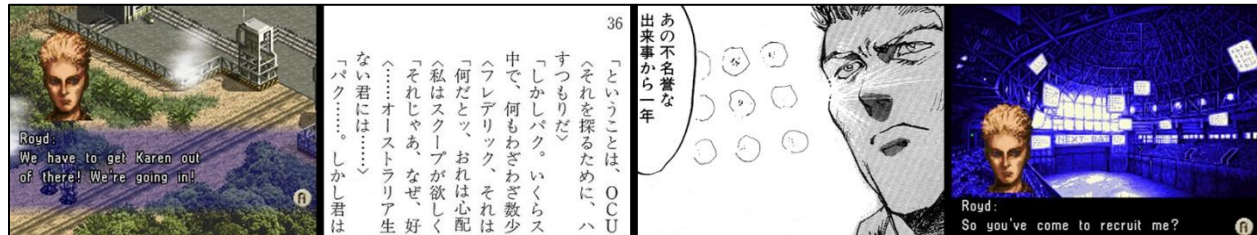


Figure 9: Details of what occurs during the year jump are explained in Front Mission's comic series and novel.

The video game that started it all on the Nintendo Super Famicom (also known as the Super Nintendo Entertainment System) was a memorable opening act. Yet, as some who have played Front Mission might know, there's a huge story jump from the opening mission to the next event in the video game. One minute you read about the aftermath of the Larcus Incident and in the next, the story fast forwards one year later. The events which occur during the off-year are later detailed in the U.S.N. campaign of Front Mission First, but that only covers the U.S.N. side of things. What happened to the bad luck-ridden O.C.U. captain Royd Clive and his recon unit after the incident? Why were the Canyon Crows formed in the first place? When did Frederick Lancaster head off for Huffman Island to document the Second Huffman Conflict? How come Royd and his fiancée Karen Meure decided to undergo the recon mission? All of these questions have an answer...but one won't find them in the video game. So, where are they?

In the Front Mission comic and the Front Mission: Front Line Report novel! Along with Front Mission, all three products were part of an aggressive transmedia marketing strategy devised by G-Craft. The Front Mission comic was designed as a lead-in to the Front Mission video game and began its life in magazine publication ASCII Comix on January 1995. With chapters coming out on a bi-weekly basis, the initial few were designed to help potential buyers understand the relationship between Royd and Karen. Once Front Mission was released, the comic's chapters then delved into untold events during the early stages of the Second Huffman Conflict. Eventually, the Front Mission comic ended with chapters taking place after the video game's story; in effect, these chapters acted as a lead-in for Front Mission 2. Soon after, the Front Mission: Front Line Report novel was released and further expanded on the events during the off-year. The novel also doubled as a lead-in to Front Mission 2 and to a lesser extent, Front Mission 4.

### INTERESTING TIDBIT

Despite its unusual nature, Royd is actually a real-life name. The name Royd has Norse roots and originates from Norway. In Norwegian, this boy name means "dwells in the clearing in the forest". As Royd Clive's ancestry is partially Norwegian, his first name is very much a legitimate one.

## Explained! Royd Clive – a Hero, or a Terrorist?

### Media Platforms – Video Games, Comics, Novels



Figure 10: Is Royd a hero in the eyes of one individual, or a terrorist in the eyes of another?

Fate loves being a cruel mistress to many souls of the Front Mission storyline, certainly so for the cursed Royd Clive. In the original Front Mission and its story supplements, Royd is a man who gets caught in the wrong place and wrong time...more so than he likes! While certainly not your generic do-gooder (though he's written that way in the censored localization of Front Mission First), Royd is a regular Joe who does his job by day and gets drunk at bars by night. Of course, this all changes when his fiancée Karen Meure is murdered on a mission he wasn't too pleased to participate in. Her apparent death initiates a chain reaction of events in which Clive begins to realize what truly happened to his lover...along with more bad luck! When he does learn the truth, one can't help but feel sorry for the poor guy. This, however, propels him to ending the nightmare on Huffman Island. By the end, Royd promises to break the cycle of madness and soon enough, it's the end for the original Front Mission.

Years later in Alordesh, the unsung hero appears to continue fighting for a just cause as a hired gun. Yet during the coup, the cast of Front Mission 2 begin to hear of ghastly crimes being committed by some mercenaries throughout Alordesh. Near the zenith of the conflict, the face of that evil is revealed...and it is none other than Royd himself! Exposed, Clive drops his nice guy act and reveals his new self: that of a terrorist fighting for a nationalist agenda. Driven by hatred, Royd reveals his crusade against the O.C.U. for their machinations in orchestrating "make-believe wars". The man also shows no remorse for his killings of civilians, rationalizing his acts as sacrifices in a war to stop the world's evils. Clive also reveals that he was sent off to prison sometime in-between Front Mission and Front Mission 2. What happened to the man who was cursed by fate? How was Royd arrested? Why did Royd transform from a victim of war to a man who became what he sought to fight against – the cycle of madness itself?

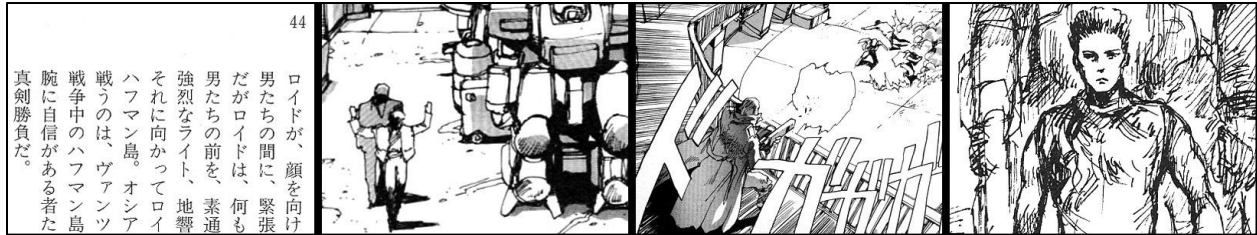


Figure 11: From “the means justify the end” to “the end justifies the means”, Royd succumbs to the cycle of madness itself.

This transformation is actually quite plausible, at least upon reading the Front Mission comic series, and the Front Mission: Front Line Report novel. As the novel mentions, Royd Clive is a character with many flaws. He suffers from anger problems, has serious issues trusting others, is emotionally sensitive, and often clashes with authority figures. Clive’s world is shattered when he ends up being used as the fall guy for the Larcus Incident and inevitably, the Second Huffman Conflict. With Karen dead, Royd slowly succumbs to the darkness inside of him. This is further seen through Royd’s arrest and jailbreak, which are revealed in the comic series. The mercenary gets captured while visiting friends in Australia and is soon put in prison. However, Clive is broken out by shady characters who have taken an interest in him since the Second Huffman Conflict. Wanted and with nowhere else to turn to, these folks begin to play on Royd’s grievances and persuade him to fight for their cause...

## TRANSCRIPT FROM FRONT MISSION 2

*Oh, I’ve got to thank you guys for sending me off to jail. Do you have any idea what the food was like in there? It was food fit for dogs...fucking dogs! I’ve been waiting for this day for so long...the day when I get my revenge!*

No one deserved to be thrown in jail more than you did!

*What kind of fool are you!? Listen idiot, I was fighting to free people from the grip of the super-states!*

You murdered civilians! Completely innocent people!

*Heh heh heh, if I deserve to be thrown in jail for what I’ve done, then you and the O.C.U. deserve the death sentence.*

What are you talking about?

*How many thousands of people do you think died in your little make-believe wars?*

...



### Media Platforms – Video Games, Comics

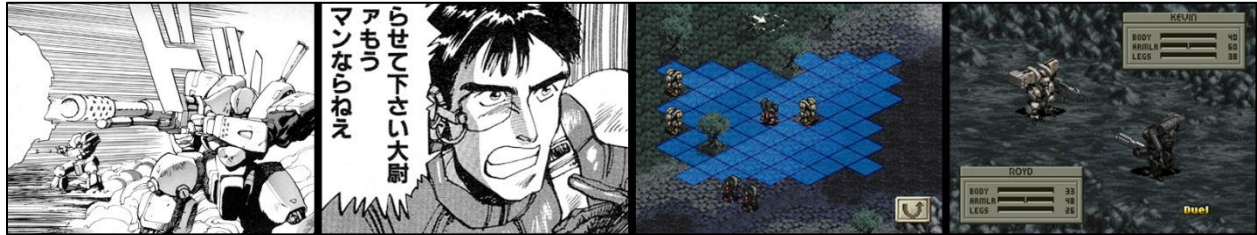


Figure 12: Who truly emerged victorious from the Mail River border skirmish...Royd or Kevin?

This is Kevin Greenfield, as some may know from the U.S.N. campaign of Front Mission First. The main protagonist of that particular campaign, Kevin is a squad commander for the Black Hounds and later on, the Silver Lynxes. Although he is a do-gooder of the genuine kind (read: not an angst-ridden teenager!), his character evolves in a very believable fashion throughout the story. Greenfield takes a lot of heat for his actions and while he admits that he's still got a lot to learn, one can't help but relate to his desire to make someone's day a little brighter. There's also something else unique about him – he actually doesn't debut in Front Mission First! Before Kevin's debut in Front Mission First, he first showed up in the Front Mission comic. That's a good eight years before his introduction in the video game! Kevin's role in the Front Mission comic is a really small one, but it's a doozy. It depicts his battle against Royd Clive at the Mail River border...including the outcome of the skirmish not shown in Front Mission First!

### FACT FILE

#### Kevin Greenfield

**Date of Birth:** February 24, 2067

**Nationality:** U.S.N. America

**Height:** 174 cm

**Weight:** 58 kg

**Blood Type:** O Rh+

**Marital Status:** Married

**Occupation:** U.S.N. Army Second Lieutenant

#### **Affiliation:**

U.S.N. Navy 4th Marine Expeditionary Unit, Special Operations Unit "Black Hounds"

U.S.N. Army 334th Mobile Company, 112th Special Armored Infantry Unit "Silver Lynxes"

U.S.N. Army Border Patrol Force

Media Platforms – Video Games, Novels



Figure 13: Who does Sayuri have to thank for her natural talent in analyzing and deciphering situations?

This is Sayuri Mitsuzuka, as some may know from one of the three main viewpoints in Front Mission 2. As one of the protagonists of Front Mission 2, Sayuri is an officer for O.C.U. military intelligence and is the adjutant for fellow officer Lisa Stanley. Ever the sarcastic one, she injects some fourth wall-breaking moments with her witty comments about the good, bad, and ugly situations which their unit gets caught up in. Mitsuzuka does, however, have a role in the story as she helps Lisa gather information on the Alordesh coup forces' movements. There's also something else unique about her – she actually doesn't debut in Front Mission 2! Before Sayuri's debut in Front Mission 2, she first showed up in the Front Mission: Front Line Report novel. That's a good two years before her introduction in the video game! Sayuri's role in Front Mission: Front Line Report is a doozy. While she doesn't play a crucial role per se, the novel drops a huge bombshell – Sayuri is the daughter and only child of Frederick Lancaster!

**FACT FILE**

**Sayuri Mitsuzuka**

**Date of Birth:** September 30, 2080

**Nationality:** O.C.U. Japan

**Height:** 159 cm

**Weight:** 45 kg

**Blood Type:** B Rh+

**Relatives:** Frederick Lancaster (father), Naomi Mitsuzuka (mother)

**Occupation:** O.C.U. Ground Defense Force Second Lieutenant

**Affiliation:**

O.C.U. Ground Defense Force, 126th Infantry Division

O.C.U. Ground Defense Force Intelligence Agency, Second Division

Central Intelligence Unit

## Honorable Mention: The World of Gun Hazard

### Media Platforms – Video Games, Comics, Films, Novels, Radio Dramas



Figure 14: Gun Hazard may only be one game, but it covers more media platforms than the main Front Mission universe.

And here is another honorable mention to give out! It may not be a part of the main Front Mission universe, but Front Mission Series: Gun Hazard deserves some recognition. Despite only having just one video game entry, this spin-off of the main Front Mission line has a unique distinction that can't be ignored. Front Mission Series: Gun Hazard covers the most media platforms of them all – **video games, comics, films, novels, and even radio dramas!** Each of these products greatly flesh out the world of Gun Hazard, from exploring the events that lead into the video game to gaining insights into the minds of the characters themselves. And unlike the main Front Mission universe, everything is wrapped up in one go!

### INTERESTING TIDBIT

The live-action commercial film of Front Mission Series: Gun Hazard was produced by PMC Pictures (which is now sadly out of business) based in Los Angeles, California, America. Shot in Santa Monica, California and Tonopah, Nevada in America, the film was directed by the trio of Yoshihiko Dai, Clarence Major, and Misha Suslov. Yoshihiko Dai is a Japanese director known for directing numerous commercials and films such as the Romancing SaGa 3 commercial and The World of Golden Eggs. Clarence Major is an American art director whose film works includes Terminator 2, Robocop, and End of the Spear. Misha Suslov is a Russian cinematographer and long-time resident of Hollywood, having worked on films such as The Seagull, Strangers Kiss, and Prancer. (Wharton, 1986)

Name	Profession	Notable Works
Yoshihiko Dai	Director	The World of Golden Eggs, commercials for Final Fantasy II, Romancing SaGa 3, Kirin, Honda, and Dragon Quest VI
Clarence Major	Art Director	Terminator 2, Robocop, Redemption High, Something to Sing About, End of the Spear
Misha Suslov	Cinematographer	The Seagull, Strangers Kiss, Black Moon Rising, Prancer

## A WORK OF ART GREATLY MISUNDERSTOOD

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Front Mission is truly a one-of-a-kind work...yet it is a very misunderstood one. And given all of the unique circumstances surrounding its creation and nature, it is quite easy to see why. Like an onion with many layers, a person's understanding of the franchise will vary depending on how many layers have been peeled off. From the outside, one could see Front Mission as being another Square-based video game brand known for its turn-based strategy mechanics, usage of mecha, and near-future settings. It would be safe to say that most people who have heard of Front Mission, or played at least one of the localized Front Mission titles fall under this boat. There is nothing wrong with this assessment of the franchise, but it's just a deceptive cover of what Front Mission is...**and a very deceptive one at that!**

### The Outer Layers of the “Onion”

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Figure 15: The localized Front Mission video games.

Upon peeling the first layer of the onion, which would be the equivalent of playing at least two of the localized entries, one's assessment of Front Mission will no doubt change. A fan might realize that each Front Mission plays different from one another...or that the stories share linkages between each other.

Upon peeling the second layer of the onion, or playing two of the numbered Front Mission titles and Front Mission Evolved, a fan might start to discover new things about the brand. For example, they might come to realize that a Front Mission is not quite pigeon-holed into the turn-based strategy genre.

Upon peeling the third layer of the onion, or having played all of the localized Front Mission entries, a fan will very likely come to the realization that there is more to Front Mission than what meets the eye. Provided they paid close attention to the stories, one could deduce that there are numerous linkages and unexplained plot details between the Front Mission titles.



Figure 16: All Front Mission video games, excluding the Front Mission Mobile titles.

At this point, there is a very high chance that the fans that peel off the third layer of the onion will possess a growing hunger to learn more about Front Mission. For the uncommon few that make it this far, they begin dabbling into the worlds of importing and fan translations. And it is through here that one can really start to appreciate the unique nature of the Front Mission video games.

Peeling off the fourth layer of the onion means that a fan has played through the localized Front Mission titles and the fan translations for the original Front Mission, Front Mission: Gun Hazard, and Front Mission 5 ~Scars of the War~. Several new truths become realized at this stage, the most significant being that the plots of Front Mission titles are actually parts of a larger overarching storyline. One will also realize that Front Mission is no stranger to change when it comes to how it's played out. Lastly, a fan might notice that the fan translated Front Mission is a darker tale that has a decidedly different feel from the localized Front Mission First for the Nintendo DS.

Peeling off the fifth layer of the onion means that a fan has played through all of Front Mission titles. For Western fans, this would mean everything but Front Mission 2089-II and Front Mission Online (unless you tested the English alpha version or lucked out somehow). By this stage, one can finally see the Front Mission video games for what they are – unique freaks of nature that embrace the winds of change. They offer diversity in terms of genre and playability, artistic directions, musical compositions, and even the feel of the overall game is never the same!

Yet despite all of this, **one and only one constant remained – the storytelling itself.** A fan could dislike aspects of a Front Mission title, but story was one aspect they could always count on to deliver. Those lucky enough to reach this rarefied air come to understand what makes Front Mission so appealing and

it all comes down to this. And as stated in the sections above, Front Mission is in actuality a serial drama, ruled by an overarching storyline coupled with smaller plot arcs which run through multiple titles. Individually, the stories of Front Mission are impressive in their own right. However, collectively they form a multi-layered, mature, and realistic tale that has very few peers within the video game realm.

### ANALYSIS OF PLOT ARCS

Story	2089	2089-II	1	Online	4	2	3
O.C.U. Domestic Conflicts			X			X	X
Zaftran Conspiracies			X	X	X		
Huffman Border Disputes	X	X	X				
South American Strife			X		X		
CIU Investigations						X	X
Puppet Soldier Plan	X	X					
The Larcus Incident		X	X				

**Table 1: Numerous plot arcs in the Front Mission video games generally overlap with one another.**



Figure 17: A collection of various Front Mission video games and other media.

For virtually everyone outside of Japan, including the writers of this article, the video games of Front Mission were the be-all and end-all of the franchise. At least, they were until the same writers of this article realized there were more secrets of Front Mission waiting to be discovered in 2009. Strangely, Front Mission wasn't all about just video games, strategy guides, soundtracks, and action figures...it had more than that. Near the tail end of the Front Mission 5 ~Scars of the War~ fan translation, the team decided to embark on a quest to document everything. And what they learned completely their breath away. In the midst of their journey, they were also aided by **some special folks who know, live and breathe Front Mission**. As the team were taught the true history of Front Mission, its development, its intended audiences and Japan's reaction to it, everything came to full circle...

...the sixth and final layer of the onion lies within the expanded universe of Front Mission itself. The fans in Japan are already aware of this layer, so to speak, and knew about it since 1994. But for everyone outside of the country, this layer was completely hidden from the world. Even the few writers of this article who lived in Japan during the great journey had no idea it even existed! As luck would have it, the aforementioned special folks that the team got in touch with decided that these dogged foreigners at least deserved to know the truth behind Front Mission. Thus, the foreigners were introduced to a completely different side of the story...

## Everything Begins and Ends with One

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Unbeknownst to all but the Japanese, Front Mission's story is told through two distinct approaches: the worldview and the individual view. The worldview, which focused on the supranational unions and other large impersonal forces that be, is seen mostly in the Front Mission video games. The individual side of the coin, on the other hand, is seen mostly through Front Mission's expanded universe. How can someone tell the difference between the two approaches? The answer to that is simple. Think of any numbered Front Mission title and look at its story and settings from a bird's eye view. Let's use Front Mission 4 for an example. The story follows two distinct campaigns featuring their own distinct set of characters as they uncover the conspiracy behind their crises. That being said...

*How much of the story focuses on the world events as opposed to the characters themselves? How are the characters presented throughout the story? Do they physically appear in-game, or do they appear through their wanzers and 2D portraits? Do they receive significant amounts of character development, or is it kept to a minimum?*

If a fan can properly answer these questions, then they already are aware of the differences. So what does the expanded universe portray with its focus on the individual view? The individuals themselves! Yes, the expanded universe has its wanzers, war battles, and geopolitical intrigue...but that's not really its main selling point. What it does, and does extremely well, is revealing **how a character's background, their life experiences, and driving forces are intrinsically linked to the many crises seen through the worldview.** Most of these developments are done away from their war machines, and away from the battlefield itself. But don't think for a second that the countless souls of Front Mission have normal everyday lives inside the bubble of society.



Figure 18: Unlike the video games, the expanded universe holds nothing back in the way of mature and truly deep issues.

Within the protected barriers of society, the characters of Front Mission fight a different kind of "war"; a war against materialistic ills of society, a war against government oppression, a war against fraudulent peace, a war against media blackouts and cover-ups, and ultimately, a war against themselves. These "wars" also pose a very different kind of danger to these battle-hardened warriors; **some of the issues they face include post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide, rape, drug addiction, alcoholism, insanity, systematic brainwashing, police brutality, and poverty.** Each character's attempts to deal with these



demons set in motion events that bring them to their current predicament as of the Front Mission title they are introduced in...and the ensuing chaos that follows.

Toshiro Tsuchida, his right-hand Hideo Iwasaki, and his team of writers (all of which boast impressive credentials in film, television, and novels) knew the whole story could not be properly represented in the video game medium. Furthermore, with video games being seen as “toys for kids” at the time, Square Co., Ltd. advised G-Craft to limit the amount of mature content being put in the original Front Mission and in any future works. (Dengeki, 2004) Consequently, Tsuchida decided to employ the principles of transmedia storytelling to devastating effect. In a transmedia entity, each media platform provides their unique contribution to the greater whole in a way that that maximizes their impact. For example, **comics provide backstory pieces, while video games allow for exploration of the fictional world.** (Jenkins, Seven Myths About Transmedia Storytelling Debunked, 2011)

Staying true to their word, G-Craft limited the mature content placed in the video games and used traditional media platforms to cover the heavier issues. The video games were designed to reach out to a broader audience including teenagers, whereas the other media were specifically tailored for the mature adult. As such, Tsuchida, Iwasaki, and the writing team took great care on the delivery of the story to ensure that every piece was put in their proper positions. In doing so, they were able to craft a work of art that could stand alone through its video games, but was written in a way that moved fans into exploring its expanded universe. And having said that, let’s look at a case study of how each medium’s stories tie back into the link between the world and the individual...

Comic – Front Mission

Novel – Front Mission: Front Line Report

Video Game – Front Mission



Diagram 1: In transmedia, each media platform’s unique qualities are used to tell the story from different angles.

During the opening of the original Front Mission, the player learns that Royd is engaged to Karen and after watching her wanzor explode, they see how distraught the soldier is. When Clive is given the chance to find his fiancée’s killer by joining the Canyon Crows, it triggers a series of events where he indirectly ends up exposing the truth behind the Second Huffman Conflict. The video game shows all of these details and provides adequate justification for Royd’s actions. What it does not cover in greater detail are two things – Royd’s relationship with Karen, and the psychological trauma he suffered from being used as the scapegoat for inciting the Second Huffman Conflict. However, by reading the Front Mission comic and the Front Mission: Front Line Report novel, these topics get their due coverage.



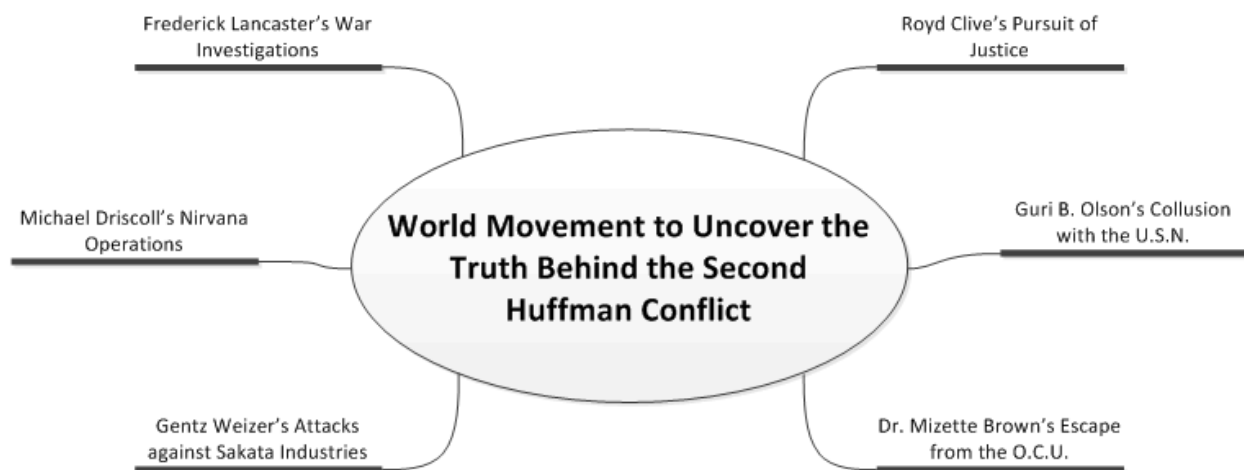
Figure 19: The backstory between Royd and Karen’s relationship is detailed in the comic series.

The early chapters of the Front Mission comic provide the backstory for Royd and Karen, where the two are shown to have a troubled but enduring relationship. Their love for each other is displayed when Karen saves Royd from near-death during a military skirmish, and when he returns the favor by rescuing her from the human traffickers. Given all of the implied struggles the two of them have conquered during their relationship, Clive’s reaction to Meure’s “death” makes a lot more sense. The impact of the scene and the soldier’s desire to avenge her loss is thereby fully realized if the player read the Front Mission comic first. The comic aside, the early chapters of the Front Mission: Front Line Report novel gives the reader an insight into Royd’s thoughts as he copes with the fallout from the Larcus Incident.

In-between the time of his discharge from the O.C.U. military and his recruitment into the Canyon Crows, Clive reveals his struggles against post-traumatic stress disorder. Believing that God took away his life, the soldier toys with the idea of suicide to free himself of the guilt he feels for not protecting Karen and inciting the war. However, as a religious person, Royd admits to himself that he cannot commit such a grave sin and tries to move on. Clive then becomes an arena fighter to unload his rage through the heat of battle and gets addicted to alcohol in hopes of numbing the pain. On most nights, he looks up to the stars and prays to God for a chance to find Karen’s killer, as that would give him a reason to keep living. Royd’s prayers are realized when Guri B. Olson makes him an offer he can’t resist.

When one reads the two books and then plays through the video game, Royd’s intense desire to get justice for Karen no longer feels bare-bones or tacked on. Instead, his actions, his motivations, and his attitude towards other Canyon Crow members, all makes sense now. Ultimately, Clive comes off as a tortured soul whose life becomes rudderless due to tragedy. As he struggles to put the pieces of his broken life back together, fate gives him a chance to attend to unfinished business. When Royd accepts the opportunity, he becomes so one track-minded that he foregoes forming any bonds in the Canyon Crows. In the novel, the mercenary reveals that while he truly wants to befriend his new comrades, he refrains from doing it to ensure their safety and so that no one stops him from his pursuit of justice.

Over the course of the video game, Royd’s pursuit of his self-interests collides with that of many others. As Royd begins to realize more details behind Karen’s death and the identity of her killer, he gets caught up in a conspiracy about the war itself. Eventually, his self-interests and that of other individuals he encounters snowball into a global movement to uncover the Second Huffman Conflict’s true nature.



**Diagram 2: Each individual’s self-interests eventually cross paths, giving way to a greater social phenomenon.**

As the diagram above shows, there are six individuals whose self-interests inevitably bring about a movement to uncover the true purpose of the war. Through his pursuit of justice, Royd is put on a

collision course with the other individuals in a domino effect. When Royd accepts Frederick Lancaster into the Canyon Crows to let him document the war, the mercenary soon crosses paths with Dr. Mizette Brown. The medical doctor's attempts to hide from the prying eyes of the O.C.U. lead him to Gentz Weizer next. Gentz's assaults on Sakata Industries awaken Royd to the nature of the Nirvana Institute's operations led by Michael Driscoll. While locked in battle against Karen's killer, Driscoll informs Clive that he's not the only artificer behind the war. Upon this realization, Royd finally understands the truth behind it all. He is ultimately pitted against the man who initiated this domino effect...Guri B. Olson.

Everything soon comes to full circle and in the story's denouement, Frederick encapsulates Royd's experiences, as well as his own and that of the other Canyon Crows, into a news article. The article becomes a massive sensation with the world public and triggers a global movement to uncover the truth behind the Second Huffman Conflict. What begins as one man's journey for vengeance translates into something far greater in the end.

## THE “MIDAS TOUCH” OF TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING

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After all of this discussion on transmedia storytelling, what are its benefits and how has it helped Front Mission in the long run? Let's take a look at them.

### The Benefits of Transmedia

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The most significant advantage of transmedia lies in its ability to invite maximum engagement through audience participation. (Rutledge, 2011) **In other words, the story encourages its audience with strong call-to-actions to explore the fictional universe in other media platforms.** Each piece of the greater whole plays its part in showing an individual that there's more to the puzzle than just the original source material. A novel-based transmedia might incorporate cliffhangers at the end of a novel to motivate them into exploring a comic which takes place after the book. Upon reading the comic, one might take an interest in its backstory. An advertisement placed in the back of the comic mentions that the said backstory elements can be explored in a video game, serving as incentive to get it. The individual beats the video game, noting that it ends in a cliffhanger as well...which coincides with the next novel release.

This strong emphasis on call-to-action leads to another major benefit for transmedia storytelling – return on investment (ROI). To any neophytes in the world of finance, ROI refers to the amount of money gained or lost on an investment in relation to how much money was put into it. For example, if a company spends 1 million to make a video game and gets 3 million back from sales, then they have a good ROI. In contrast, if the same company only makes 500,000, then their ROI is poor. This is a huge issue for any businesses trying to sell off their products or services to prospective clients. If their product takes off, then the business thrives. However, if their product fails to catch attention, then the business suffers. In most cases, one failed product generally translates into a death sentence for the company.

Transmedia storytelling has the potential to avoid this issue because it doesn't offer just one form of entertainment. By providing multiple forms of entertainment that tell the story, the brand has less chances of dying because of a failed product. A horrible video game or a poorly-written comic won't do much damage if everything else is solid and continues to attract its targeted audience. The downside to this is the quality of the transmedia story itself. **The whole point of transmedia storytelling is the message itself and if it falters, the brand will surely fail.** On the other hand, a powerful and captivating story can provide huge benefits financially. When done right, a brand can experience huge increases in ROI, extended shelf-life, and create ancillary revenue streams. (Bucker & Rutledge, 2011)

Like serial dramas, transmedia brands possess the advantage of a dedicated customer base. Although they may not appeal to everyone, transmedia entities can cultivate fiercely loyal fans that will support it wholeheartedly. Whether the brand is thriving or experiencing some rough patches, these fans can be counted upon to keep it going. This becomes more pronounced since the story isn't being told through one medium alone. Fans that don't like a brand's comics can still support it through the video games and

so on. The financial value of having customers in the long term cannot be underestimated by anyone wishing to dabble in this new approach to entertainment.



Figure 20: Front Mission started out with a comic series and fittingly, it will end with another comic series...is it really a video game-based transmedia, or a comic-based one?

One last key benefit that transmedia storytelling offers is accessibility. To be specific, this kind of accessibility lies in offering different points of entry. What does this mean? Basically, a point of entry refers to how an individual can experience the story through one of the media platforms it employs. Let's use an example of a comic-based transmedia that covers radio dramas and video games. Imagine that someone finds out about this brand through a friend. This individual wants to start off with the comics, but can't find any in a bookstore. What they did find, however, is a CD containing one of the radio dramas. This person buys it and upon listening to the radio drama, decides that they like it and orders the comics online. As one can see, the fan wants to find the comics but because of availability issues, is introduced through the radio drama instead. This is an advantage unique to transmedia because **it allows anyone to jump into the story without needing the original source material first.**

### Transmedia and Front Mission

Okay, so what about Front Mission? Well...it surely has benefited from transmedia storytelling and in all of the ways mentioned above! When Front Mission 5 ~Scars of the War~ was released, Toshiro Tsuchida and his team commented on the experience on their old development blog (which is now unfortunately out of service). Tsuchida and many developers, especially ones who made up the original core team, wrote lengthy posts expressing their thoughts on the journey, how the franchise evolved, and thanked all of the fans who supported them. One universal thought shared among everyone was the simple fact that they actually managed to complete their work. All of the developers, including Toshiro himself, admitted that they thought reaching the finish line for such an extremely ambitious project was just wishful thinking. Yet, the impossible became possible because **it did happen.**



**Diagram 3:** The release schedule for all Front Mission Series: Gun Hazard media, in order from earliest to latest.



**Figure 21:** A collection of Gun Hazard media showing: behind the scenes footage of the live-action film, an episode script from the radio drama, and a full-color page from the comic series.

When interviewed on why Front Mission was so successful and still continued its existence a few years later, Toshiro Tsuchida answered with a detailed analysis of the brand. (ASCII Media Works, 2008) In his eyes, the success of Front Mission really came down to the fact he designed it as a transmedia entity. The first major point Toshiro explained was the brand’s call-to-actions through aggressive marketing. During the franchise’s conception, he scheduled the releases of Front Mission media in a way that would convince people that it wasn’t just video games only. The original Front Mission, for example, had been placed in-between its comic series and the Front Mission: Front Line Report novel. Front Mission Series: Gun Hazard media was also planned similarly. Its video game was sandwiched in-between the live-action film and radio drama which preceded it, and the Gun Hazard: A Mercenary’s Iron Legs novel. By time of the novel’s release, its comic series began circulation in magazine publication Comic Bean.

<p>●「ガンハザード」が発売されることを初めて知ったのは、何によってですか？ (番号に1つだけ○をつけてください。)</p> <p>1. ゲーム誌の記事や広告 2. ゲーム誌以外の一般誌の記事や広告 3. テレビのCM 4. テレビ番組 5. 店頭ポスターやチラシ 6. 友人・知人からの情報 7. 「ガンハザード」ラジオドラマシリーズ(ラジオ情報) 8. その他( )</p> <p>※上の1か2に○をつけた人のみお答えください。 ・ゲーム誌とは以下のどれですか？</p> <p>a. Vジャンプ b. 週刊ファミ通 c. ファミリーコンピュータマガジン d. 電撃スーパーファミコン e. マルカッツスーパーファミコン f. The スーパーファミコン g. 覇王 h. ゲームウォーカー i. じゅげむ j. その他( )</p> <p>・広告や記事をご覧になった一般誌は何ですか？ ( )</p> <p>●「ガンハザード」を、お買い求めになった理由は何ですか？ (上位3つ以内まで○をつけてください。)</p> <p>1. 雑誌の記事や広告を見て面白そうだったから 2. 雑誌のランキングを見て 3. テレビの宣伝や番組を見て 4. 友人・知人の評判がいいので 5. イベントや店頭で見たりプレイして 6. 「ガンハザード」ラジオドラマシリーズ(ラジオ情報)を聞いて 7. ジャナルが好き 8. スクウェアのソフトだから 9. その他( )</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>フロントミッションシリーズ ガンハザード</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>本書のことを何で最初に知りましたか。(ひとつだけ)</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 月刊コミックビームの記事・広告で <input type="checkbox"/> その他のアスキー発行の雑誌記事・広告で <input type="checkbox"/> アスキー以外の出版社の記事・広告で <input type="checkbox"/> 書店店頭で <input type="checkbox"/> 友人・知人から <input type="checkbox"/> その他( )</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>本書購入の動機はなんですか。(複数回答も可)</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 元となったゲームに興味があるから <input type="checkbox"/> 絵やストーリーが気に入ったから <input type="checkbox"/> その他( )</p>
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Figure 22: Even the survey cards want fans to realize that Front Mission is more than just video games...ever listened to the Gun Hazard radio drama series or read the Gun Hazard comic series?

As a result of this marketing approach, Toshiro noted changes in audience expectations for the brand upon analyzing the feedback from survey research. Fans initially thought that Front Mission would just be a turn-based strategy series of video games when it was announced at a game conference in 1994. (ASCII Corporation, 1994) These expectations changed with each passing Front Mission product, video game or otherwise. By the time of Front Mission Alternative’s release, the Japanese audience no longer saw the brand as video games only. The feedback from Front Mission Alternative’s surveys indicated that the fans **were more interested in seeing the franchise branch out into other media instead of just video games**. Also, many felt that the video games themselves could not simply placed in one category and wanted more genre deviations. Lastly, with respect to future Front Mission products, **the consensus was overwhelmingly in favor of checking out and/or purchasing them**. (Dengeki Editorial, 2007)

By cultivating a dedicated customer base in Japan, Front Mission was able to weather through a myriad of storms, including a significant layoff of Square Co., Ltd. employees during the development of PlayOnline and Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within from 1999 to 2001. (ASCII Media Works, 2008) The lackluster Front Mission 3 and the brand’s hiatus from 1999 to 2003 did not result in heavy losses either. Some fans fell out of the circle, but the vast majority of them still believed in Front Mission’s vision. When the Front Mission Project was officially announced in 2003, the franchise picked up where it left off as if nothing happened. Tsuchida and his developers, however, wanted to draw in new fans and also saw new opportunities to expand Front Mission thanks to technological advances. Re-releases of Front Mission media and the Front Mission Mobile project were two things that came out of this realization.





Figure 23: Advertisement for the Double Mission Campaign.

As ways to help newcomers get caught up with the story, Front Mission First and Front Mission History were released. The former was a remake that contained a new campaign to play through that had links to the upcoming Front Mission 4. Front Mission History, on the other hand, was a compilation of Front Mission First, Front Mission 2 with bug fixes and new playability options, and Front Mission 3. Both of these products were released in limited numbers, especially so with Front Mission History; only 20,000 copies of it were produced. Tsuchida also worked with distributors of other Front Mission media to ensure that they were re-released as well, if only in limited numbers. (ASCII Media Works, 2008) These moves were combined with a marketing contest called the Double Mission Campaign. In the contest, those who purchased Front Mission First or Front Mission 4 would be eligible to win prizes, the biggest being able to test out the upcoming Front Mission Online video game. (Square Enix Co., Ltd., 2003)

Aside from the re-releases, the team created the Front Mission Mobile project to take full advantage of the rise of mobile phones in Japan. The developers initially planned to create video games on them, but this changed when Hideo Iwasaki proposed something more ambitious. His proposal revolved around developing applications which would give fans a more participative role in the story. (Dengeki Editorial, 2007) Iwasaki laid out a well-thought framework for his idea and after a few weeks of discussion, it was approved by Tsuchida and the other developers. These new applications ran in sync with the Front

Mission Mobile titles and Front Mission Online to encourage maximum participation from the audience. Coupled with aggressive marketing plans, the Front Mission Mobile project became a major success for the brand and within Square Enix Co., Ltd.'s mobile gaming line. By spring 2007, over 300,000 mobile phone users had downloaded the Front Mission Mobile service. (ASCII Media Works, 2008)



Figure 24: These two Front Mission Mobile applications redefine “staying connected”.

One such application allowed fans to play as intelligence agents gathering data for the various militaries of Front Mission. Twice a month, players would receive notifications on their mobile phones with a list of possible mission assignments; only two missions can be taken per month. These assignments were played out either as a puzzle-styled game or in the classic turn-based strategy style. By completing an assignment, the player received a data file with information on characters, organizations, or events in the Front Mission universe. Additionally, doing these missions could affect the flow of Front Mission 2089. For example, completing specific assignments can change the layout of missions or even unlock secret missions in the video game. Another application that encouraged fans to be more participative revolved around Front Mission Online. Users of this application would receive frequent updates on the war situation, from maps of territories being fought over to news about upcoming story campaigns.

By keeping the brand accessible and keeping the audience engaged through innovative call-to-actions, Tsuchida believes that Front Mission was able to attract new customers and expand its media influence. (Dengeki Editorial, 2007) In turn, this kept the core customer base involved with the transmedia entity and thereby ensuring its continued success. Even after the completion of his vision, Toshiro noted that interest in Front Mission remained high among the Japanese. The visionary desired to see how far his creation could continue, so long as fans supported it. On that note, he also disclosed other tidbits about

his creation. Front Mission was critically and financially successful as a brand, but its achievements aren't solely the work of the video games. A large portion of its success comes from the comics and novels. When compared to other peers in their respective mediums, **Tsuchida admitted that the books are arguably more successful than the original source material itself!** (ASCII Media Works, 2008)

The Front Mission video games were never meant to be blockbuster sellers, according to Hideo Iwasaki and the franchise's main planner Ko Sato. Tasked by Tsuchida to handle the budgeting and planning details of the transmedia entity, Iwasaki and Sato put reasonable expectations for each product across the media platforms. The two established a sales window for the video games ranging from 200,000 to 400,000, with 500,000 being the cap; they rationalized these numbers as being accurate for a fairly successful video game. (ASCII Media Works, 2008) They also took into account development costs for each project and did so with much thought. When asked about it, Ko revealed that the team reused a lot of development assets to drive the costs down as low as possible. As an example, he talked about how Front Mission 4 and Front Mission Online utilized the same graphics engine and assets. The two projects also shared the same sound assets, resulting in even lower development costs. (Dengeki Editorial, 2007)

As a result of careful budgeting and aggressive marketing, the Front Mission video games have made good ROI and yielded profits. Iwasaki and Sato placed lower expectations on the other media, which were only designed to supplement the main product line. With respect to the comics and novels, Sato revealed that they were not expected to sell no more than several ten thousands. At best, these were meant to provide extra profit or cushion financial blows depending on how well a Front Mission video game was received. Even Tsuchida himself did not place too many eggs in these baskets and only hoped that enough fans would purchase them to make a quick buck. (ASCII Media Works, 2008) **How wrong they were.** Once Front Mission made its debut in the realm of books, the fans were hooked on and never let go. First editions sold out quickly, multiple reprints were ordered, and word-of-mouth ensured that those sales had long legs. Coupled with rave reviews, the team had a real gold mine on their hands.

To Toshiro Tsuchida, the unexpected successes of the Front Mission books proved that the audience was buying into the transmedia mantra...and also enjoy real storytelling! When the great visionary conceived his grand vision, he knew that the average game writer would not do transmedia storytelling any justice. One writer would not be enough for such a tall order either. And though Toshiro and his right-hand Hideo Iwasaki (who also works as a writer on the side) can tell a good story, two men would not be sufficient for the task. Deciding that he needed to bring in the heavy artillery, Tsuchida contacted many scriptwriters, film directors, and novelists to see who would be interested in crafting his story. (Dengeki, 2004) Soon enough, he created a dream team of writers accomplished in their disciplines to help him and Iwasaki pen the tale of Front Mission. What Toshiro did not anticipate was that the star power he had recruited would serve as a major selling point for the brand.

Writer	Notable Works	Notable Accomplishments
Kazuhiro Matsuda	Arc the Lad	Columnist for political journals
Norihiko Yonesaka	Xenosaga	Planner for the Xenosaga media franchise
Hiroyuki Saegusa	Ghost in the Shell	Planner for the Ghost in the Shell media franchise
Masahiko Maesawa	Galerians	Director of animated short films
Yasuo Ohtagaki	Moonlight Mile	Winner of numerous storytelling awards for comics
Taishu Matsuda	Steel City Agharta	Illustrator of comic series and novels
Fumihiko Iino	Bad Tuning	Japan Horror Novel Award winner
Hiroshi Yamaguchi	Argento Soma	Writer of animated television shows and novels
Toru Akitsu	The Brave Harpy	Japan Fantasy Novel Award winner

**Table 2: Loaded with scriptwriters, film directors, and novelists, this is no ordinary writing team...**

The stories of the Front Mission video games were penned using a three-man unit with Toshiro Tsuchida, Hideo Iwasaki, and a third writer. The third writer was also tasked with penning any other media related to the video game they worked on as well. (Dengeki, 2004) This high-powered writing team included the likes of Norihiko Yonesaka, Hiroyuki Saegusa, Masahiko Maesawa, Yasuo Ohtagaki, Fumihiko Iino, and Toru Akitsu. All of them being known for their work on mature-themed stories and for some, their writing awards (Iino won the Japan Horror Novel Award for his work on Bad Tuning). For many, this was all they needed to place their faith in Front Mission. They were not disappointed. While the video games were praised for their political intrigue and military conspiracies...**it was the personal struggles and triumphs of the people involved that stole the show in the expanded universe. Even the writers admitted their best works lied in the other media, not video games!** (ASCII Media Works, 2008)

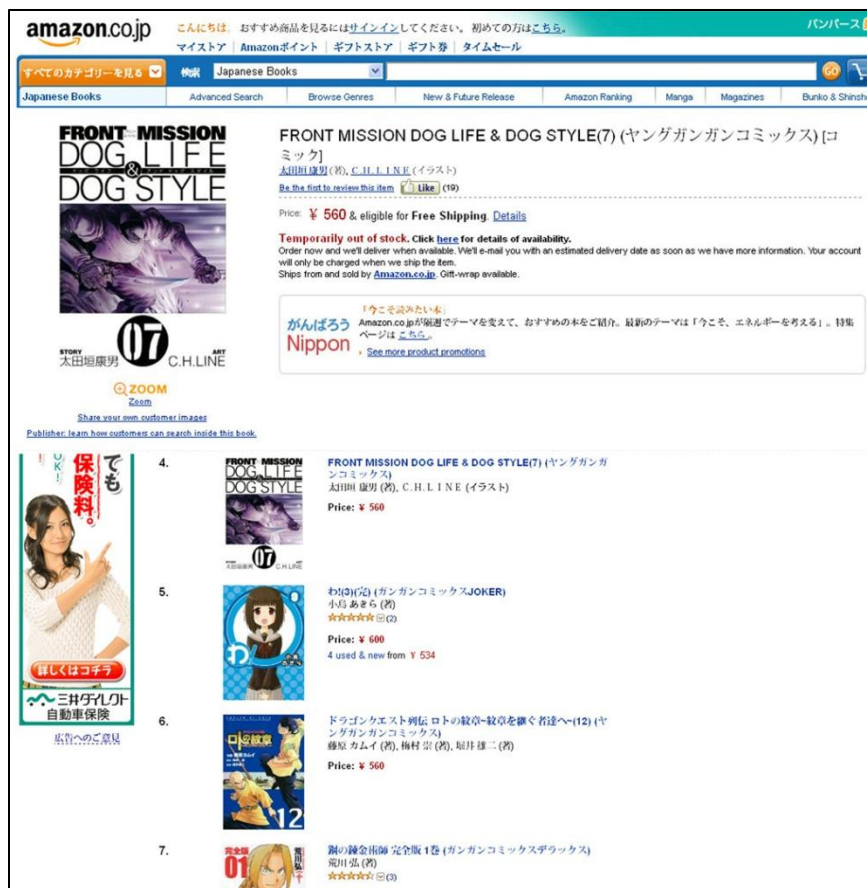


Figure 25: Front Mission continues to remain a dominant force in Japanese comics...



Figure 26: ...to such a degree that it even has Korean and French translations now!

With star power and top-class storytelling, the Front Mission books achieved success that not even its creators anticipated. Toshiro Tsuchida soon admitted that the brand did not need the video games to survive on its own. (Dengeki Editorial, 2007) Whereas the video games competed with many high-profile releases, the comics and novels were dominant in their respective mediums. Front Mission Dog Life & Dog Style, an original comic series, exemplifies this. It quickly became a marquee series for magazine

publication Young Gangan since debuting in 2007, receiving colored chapters and gracing the front cover. The omnibuses were often sold out from pre-orders alone and outperformed its peers in sales charts. **Even *Dragon Quest*, a video game heavyweight, could not outsell Front Mission with its comic!** (Square Enix Co., Ltd., 2011) The successes of Front Mission Dog Life & Dog Style eventually prompted Square Enix Co., Ltd. to release Korean translations in South Korea. (Haksan Publishing Co., Ltd., 2010) French translations of the comic series were also soon released in France as well. (Kameyoko, 2011)

As of the time of this writing, Front Mission only exists in the comic medium through Front Mission Dog Life & Dog Style. The last video game title, Front Mission Evolved, was a lackluster release devoid of any influence from the core developers. The lack of any guidance from the creators of the franchise in Front Mission Evolved proved to be fatal as the video game failed to achieve critical and commercial success. With the end of the Front Mission Mobile service on February 28, 2011, it's safe to say that this is the end of video games for the brand. Most of the core team, including Toshiro Tsuchida, has left Square Enix Co., Ltd. to pursue other ventures. Some continue to produce video games, while others have begun new journeys in other media platforms. Either way, their work on Front Mission will never be forgotten. **It was one thing to actually complete the highly ambitious project, yet it's something else to actually continue it beyond its expected lifespan!**

## Creating a Transmedia Brand, Part 4 – Results

The following section shows the shipments and sales data (in the case of Front Mission Mobile, downloads) for each Front Mission video game in Japan. Estimated lifetime to date (LTD) sales for all video games except Front Mission 2089: Border of Madness and Front Mission Evolved are recorded as of August 2008. (ASCII Media Works, 2008) This also includes sales data for re-releases of each Front Mission title. Initial shipment data for all video games except the above-mentioned are also included. (ASCII Media Works, 2008) Front Mission 2089: Border of Madness data is taken from a Square Enix Co., Ltd. fiscal report written on November 2008. (Square Enix Co., Ltd., 2008) Front Mission Evolved sales data for the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 versions are taken from a Famitsu Top 1000 sales chart for all video games in 2010. (Geimin.Net, 2011) No data is available for the PC version of the video game.

### Guide:

IS – Initial Shipments, refers to the initial shipments produced when the video game was released

LTD – Lifetime to Date, refers to sales recorded since the video game was released

N/A – Not Available

Entry	IS	LTD	Re-releases
Front Mission	500,000	520,000	None
Front Mission 2	450,000	530,000	Ultimate Hits
Front Mission Alternative	200,000	260,000	Ultimate Hits
Front Mission 3	300,000	320,000	Ultimate Hits/PSone Books/Millennium Collection
Front Mission First	50,000	70,000	None
Front Mission History	20,000	20,000	None
Front Mission 4	250,000	300,000	Ultimate Hits
Front Mission Mobile	N/A	300,000	None
Front Mission Online	100,000	100,000	1st Anniversary Limited Package
Front Mission 5 ~Scars of the War~	250,000	330,000	Ultimate Hits
<b>Remake and port releases</b>			
Front Mission, WonderSwan Color	20,000	20,000	None
Front Mission First, Nintendo DS	50,000	60,000	None
Front Mission 2089: Border of Madness	50,000	50,000	None
<b>Other releases</b>			
Front Mission Series: Gun Hazard	300,000	300,000	Virtual Console
Front Mission Evolved	N/A	90,427	None

**Table 3: The sales data for all Front Mission video games, including re-releases, in Japan.**



This next section shows the sales data for each localized Front Mission video game. These numbers are only for the North American releases, as there is no source to rely upon for European releases. Only Front Mission Evolved sales for the Xbox 360 version as of the first four weeks of its release are included in the analysis. No data is available for the PlayStation 3 and PC versions of the video game.

Entry	Sales
Front Mission 3	87,845 (Square2005, 2006)
Front Mission 4	118,000 (Kart, 2008)
Front Mission First, Nintendo DS	28,000 (Kart, 2008)
Front Mission Evolved	30,543 (Biggs, 2010)

**Table 4: The sales data for all Front Mission video games released outside of Japan.**

Last but not least is a minor section on the other Front Mission media. The table below shows the printing data for several Front Mission comics and novels. Although it does not display the most recent printing for each product, their edition and release date information should give people an idea of how popular they are in Japan. Excluding Front Mission Dog Life & Dog Style omnibus volumes 03 to 07, the books have cumulatively sold over 1 million copies as of August 2008. (ASCII Media Works, 2008) No data is available for the Korean and French versions of the Front Mission Dog Life & Dog Style omnibuses.

Entry	Edition	Release Date
Front Mission 4 I ~Elsa #1~	First printing	September 24, 2004
	Second printing	October 15, 2004
Front Mission 4 II ~Elsa #2~	First printing	September 24, 2004
	Second printing	October 15, 2004
Front Mission ~The Drive~	First printing	April 25, 2007
	11th reprint	October 26, 2010
Front Mission Dog Life & Dog Style 01	First printing	November 25, 2007
	15th printing	June 22, 2011
Front Mission Dog Life & Dog Style 02	First printing	June 25, 2008
	10th printing	April 19, 2010
Front Mission Dog Life & Dog Style 03	First printing	December 25, 2008
	Seventh printing	April 19, 2010
Front Mission Dog Life & Dog Style 04	First printing	August 25, 2009
	Third printing	February 15, 2010
Front Mission Dog Life & Dog Style 05	First printing	February 25, 2010
	Third printing	June 22, 2011
Front Mission Dog Life & Dog Style 06	First printing	September 25, 2010
	Third printing	June 22, 2011
Front Mission Dog Life & Dog Style 07	First printing	June 25, 2011
	Second printing	August 17, 2011

**Table 5: The printing data of various Front Mission books in Japan, including release dates for reprinted editions.**

## CONCLUSION

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Front Mission is many things. It is a transmedia entity. It is a serial drama. It is a video game. It is a comic. It is a novel. It is a film. It is a radio drama. It is a mobile phone application. All of these pieces form to create a most magnificent puzzle unlike any other. Putting all of those pieces in place is a tall, strenuous, and costly task for any individual...no doubt about it. However, those who do make a real effort to try and understand Front Mission receive an experience that cannot be described with mere words alone. And that magical experience is something that only transmedia storytelling can provide.

That is why it is truly heartbreaking that the Front Mission franchise sputtered and crashed before it even got out of the starting gates. A work which was very intentionally targeted at the English-speaking world with very strong Western overtones never truly broke out, thanks to the handiwork of Square Co., Ltd. and Square Enix Co., Ltd. In his closing words after reflecting on the grand journey, Toshiro Tsuchida expressed his disappointments that the audience he desired will never have a chance to truly experience Front Mission. (ASCII Media Works, 2008) All the company he once worked for allowed this audience to see was the very tip of the iceberg...nothing more, nothing less. Front Mission as just another video game-based franchise was not what he intended others to view his greatest creation as.

Toshiro Tsuchida's greatest hope for all who dabbled into the world of Front Mission was that they would see it as something more than just an artistic work, or escapism. Rather, his hope was that people would be awakened to the many realities of the world we live in, and to disturbing real-life trends that could very well usher in a new "dark age" within our lifetime. (ASCII Media Works, 2008) To influence an individual to the point that they question these developments and then take an active role in ensuring that our world's future took a brighter path...this was what Tsuchida desired. Front Mission as "realistic impression of our world's future" is spot-on as its world represents a future of many possibilities. In the best case scenario with the full Front Mission story being available globally, Toshiro hoped that people around the world would be moved to stand up and make a difference. Although this did not happen, his work achieved its intended effects...to an audience he least expected would be affected by it.

Aside from its usage of mecha themes, Front Mission is very much West-first, Japan-last as a story. Take out the robotic angle and Front Mission really is just another **24**...albeit it is more politically charged, military-oriented, slower-paced, and global in its setting. Both are mature stories that confront some very serious questions and themes which many people do not want to answer, or even contemplate. Both are early pioneers of transmedia storytelling and are successful models of it for their respective core media platforms; Front Mission with video games and **24** with television. And both of their core narratives revolve largely around a big cast of English-speaking Caucasians, from protagonists to the antagonists...not very Japanese at all. All of these are things that Toshiro Tsuchida (who is also an avid follower of **24** himself) thought would not appeal to his native countrymen. Yet surprisingly, they did.

Since the genesis of his creation, Toshiro Tsuchida was always intrigued by the changing perceptions of Front Mission via survey research. (Dengeki Editorial, 2007) What he did not foresee was that along with

these changing perceptions, the audience were also being changed from within. On the old Front Mission Project Blog lied a section where fans could submit feedback to the developers directly. Toshiro noted that among the many feedback he read, he was fixated on personal confessions from fans whose lives were truly changed by Front Mission. (ASCII Media Works, 2008) One such fan was moved to study robotic engineering in hopes of developing tools to aid the physically disabled. Another individual was convinced that social work was their true calling and changed careers from computer technician to drug counselor. A third person became involved with municipal politics as an activist thanks to Front Mission.



From mere escapism to serious discussions on the 2011 Japanese earthquake, the Japanese nuclear reactor accidents, the Libyan civil war, and the growing EU economic crisis...Front Mission has profoundly impacted the lives of its Japanese fans.

These personal confessions revealed a genuine change in one's mindset, their perceptions of the world around them, and how they view their own lives. Even though these all came from Japan, Tsuchida was very humbled to know that his work **did make a difference in the lives of many**. This is the greatest kind of gift that an artist can ever receive for the works that they create.

In closing, the writers of this analysis hope that all of you reading it have learned a lot about Front Mission and of its true nature. It may be too late to reverse the damage that was dealt to the brand. Most people outside of Japan do not care much about Front Mission these days as well. Indeed, many on the team who have helped write this piece wonder if it will even make a difference in enlightening overseas fans about the franchise. Yet, it would also be an injustice to not shed any light on this truly one-of-a-kind work. The special folks who have given up their time to enlighten the team on the religion of Front Mission would not want this knowledge to remain exclusive to a select few foreigners either. No one on the team imagined a journey that began on December 2007 out of a desire to localize Front Mission 5 ~Scars of the War~ could lead to all kinds of new experiences.

Since then, everyone has undergone their own transformations as a result of both working on the localization projects and understanding Front Mission. While some realized their true calling in life, reinvented themselves into better individuals, or regained confidence in their passions, everyone learned the dangers of an apathetic society. Most importantly, everyone developed a great appreciation and knowledge of current global and local issues, and the means to confront these problems head-on. This, the team believes, is the reasoning behind the words “Front Mission”. All of us have a “mission” in our lives that we must commit to, and the only way we can ever finish it is to move to the “front”.

*So...what is the “Front Mission” of your life, and how do you intend to finish it?*

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