

OPS

The world

This one-hour drama takes us inside the world of a private military company (PMC).

Officially, mercenaries are illegal. That's why, when we see the results of their operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, or Kosovo on the evening news, the PMC's involvement is rarely mentioned. It's why, when their employees are captured, killed, or accused of a crime, newspaper accounts usually refer to them as "contractors" or "security workers."

This show is about them.

JOE MCGINTY and THEO VANOWEN are partners in Falcon International Security. Based in an unprepossessing office in small-town Connecticut, staffed by ex-soldiers and intelligence from the U.S. and other countries, Falcon is the modern face of private warfare.

They're a small company, basically a mom-and-pop shop. They work contract-to-contract, trying to find short-term, highly profitable missions:

- wartime deliveries
- executive protection
- kidnapping extraction
- combat training
- foreign surveillance, and so forth.

Often, they're the guys you call when you can't call anyone else.

Their missions take them to the most dangerous and conflict-ridden corners of the world—Africa, South America and the Middle East. Their clients are foreign governments, VIPs, corporations, and the U.S. military—who use PMCs for "gray zone" missions where policy or politics forbid sending U.S. troops. They also on occasion work as sub-contractors to the industry giants, the Halliburton's of our world.

While there's usually some action element in most episodes, this isn't the A-TEAM. Tonally and structurally, it's more of a procedural. Subtract the supernatural element, and THE X-FILES is a good comparison:

Every week, our two heroes are thrust into a new environment, trying to make heads-or-tails of a crazy situation. The difference is that instead of trying to solve a mystery, our guys are trying to complete a mission. Which is usually a hell of a lot more difficult.

The characters

THEO VANOWEN brings to the job the special ops skills and knowledge acquired in ten years as a Marine, plus ten more as a private soldier. Nicaragua, the Balkans, the first Gulf War: he was there. Hard-drinking, profane, volatile, and susceptible to paranoia, Vanowen is a scary guy. But we like him. He's fiercely loyal to his friends and to his own private code of behavior—a code he couldn't explain if he tried, and would laugh if you accused him of having one.

JOE MCGINTY is the business half of the partnership. A fast-talking, hustling John Cusack type from a blue-collar background, McGinty has hitched his star to Vanowen's and is determined to make the company a success. He has zero military training, and is a fish out of water in any situation involving violence or physical courage—but in his own way, he shares Vanowen's code of loyalty.

Joe and Theo are our Mulder and Scully. Their adventures will send them around the world and bring them into contact with a diverse range of supporting characters. But whatever happens, it's always about these two guys. Partners. Brothers.

Structure of a typical episode

The basic pattern common to most episodes is:

1. The guys get a mission (or we start in the middle of one).
2. McGinty and Vanowen attempt to carry out the mission.
3. Things go horribly awry or take an unexpected turn. (The act breaks.)
4. McGinty and Vanowen scramble to come out ahead. Sometimes, this means a firefight, but just as often could be negotiation, seduction, or hot-wiring a jet.
5. They face the consequences of their success or failure.

Settings can be anywhere—but especially Iraq, Afghanistan, Africa, Southeast Asia, eastern Europe, the former USSR, Central and South America. Many episodes will visit the “home base” in Connecticut, but it's not a given.

A few examples of the kind of jobs they might accept, ranging from relatively innocuous to totally against international law (if they get caught):

- Guard a VIP travelling in a war-torn country
- Guard an offshore oil rig from attack by rebels
- Evacuate civilians from a danger zone
- Train a foreign army to help it win a civil war
- Storm a building and rescue the hostages
- Recapture a mine from rebels who have seized it

The initial mission isn't always the focus of the episode. A simple guarding operation can explode into an all-out firefight. An attempt to rescue a kidnap victim may find the guys defending a school under siege.

Sometimes our guys discover halfway through the job that the client lied to them.

Sometimes complications arise between our guys and other forces who are on the same side. For example, if things get really hot, the U.S. might send in the Marines to save our heroes. Or they might decide not to, leaving our guys high and dry. Conversely, other PMCs or armed individuals operating in the area might pitch in to lend a hand—or show unexpected opposition.

The one constant is that in every episode, at least *one* expectation gets turned completely upside down or inside out—whether it's the mission itself, the underlying situation, or where our sympathies lie.

Inevitably, faced with a dilemma, our heroes will search for a way to do, if not the right thing, at least *a* right thing. It's a thin line, but it's the only thing separating them from the bad guys.

Some episodes are tragic. Some are funny. Some are both.

Most episodes end on a positive note, albeit one rich with irony. Conversely, the occasional "down" ending episodes always have at least a glimmer of light—even if it's only the strengthening of the bond between our heroes.

Dynamic between the characters

McGinty and Vanowen first met at SOS where they were both employed: Vanowen in the field, McGinty on the business and sales side. McGinty—relatively new to the PMC world—recognized Vanowen, with his connections and experience, as the kind of guy you can build a company around. He pestered Vanowen successfully to quit along with him and start their own PMC.

McGinty's in his mid-twenties, Vanowen around 40.

- Vanowen is good at things like taking a rifle apart and putting it back together in the dark, or knowing how many men you need to guard an airstrip. McGinty is good at selling and negotiating.
- McGinty likes jobs that will bring in big money, or get them to the next level, or in with the right kind of people. Vanowen likes jobs that won't get fucked up.
- McGinty is driven to succeed, to prove himself. Vanowen, deep down, is driven by the desire for redemption: to do one good deed.

- McGinty is susceptible to beautiful women, eager to be their knight in shining armor. Vanowen has long since outgrown this particular romantic fantasy.
- Vanowen has been part of so much bad stuff, and been screwed over so many times, that he's grown a hard shell of cynicism to protect himself. Underneath, he's a closet idealist.
- McGinty is a blue-collar guy who yearns to be accepted by the ruling class. Vanowen believes the ruling class exists to screw over guys like him, and wants no part of it.
- McGinty's moral awakening is gradual over the course of several seasons and involves the big questions, the big patterns of the world: who is behind such and such, and what does it mean? Vanowen's morality is always focused on the present situation, here and now.

Supporting characters

These are some of the characters who don't appear in every episode, but pop up frequently.

TINA MCGINTY, 30, is Falcon's bookkeeper. She's also McGinty's big sister—a single mom CPA with zero interest in military cloak-and-dagger stuff. Unflappable and dryly sarcastic, she is the reality check to McGinty's entrepreneurial zeal, and always expects the business to fail by the end of the month.

BRIAN BARKER is the successful founder and CEO of SOS, McGinty and Vanowen's former employer. Barker and Vanowen hate each other for many reasons. Such as the sex-slave ring SOS employees were running on the side in Bosnia, which Vanowen found out about. Vanowen's reaction showed Barker that he was not a team player. Their mutual dislike only deepens with each encounter.

DARKO KOVIC, 35. Romantic, brooding Croatian with a death wish. Trained under Vanowen ten years ago as a commander in the war with Serbia. They meet again in Iraq, where he's now driving a truck for 100 times what he could earn back home; he quits his job on the spot to join Falcon.

AMON LUCAS, 25. Daredevil pilot who can fly anything, anywhere. An American patriot whose military career ended prematurely due to his extreme intolerance for any form of authority.

MINDY CHASTAIN, 35. One of the best close protection specialists (bodyguards) in the business, who occasionally works for Falcon. Formerly military intelligence, she knows Vanowen from way back. They had a romance a long time ago; now they're just good friends.

CHASE PELARIN, 24, McGinty's eventual love interest. Her World Bank job sends her to many of the same places that Falcon's clients are interested in. Her grandfather, **JEREMIAH PELARIN**, a former high-ranking Defense Dept. official as well as a former Blackwell executive, is one of the most well-connected men in the country. Chase has her own agenda, and holds her cards close to her chest where McGinty is concerned.

VLADIMIR LURIA is a personally likable, but utterly ruthless international arms dealer who became wealthy selling off former Soviet materiel to anybody who could pay, and to their enemies. Even his CIA handlers couldn't handle him. He's now recast himself as a legit businessman, but he's Russian mafia through and through. He does Falcon a favor now and then; and McGinty trembles every time, because Luria is not a guy you want to owe a favor to.

The military services world is a small one in which everyone knows everyone. When previous experience consists, by definition, of things you can't put on a resume, personal relationships are essential. Vanowen has been in this business since the Cold War. Many of the people he and McGinty meet in their travels—from soldiers to mercenaries to government agents—Vanowen has prior history with. Sometimes they were on the same side, sometimes opposite. Sometimes this has resulted in lasting friendship, sometimes enmity. Interestingly, there's little correlation between the two.

The companies

Falcon is just one of dozens of private military companies, all competing for the same customers, employees and territories.

BLACKWELL INC. is the largest PMC in our world, a global conglomerate with thousands of employees, billions in revenues, and high-level political and military connections. They're the ones who land the mega-contracts in places like Iraq.

SECURITY OPERATIONS SYSTEMS (SOS) is a flourishing mid-size PMC. As we'll learn in the pilot, Vanowen and McGinty worked there before they quit to hang out their own shingle. SOS is everything they hate; it's the kind of outfit that gives mercenaries a bad name—and it is enviably successful.

FALCON INTERNATIONAL SECURITY, our heroes' company, is by comparison a mere startup—struggling to compete against its more solidly established competitors. In this niche, survival depends on being willing to take on smaller jobs that are too dangerous or dirty for the majors to touch. Falcon is living from one payroll to the next, trying to win that first big contract that will put it on the map.

Point of view

This isn't the kind of show where square-jawed commandos, armed with state-of-the-art equipment and the strength of righteousness, go in and pulverize the bad guys each week. It takes place in a world that's a lot messier than that, and a lot more interesting. A world that in many ways resembles our own.

We're not out to glorify private military companies. But we're not out to lambast them either. We tell it like it is, so that everyone from a gung-ho marine to an ardent pacifist can appreciate our show as entertaining and true to life.

We *like* our guys. In their heart of hearts, they want to be heroes. In a perfect world, they would take only the good jobs and fight only the bad guys. But the world isn't perfect, things aren't always as they appear on the surface, and right and wrong get all tangled up....

Are our heroes mercenaries? Sure, because they answer to themselves instead of following orders from a superior officer. But one of the things the show will make abundantly clear is that private soldiers can be as courageous, heroic, and self-sacrificing as the soldiers of any national army... and also as cowardly, murderous, and corrupt. War—declared or de facto—offers ample opportunity for both extremes of human decency, and for all the shades of gray in between.

Mythology

In the pilot, McGinty hears the phrase "The Brotherhood" for the first time, only he doesn't know what the hell it means, so he shrugs it off.

Over the course of many episodes and seasons, McGinty will discover that the Brotherhood is a secret society—a small group of men who have kept their bond with each other, over decades, and now occupy high places of power in business, politics and war. He can't prove the Brotherhood exists, but he can feel its unseen hand behind the scenes, pulling the strings in many of the operations they become involved in.

Who are these men? What is the bond they share—what was their promise to each other? Is the Brotherhood good or evil? This quest becomes an obsession for McGinty.

This is the "X-Files" aspect to the show. Each episode stands on its own as an adventure with a beginning and end—but then there's this other, deeper level, which you can take, leave, or become obsessed with, depending on your inclination as a viewer.

Proper names

All U.S. and foreign government officials portrayed on the show, elected or otherwise, are composite fictional characters. Those at the highest level, like the President and

Secretary of Defense, will for the most part be seen only briefly on the evening news. The government officials who get involved in our action will be in less visible posts, like Deputy Director of something. A good example of the balance we want to strike is *The Manchurian Candidate* (2004)—it has that "ripped from the headlines" feel, but doesn't try to represent this year's actual people or events.

In some cases, we will fictionalize entire countries. Example: Our heroes turn on the TV morning news to see that Islamic fundamentalists have assassinated the moderate president of Kafiristan and civil war threatens the country. Most viewers will be unfamiliar with this mountainous, tribal, largely Muslim former Soviet republic a stone's throw from Afghanistan—because it doesn't exist. But it sounds like it might, and that's what we want.

(And people in Tajikstan and Kyrgyzstan can watch the show and feel reassured: "That's OK, they're not talking about us.")

Other nations of the world that are already in the glare of the public spotlight—US, Britain, Russia, China, Iraq, Afghanistan—can appear as themselves. With real countries, our rule is to avoid storylines that would transform them in a way that everyone knows hasn't happened—for example, a coup in Saudi Arabia, or an assassination of a U.S. president. Fake country names give us permission to create situations that are extreme, yet believable.

Theme

The show is about brotherhood.

First, the bond of trust and friendship between our heroes, forged and tested in life and death situations.

Second, its negative—the occasional bad hire who screws up and lets them down, or even betrays them.

And finally, its dark side—when brotherhood becomes cronyism and corruption. The show's villains, from corrupt African dictators to Russian mafia arms dealers, operate according to their own lights by the same code of friendship and loyalty that binds the good guys. In the U.S. government and military, with their ties to giant corporations like Blackwell, we see the code of brotherhood carried to the highest levels of power.

The temptation to cross the line—to justify illegal or immoral actions because they are good for you and your friends—is one that our heroes will be forced to confront again and again, in a variety of guises.