

Command/Logistics/Ordinance Warning Network (CLOWN)

Wheels within wheels within wheels.

The outermost layer of this onion is the Command / Logistics / Ordinance Warning Network, which is a minor Department of Defense program designed to 'track emerging strategic potentialities in the existing conceptual battlespace.' That this makes no sense as a concept is not generally held against CLOWN; most people who notice it also notice its preferential place in the military budget, and simply assume that the program is of half-illicit benefit to various federal politicians and bureaucrats. It's not a *big* preferential place in the military budget, so it's also not really a big deal.

The next layer? Well, CLOWN came to the DoD from the CIA during the Church Committee scandal in the 1970s, and -- like every other weird program in the military of a certain type -- is linked to Project MKUltra. Was it? Nobody's saying. What they **are** saying is that CLOWN has access to a very small but replenishing pool of remote viewers and other psionic individuals who can provide useful national security insights.

It's subtle. Nobody can make anybody's nose bleed, or pick next week's lottery numbers. But operations supported by CLOWN consistently have a success rate and return on investment that's at least twenty percent higher than operations that do not. That's enough to make people willing to keep the group running. It should be noted that, at this level, there's no hard-edged attempt to keep CLOWN ultra-secret. Simple utter social and professional ostracization is typically enough to keep would-be whistleblowers from doing something stupid.

And then there's the **final** layer. Remote viewing is nonsense. Psionics itself is a myth that our modern era tells itself because the alternative is admitting that magic is real, spirits exist, and necromancy works. The 'psions' are actually magicians who contact the spirits of the dead for information; and for some reason, they seem to find it easiest to reach the dead spirits of clowns and comedians. Joseph Grimaldi, Jean-Gaspard Debureau, Dan Rice, Charlie Chaplin, Emmett Kelly, John Belushi -- they come when called, and can be persuaded to do various tasks for their summoners. A spirit can go anywhere, listen to any conversation, observe any situation; knowing a rival's intentions and plans is a benefit for any military.

It is up to the GM what price the spirits demand for their participation, of course. Perhaps the ghosts are simply bored and lonely, and thus happy to do these things for no real recompense. And perhaps they are not.

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