

= Combine (Half @-@ Life) =

The Combine is a multidimensional empire which serves as the primary antagonistic force in the video game Half @-@ Life 2 , developed by Valve Corporation . The Combine consist of alien , synthetic , and human elements , and dominate Earth . They are regularly encountered throughout Half @-@ Life 2 and its episodic expansions as hostile non @-@ player characters as the player progresses through the games in an effort to overthrow the Combine occupation of Earth .

The Combine are frequently shown as harsh rulers over the citizens of Earth , suppressing dissent with brutality , policing using violence and using invasive surgery to transform humans into either soldiers or slaves . Throughout the games , the player primarily battles with transformed humans as well as synthetic and mechanical enemies that are the product of Combine technology . The atmosphere generated by the dystopian Combine state has been praised by reviewers , although the artificial intelligence of the transhuman Combine characters was thought to be inferior to that of other characters in Half @-@ Life 2 . In addition to their role within the Half @-@ Life series , the Combine have been adapted for machinima productions and one Combine character type has been made into plush toys by Valve .

= = Design = =

Some elements of the Combine 's appearance , such as that of the Advisor , are inspired by the works of Frank Herbert . The name " Combine " itself is a tribute to Ken Kesey 's novel One Flew Over the Cuckoo 's Nest , which features a collection of authorities which mechanistically manipulate and process individuals .

During Half @-@ Life 2 's development , various concepts for Combine non @-@ player characters were created and later cut . Female Combine assassins , similar to black operations assassins featured in the first game , were planned but later abandoned , although they appear in the Half @-@ Life 2 : Survivor arcade game . Another non @-@ player character , the cremator , was conceptualized as a Combine laborer who cleaned the streets of bodies after a battle with an acid gun and although removed from the game , its head was featured in Eli Vance 's laboratory . Other cuts included a variety of alien Combine soldiers that would have complemented the transhuman soldiers in the game and a number of synthetic combat machines . Many of Half @-@ Life 2 's Combine characters went through multiple redesigns ; the Combine Overwatch soldier was subjected to at least twelve redesigns before the final appearance was settled on .

Opera singer and actress Ellen McLain provides the voice for the Combine Overwatch announcer and dispatcher in Half @-@ Life 2 and its episodic expansions , while the various Combine soldiers throughout the games are voiced by John Patrick Lowrie .

= = Attributes = =

= = = Society = = =

Little is revealed of the Combine 's role outside of Earth , but dialogue in Half @-@ Life 2 states that they control worlds in different dimensions and inhabited by a range of species . The Combine occupation of Earth , however , is shown to be a brutal police state . In City 17 , an Eastern European city , Civil Protection units are seen frequently , often conducting random searches of apartment blocks , interrogating human citizens and engaging in random police brutality . The military Overwatch forces of the Combine are shown attacking human resistance bases in an effort to further solidify their control . The citizens themselves are all clad in blue uniforms and live in designated apartment blocks . Citizens are shown to be moved around to different cities or locales at the Combine 's will , using passenger trains . Vortigaunts , alien creatures from the original Half @-@ Life , are also shown to have been enslaved , and are observed in various jobs such as janitors . According to Half @-@ Life 2 : Raising the Bar , the Combine are draining the Earth 's

oceans , minerals and resources to be used on other Combine worlds ; both the water levels along the coast of City 17 and later coastal levels are also greatly reduced .

At the heart of the Combine 's command structure in Half @-@ Life 2 is the Citadel , an enormous structure of Combine construction , reaching approximately 2 @.@ 6 kilometres (1 @.@ 6 miles) into the sky from ground level , and delving deep underground . Located within City 17 , the Citadel serves as the primary headquarters of the Combine , housing both Combine Advisors and the office of the Earth administrator , Wallace Breen . Breen is frequently seen on large screens around the city from which he spreads propaganda . The Citadel projects an energy field that is able to prevent human reproduction , as well as a field that keeps dangerous alien wildlife out of the city . In addition , the Citadel contains a trans @-@ dimensional teleporter which allows the Combine to travel between their native universe and Earth . The Citadel also contains construction facilities for various synthetic Combine combat machines .

= = = Depiction = = =

The Combine is composed of various species and machines . The most commonly encountered enemies throughout Half @-@ Life 2 and its expansions are the transhuman Overwatch soldiers and human Civil Protection officers . A variety of combat machines and synths are also encountered .

= = = = Advisors = = = =

Advisors are large larvae @-@ like creatures which are virtually featureless , with no visible eyes , ears or limbs , though they do possess an eye @-@ like mechanical device attached to the left side of their heads , and detachable mechanical arms . Their faces are covered by a form of respirator , which is able to lift to reveal a mouth @-@ like orifice from which extends a long flexible proboscis . With this , they can examine objects , or attack and kill enemies . Advisors appear to be feeding upon their victim during their attacks . It is implied that Advisors are the original master race behind the Combine , with the Earth administrator Wallace Breen answering directly to them . Although Advisors are usually seen in protective pods guarded by Combine soldiers , they also possess telekinetic powers with which they are able to float through the air and immobilize enemies so that their proboscis can examine their victims without interference . Their appearance was based on the Guild Navigators from the film Dune .

= = = = Civil Protection = = = =

Civil Protection is the Combine 's law enforcement agency on Earth , consisting of humans who have agreed to work on behalf of the Combine . Also referred to as metrocops , Civil Protection units wear light armor and gas masks . They are usually armed with electroshock batons and pistols , and are occasionally seen using submachine guns . Metrocops are brutal in their methods , keeping the local populace in line via intimidation and physical force . Interrogations , inspections , raids , random beatings , summary executions and acts of extreme police brutality are all used as a means of policing their respective jurisdictions ; their methods are justified by their role as " protectors of the civilians ' well @-@ being " . On the outskirts of City 17 , Civil Protection units are observed patrolling for escapees from the city . Civil Protection officers are in constant contact with Combine Overwatch headquarters , which gives them objectives and situation updates . On the death of an officer , that officer 's armor detects that its wearer is no longer alive and automatically informs headquarters of the fatality and advises nearby units as to the place of death .

= = = = Overwatch = = = =

The Combine Overwatch is the primary military force of the Combine on Earth . It consists of biomechanically enhanced humans , who wear heavily padded long @-@ sleeve body armor and

gas masks . The markings on the suit change depending on each individual unit 's assignment and rank . Elite Combine soldiers wear bright white armor , while the majority of soldiers wear variations of blue or brown armor . They are armed with a variety of firearms , including shotguns , submachine guns , sniper rifles and pulse rifles . Overwatch soldiers usually operate in small groups , using squad tactics and grenades to flush out and flank the player . They occasionally provide support to Combine synths , and often travel to areas by use of dropships . They use radios to communicate with each other and with Overwatch headquarters . Combine Overwatch soldiers are usually encountered outside City 17 , and only appear in the city after " The Uprising " near the end of Half @-@ Life 2 .

= = = Combine technology = = =

The Combine use a large array of science fiction technology . They have access to teleportation technology , which takes them from their dimension to Earth . However , their teleporter technology is restrictive in comparison to that developed by Eli Vance , Isaac Kleiner and Judith Mossman in that it cannot be used to teleport to other locations on Earth without significant modification . Throughout the games , various futuristic computer consoles , doors , power sources and weapon emplacements are encountered . In addition , the Combine employ the use of small airborne robots , scanners , to observe the citizens of Earth . The city variant merely moves about the streets , monitors individuals , and takes photographs , while the combat equivalent is capable of dropping mines into an area . Civil Protection makes use of smaller airborne robots called manhacks , which fly using razor @-@ sharp rotating blades with which they attack their targets to cause laceration injuries . These are often deployed in closed @-@ in areas . The Combine also use two types of land mines ; hopper mines throw themselves into the air and detonate when an enemy is detected nearby , while the spherical rollermines roll towards vehicles or other enemies , attach themselves and deliver damaging electrical attacks . Combine technology is also used to transform humans into Overwatch soldiers or stalkers , deformed and mutilated humans with no memory of their past selves who act as slaves and maintenance workers in Combine facilities . Transformation into a Stalker is considered among the Combine 's worst punishments for dissidents .

Militarily , the Combine make use of both synthetic machines ? machines powered by organic components ? and traditional mechanical machines such as armored personnel carriers and attack helicopters . The most prominent of the synthetic machines are the insect @-@ like gunships ; and Striders , 50 @-@ foot @-@ tall (15 m) armored creatures that walk upon three legs , which are armed with a high powered warpspace cannon and a head @-@ mounted pulse turret . In Episode Two , a smaller equivalent to the Strider , the Hunter , is introduced . These 2 @.@ 5 m (8 ft) tall , tripodal assault machines fire explosive flechettes at targets and are small enough to maneuver indoors . Other synths are seen near the end of the Half @-@ Life 2 , although their roles are not elaborated on . Sentry turrets are also used by the Combine . The Combine also use headcrabs as a biological weapon against dissidents , firing artillery shells loaded with the creatures into areas and allowing them to infest the vicinity .

= = Appearances = =

= = = Half @-@ Life series = = =

According to the backstory presented during Half @-@ Life 2 , the Combine appear on Earth after the death of the Nihilanth , the boss character at the end of Half @-@ Life . The death of the Nihilanth , a powerful creature controlling the dimensional rip between Xen and the Black Mesa Research Facility on Earth , causes the rip to worsen , resulting in " portal storms " which spread the hostile wildlife of Xen across Earth . The Combine manipulate this tear in the spacetime continuum , widening it to allow access to Earth from their dimension . When it is sufficiently wide , the Combine invade in force , and in the subsequent Seven Hour War quickly defeat the forces of Earth and

destroy the United Nations Secretariat Building in New York City . Earth 's surrender is negotiated by Wallace Breen , who is then made the Combine puppet administrator of Earth , and uses City 17 as his base of operations .

The Combine 's first appearance is in Half @-@ Life 2 . Through the early stages of the game , Combine Civil Protection units pursue Gordon Freeman through City 17 after he accidentally reveals his presence to Wallace Breen . Due to Freeman 's actions in Half @-@ Life , Breen sees Freeman as a major threat . As Freeman escapes the city , Civil Protection units raid the resistance base of Black Mesa East and capture resistance leader Eli Vance , who is transferred to holding facilities at Nova Prospekt . Freeman and Vance 's daughter Alyx break into the facility to rescue him , but Eli Vance is teleported to the Combine Citadel by double agent Judith Mossman . However , the strike against Nova Prospekt is seen as the start of a revolution by the citizens of Earth , who take up arms against the Combine . In response , Combine Overwatch are deployed to City 17 , and heavy street fighting takes place . Freeman manages to infiltrate the Citadel but is captured and taken to Breen . Mossman allows Freeman to break free of his captivity , and Breen flees to the Citadel 's trans @-@ dimensional teleporter , intent on escape . However , Freeman destroys the teleporter 's reactor before Breen can escape , causing a large explosion that destroys the top of the Citadel .

In Episode One , the destruction of the top of the Citadel has caused its primary reactor to begin to melt down , forcing Gordon Freeman and Alyx Vance to journey back into the Citadel to temporarily stabilize it while the city 's inhabitants are evacuated . The Combine , however , attempt to accelerate the meltdown to send a message to their native universe for reinforcements . After Alyx acquires an encrypted copy of the data to be sent , Overwatch forces desperately attempt to stop the pair from escaping the city , spurred on by Combine Advisors . As the pair escape on a train at the end of the game , the Citadel sends the message and detonates , destroying City 17 .

Episode Two opens with Alyx and Freeman discovering that the Citadel 's destruction has resulted in the formation of a super portal to the Combine dimension , which is slowly progressing to a stage where it can send overwhelming reinforcements . They also discover that the data packet they retrieved from the Citadel contains codes that can be used to close the portal , and so traverse the countryside to deliver the packet to the resistance headquarters at White Forest . As they progress , it becomes evident that the Combine Advisors escaped the Citadel 's destruction , and that remaining Combine forces are regrouping , albeit under occasional attacks by Vortigaunts . Aware of the resistance 's plans to close the super portal , the Combine attack White Forest in force , but are repelled . The super portal is destroyed after the resistance launch a satellite containing the appropriate data . However , in the game 's closing scenes , two Advisors attack Freeman , Alyx and Eli Vance , and kill Eli before being driven off by Dog .

= = = Appearances in other media = = =

The use of sandbox applications like Garry 's Mod have allowed for Combine non @-@ player characters to be used in a variety of webcomics and machinima productions . In one webcomic , Concerned , the Combine are portrayed as a highly bureaucratic and often inept organization . One issue shows a Civil Protection briefing for attempting to capture the comic 's protagonist Gordon Frohman , in which officers are instructed to cluster around explosive barrels , seek cover on unstable structures and rappel down from bridges in front of fast moving vehicles . In another example , the machinima series Combine Nation follows Civil Protection officers in a similar style to police procedural documentaries . The officers perform their duties with various twists , such as the team 's medical officer having an obsession with adhesive bandages and the legal consultant , an Overwatch soldier , favoring dramatic entries , such as throwing flashbangs , which often backfire on him . Another web series , called The Combine , parodies the TV show The Office . This series attempts to portray the combine as an intergalactic corporation that suffers from everyday office issues and problems . One episode shows the soldiers attempting to bypass a webfilter so they can watch videos online instead of working . Other media portray the Combine with more serious overtones , such as the live @-@ action video The Combine Interview , which parodies an interview with Tom Cruise discussing Scientology . The video , described by ActionTrip as " eerie , to say the

least " and by both Joystiq and Kotaku as " creepy " , instead presents an interview with a Civil Protection officer discussing the Combine 's rule of Earth , adapting Cruise 's words to fit the Combine theme . PC Gamer UK noted that " the suggestion , of course , is that Scientology 's purpose or self @-@ image in some way resembles that of the homogenising intergalactic murderous alien collective " .

= = Cultural impact = =

= = = Merchandise = = =

The Combine have inspired the creation of several items of merchandise for the Half @-@ Life series . A plush toy was created by Valve , based on the synthetic tripod Hunters introduced in Episode Two . Sold and distributed via Valve 's online store , the toy was released in February 2008 . In addition , Valve has produced t @-@ shirts depicting the Combine 's idea of humanity 's evolution , from ape to Combine Overwatch soldier , and a lithograph displaying twelve pieces of concept art for the Combine soldier .

= = = Reception = = =

The Combine have received a positive reaction from critics . 1UP.com praised the " epic feel " built up by the Combine and their harsh rule of City 17 in Half @-@ Life 2 , stating that this created " a world governed by newspeak , decorated with urban decay , and lacking any hope " . GameSpot echoed this praise , saying that the " vision of a dystopian police state is chillingly effective " . PC Zone described the appearance of the Combine 's soldiers as " stormtrooper @-@ like " , but although stating that overall the artificial intelligence for the game was " extremely competent " , the Combine non @-@ player characters " could have used better survival instincts " , citing their reluctance to take cover and tendency to charge at the player and into a shotgun blast . A number of reviews of Episode One were disappointed by the lack of new characters for the Combine , although GameSpot praised the improved AI for Combine soldiers and the addition of new abilities , such as rappelling down buildings . The addition of the Hunter in Episode Two was particularly well received by critics ; Computer and Video Games stated that they were challenging to fight and were " a very welcome addition " to the series , while IGN stated that the Hunters were " impressively designed ... [they are] sleek and powerful all at once and reek of malicious alien intelligence . "

The Combine were ranked at # 22 in IGN 's ' Top 100 Videogame Villains ' list .