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**THESIS**

**SERVARE VITAS- POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES FOR  
ROMANIAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY OF  
HOSTAGE DEATHS IN A ROMANIAN SPECIAL OPERATIONS  
FORCES HOSTAGE RESCUE OPERATION**

by

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September 2006

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**POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES FOR ROMANIAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT  
AND MILITARY OF HOSTAGE DEATHS IN A ROMANIAN SPECIAL  
OPERATIONS FORCES HOSTAGE RESCUE OPERATION**

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requirements for the degree of

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## **ABSTRACT**

Humankind conflicts reached a point where the use of terrorism continues to be viewed as an acceptable and valuable instrument to pursue political goals. Because of the fact that the Romanian forces have encountered little action in the terrorism arena, one can say that the Romanian counter-terrorism and anti-terrorism arrangements within the law enforcement and military are immature.

This paper attempts to shed light upon the current crisis management procedures and how that arrangement can affect the effectiveness of the state response in hostage situation crises both in country and abroad. The paper analyzes five hostage rescue operations, conducted by German, British, Peruvian, and Russian forces, and focuses on three critical procedures that lead to hostage deaths: security measures, negotiations, and handling the media. The analysis exposes that the effectiveness of these procedures will minimize the civilian casualties and will act as prerequisites for successful hostage rescue operations.

In the light of the case studies results, a general-based model provides the Romanian authorities with critical tasks faced by either military or law enforcements assets that are required in order to accomplish rescue operations. The project concludes with a number of suggestions for immediate and long-term alleviation of current development problems faced by Romanian Special Operations Forces.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

*Terrorism is not going away. For the terrorists, no one is an innocent victim, no one is a neutral. To terrorists, human life is just another commodity which can be bartered for gain.*

*(Norman Antokol and Mayer Nudell, No One a Neutral, 1990, p. 166)*

## A. BACKGROUND

### 1. The Romanian Politico-Military Context

The new millennium has brought international terrorism in a particularly severe form, threatening states' security and global stability. Since international terrorism has become more complex and unpredictable, Romania has reasserted its position against this threat through domestic measures and participation in international counterterrorism efforts.

Romania, a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member since April 2004, has developed a new set of responsibilities for its armed forces, and has deployed approximately 2,000 military personnel in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Their battlefield experience, although wide-ranging, is limited to peacekeeping missions, such as patrolling, site security, convoy protection, and humanitarian assistance (Consiliul, 1999).

### 2. The Romanian Special Operations Forces Battalion (RSOFB)

The Romanian government responded to the emergence of asymmetric threats to its national interests in March–April 2003 by creating the 1st Special Forces Battalion in 2003 and adopting *The Doctrine for Special Operations* (Romanian Ministry of National Defense [MoND] 2003). Among the sixteen types of missions specified, combating terrorism (CBT), direct action (DA), and

strategic reconnaissance (SR) have priority over the rest.<sup>1</sup> The Special Operations doctrine states that the Combating Terrorism mission will focus on three tasks: the rescue of hostages, the recovery or capture of sensitive materiel, and the targeting of terrorist organization infrastructure (Romanian Ministry of National Defense, 2003, pp. 15–16).

## **B. PURPOSE**

Hostage rescue is set to become a major focus of the Romanian Special Forces units and in the Romanian effort to fight terrorism. There is a problem in this, however, because Romanian forces lack experience in hostage rescue. The lack of Romanian expertise in crisis management in hostage rescue situations must be compensated for by the thorough study of other forces' experiences. This paper is such a study, drawing on the experience of other countries to create an assessment of the best practices and to isolate the crucial elements of hostage rescue. Ultimately, this study will provide some preliminary guidance to the Romanian Special Forces as they develop operational procedures for hostage rescue. A thorough understanding of the steps required in a hostage rescue operation is vital for policy decision makers and the Romanian Special Operations Forces (SOF) community, to ensure to the maximum extent possible the protection and security of Romanian citizens.

That these issues are important can be seen by the public reaction to the Russian hostage rescue operations in 2002 and 2004. They resulted in so many fatalities that the public discourse in several countries inferred that it is better to throw in one's lot with terrorists than to be "rescued" by the Russian authorities. This is not only embarrassing to the Russian government, but also to the image of the Russian military forces. The negative perceptions of how the Russians handle hostage crises raised the issue of how the Romanian SOF might perform

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Joint Pub 3-07.02, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Antiterrorism*, defines "combating terrorism" as "actions taken to oppose terrorism throughout the entire threat spectrum. Antiterrorism (AT) involves defensive measures utilized to reduce the vulnerability to terrorists' acts. Counterterrorism (CT) consists of offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorism" (U. S. Joint Pub 3-07.02, 1998, p. vii).

in a similar scenario. Will they be able to launch effective hostage rescue operations that minimize risk, or will they inadvertently cause high civilian casualties? This issue is important not only for the practical consequences of minimizing civilian risk, but also for the potential political consequences to the Romanian national government and military forces, in particular the Romanian SOF.

Considering that Romania is now a democratic country, this paper hypothesizes that Romanian decision makers will be careful in making decisions to resolve hostage situations so as to save the lives of all the hostages. The conclusions that come out from this paper indicate that media influence and human rights legislation will drive policy makers to act in the best interest of hostages, because democratic governments are responsive to public opinion. Therefore, this paper will create a model for crisis management that fits Romanian requirements. The model will be based on comparative analyses of two types of hostage rescue operations: those that result in minimal or no hostage fatalities and those with major hostage losses. Furthermore, this paper will apply this model to different scenarios that the Romanian SOF might face in the new security environment.

### **C. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In identifying a model for crisis management, the first step is to identify the critical tasks involved in hostage crisis situations. There are several critical tasks that are employed before and after a hostage rescue operation is performed. Are there any differences in the crisis management procedures that might result in different levels of civilian casualties? If so, what are these differences? By answering these initial questions, this paper will be able to identify a model for Romanian officials to use in hostage crisis management. Finally, this paper will address the question of how human rights legislation and the media affect the political consequences of high casualties in hostage rescue operations.

## D. METHODOLOGY

The paper draws on primary and secondary literature on the factors that lead to civilian casualties in hostage rescue operations. Here, the goal is to identify crisis management procedures as a critical variable in operational outcomes. The procedures are identified by pairing case studies that identify the variations between cases that result in minor casualties and those that result in major casualties.

- a. Three cases in which hostage crises ended with minimal fatalities:

Operation Magic Fire. The hostage rescue conducted by German Special Forces in Mogadishu, Somalia

Operation Nimrod. The hostage rescue executed by British Special Forces in London, England

Operation Chavin de Huantar. The hostage rescue performed by Peruvian Special Forces in Lima, Peru

- b. Two cases in which hostage crises ended with major fatalities:<sup>2</sup>

Operation Nord Ost. The hostage rescue conducted by Russian Special Forces in Moscow, Russia

The Beslan Disaster (Russia's 9/11). The hostage rescue performed by Russian Special Forces in Beslan, North Osetia, Russia

The cases selected fit the following profile:

They were undertaken in situations other than war.

They were considered to be international political events.

The assailants were part of insurgent or terrorist organizations.

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<sup>2</sup> Another significant example of high-casualty operation is the "Maalot Massacre" in Israel. On May 15, 1974, Israeli Special Forces, Sayeret Matkal, stormed a school where more than 90 children were held hostage by members of the Democratic Front of Palestine Liberation, a faction affiliated with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). During the rescue mission, 26 children were killed and 71 wounded. This case cannot be adequately analyzed due to a lack of unclassified sources pertaining to Israeli crisis management procedures.

With the exception of the Beslan hostage crisis, the governments decided to use force against the hostage takers.<sup>3</sup>

After applying a U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) crisis management procedures model to this comparative study, this paper will refine an ideal crisis management model that may be employed by the Romanian authorities and the 1st Romanian SOF Battalion. Furthermore, this paper will examine the media's influence in regard to hostage rescue operations and will analyze current Romanian legislation on human rights as it pertains to hostage crises. The paper will conclude by identifying the implications and lessons of this study for the Romanian Special Forces.

## **E. THESIS OUTLINE**

The second chapter deals with some basic methods used to understand a hostage crisis: crisis management procedures and process, measures of success and failure, and concepts concerning principles of hostage rescue operations.

Chapter III analyzes the crisis management process in three case studies of hostage rescue operations with minimal casualties. First, in Operation Magic Fire, on October 18, 1977, the German counterterrorist unit, Grenzschutzgruppe 9 (GSG-9), assaulted a Lufthansa airplane hijacked by four members of Wadi Haddad's Palestinian terrorist group. The GSG-9 rescued eighty-six hostages and killed three terrorists: none of the hostages were lost. Second, on May 5, 1980, in Operation Nimrod, the British Special Air Service (SAS) stormed the Iranian embassy in London and rescued twenty-one hostages. In a third hostage rescue operation, April 22, 1997, the Peruvian Special Forces conducted Operacion Chavin de Huantar against the Japanese embassy in Lima, Peru. After 126 days of siege and negotiations with fourteen MRTA terrorists, 150 Peruvian Special Forces paratroopers stormed the embassy, killed all the

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<sup>3</sup> After two explosives were heard inside the school, Russian Special Forces were sent to neutralize the hostage-takers. Russian authorities claim that a tactical response was not considered (see Chapter IV for details).

terrorists, and released seventy-one hostages. During the operation, two soldiers were killed and one hostage died of a heart attack.

Chapter IV covers two cases in which the poor management of a hostage crisis resulted in a major loss of life. First, on October 23, 2002, a group of forty-one Chechen radicals took over the Dubrovka Theater in Moscow and held over eight hundred hostages. Three days later, Russian Special Forces (Alpha and Vypfel teams) pumped an aerosol version of the incapacitant fentanyl into the theater, and then stormed in. Of the 129 hostage fatalities, the powerful gas killed 125. The second hostage event took place on September 1, 2004, in School No. 1 in Beslan, North Ossetia, Russia, when thirty-two Chechen rebels took more than 1,200 hostages. On September 3, Russian Special Forces and armed volunteers attempted to storm the building after the terrorists detonated one of the explosives inside. During the eleven hours of fighting that followed, more than three hundred hostages were killed and seven hundred wounded.

Finally, Chapter V deals with the crisis management procedures that Romanian authorities should use during a hostage situation. The chapter also includes a brief analysis of the Romanian media and Romanian human rights legislation. The last section of the chapter will identify some of the most salient implications for Romanian Special Operations Forces.

## II. SUCCESS AND FAILURE IN HOSTAGE CRISES: CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, AND THEORIES

*Sizing up opponents to determine victory, assessing dangers and distances is the proper course of action for military leaders.*

*Sun Tzu, "Terrain," The Art of War*

### A. RISK MANAGEMENT AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

This chapter defines a number of important operational and doctrinal terms that will be used throughout this study in implementing the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) framework for "risk management." The chapter lays out a thorough approach that begins with risk identification, includes the diverse stakeholders involved in the assessment of the risk and the decision(s) to be made, and concludes with management decisions and communication.

*Risk management* is the process of identifying, assessing, and controlling risks arising from operational factors and making decisions that balance risk costs with mission benefits. (FM 100-14, 1998)

While the concept of risk management deals with the creation of appropriate policies to prevent and control a possible threat, "crisis management" works from an operational perspective to detail the critical measures and actions that should be adopted to deal with a specific terrorist event.

In the U.S. government publication *Joint Tactics, Techniques and Procedures for Antiterrorism* (U.S. Joint Pub. 3.07.2, 1998), crisis management is defined as a *reactive phase* that includes actions taken to resolve a terrorist incident, in this case, hostage taking. Seven tasks are considered critical to effective crisis management:

(1) awareness of the possibility of multiple incidents or diversionary tactics,

(2) activation of required resources by the local authorities,

(3) notifications to appropriate military (secret service) investigative agency (i.e., the FBI),

(4) exercise of authorities' representative with media,

(5) negotiation,

(6) implementation of tactical measures to contain or defeat the threat, and

(7) preparation of after-action measures to protect the evidence, handle captured personnel, identify and process hostages, and discover needed changes to the existing plan (U.S. Joint Pub 3.07,1998, p. VI-2).

This study will focus on the requirements that present a great risk to hostages in a hostage-taking situation:<sup>4</sup> (1) security measures, including activities for isolating the incident and medical preparations for treating injured hostages, (2) negotiation, and (3) handling the media.

Although risk management will not be analyzed in this study, it is important to stress that crisis management procedures depend on effective risk management. Both are developed and explained in the *Antiterrorism Program Concept* (U.S. Joint Pub 3.07.2, 1998).

## **B. SUCCESS IN HOSTAGE CRISES**

Ideally, every government should assure its citizens that it could successfully resolve any hostage situation that might arise. Generally, there are two methods that political leaders can use in a barricaded/hostage situation to save hostages' lives: negotiation and a hostage rescue operation.<sup>5</sup> The preferred solution should be to free the hostages through negotiation without yielding to the

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<sup>4</sup> The term "hostage-taking" is defined as "the act of illegally holding one or more persons captive [in a known location] in order to make political demands" and is different from kidnapping to gain publicity (Antokol, Nudell, 1990, p. 23).

<sup>5</sup> Situations in which assailants have barricaded themselves in with their hostages, and fortified their location by blocking its access from outside. A non-barricade situation implies that the hostage takers are in an open area and their only means for threatening hostages' lives are their weapons (McMains, Mullins, 2001, p. 39).

terrorists' demands. If political leaders decide to use a tactical response, they should be aware of all consequences.

### **1. Success in Hostage Rescue Operations**

Numerous military thinkers have defined criteria for success in hostage rescue operations. This study follows the definition identified by Major General Shlomo Gazit, now retired, who, as Israel's director of military intelligence, participated in the planning of the 1976 Entebbe hostage rescue operation. According to General Gazit, there are three goals that a rescue operation must accomplish:

- The hostages are all rescued safe and alive.
- The operation is concluded with no (or minimal) rescue-force casualties.
- The operation itself does not create any political or military complications beyond those created by the hostage-taking episode (Gazit, 1981, p. 112).

Because these operations are highly sensitive, a decision to proceed with force should only be made when there is no other alternative. Also, the entire responsibility of the command and control of a hostage rescue operation, from the beginning of the crisis to its end, should rest on the political leaders. They should provide the rescue force with the intended goals, restrictions, and timely interventions consistent with the ongoing progress. The political leaders must understand the implications of such decisions and must comprehend also the significance of possible failure. This is why they must play a part in the entire planning of the rescue operation, including detailed approval of all contingency plans. If there are other solutions or efforts that can free the hostages, the political leaders should cancel the rescue operation immediately, without any hesitation (pp. 133–135).

Although the purpose and political motives of a rescue operation differ from those of other military special operations, the principles for accomplishing a rescue or other special-operations mission are almost identical. Rear Admiral

William McRaven (1996) indicates that there are six basic principles involved in the achievement of “relative superiority” in all special operations: simplicity, security, speed, surprise, repetition, and purpose.<sup>6</sup> If one of those principles is ignored or overlooked, the mission’s outcome will have some degree of failure. Moreover, to be effective, the principles must be correlated with one another.

Of all the many types of special operations, rescue operations are the most difficult. And as rescue plans increase in complexity, it becomes harder and harder to screen the political intentions and adequately prepare the rescue mission (McRaven, 1996, pp. 8–9). These missions require better training, better intelligence information, and more surgical precision in their execution than other types of special operations. Gazit’s theory of success in hostage rescue operations emphasizes that there are at least three critical interrelated principles: intelligence, deception, and surprise.

Like McRaven’s principles, those in Gazit’s theory must complement and support each other in every detail. Without critical information regarding the hostage takers, the hostages, and even the seemingly minor obstacles to the rescue, the element of surprise will be compromised. Focusing or shifting the hostage takers’ attention on or to other matters during the actual storming—never an easy task—can help the rescue force attain the end objective. However, there are no guaranties that the hostage takers will not kill the hostages during the storm. Major Carlos Perez (2004) argues that an “operator’s skills” are just as important as the other three principles in a rescue operation. Rescue team members must attain high competency levels in a variety of special skills, such as specialized shooting techniques, obstacle-breaching maneuvers, technical and tactical surveillance, and close-quarters combat skills (p. 15).

## **2. Negotiations with Hostage Takers**

A vast amount special-operations literature is devoted to hostage negotiations. This paper uses a simplified approach to reduce this very complex topic: it focuses on the procedures in hostage negotiations that are a

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<sup>6</sup> William McRaven defines “relative superiority as “a condition that exists when an attacking force, generally smaller, gains a decisive advantage over a larger or well-defended enemy” (p. 4).

precondition of a hostage rescue operation or operations. Negotiations with crusader-type terrorists are controversial, because many countries have a firm policy against making concessions to terrorists.<sup>7</sup> Yet, in many cases, both the authorities and the hostage takers find that there are advantages to conducting a dialogue in barricaded hostage situations. From the authorities' perspective, negotiations may wear down the hostage takers' resistance and persuade them to accept a peaceful negotiated surrender. Opening a dialogue could at least gain time for the authorities to plan a rescue attempt or to perform a successful assault. For the terrorists, the process of negotiation may ensure that their actions and demands are widely publicized (Antokol, Nudell, 1990, pp. 133–134).

A major aspect of negotiating with hostage takers is the “stalling for time” tactic.<sup>8</sup> According to a U.S. Department of State hostage negotiation manual (1983), the use of a stalling-for-time tactic could have the following results: (1) increased human needs (2) reduction of anxiety and stress, (3) greater rationality, (4) additional time for intelligence gathering, (5) the development of rapport and trust, and (6) reduced expectations (Antokol, Nudell, 1990, pp. 4–5). If the authorities believe that a rescue operation will solve the crisis, then a negotiated dialogue should continue until sufficient critical information about the hostage takers has been gathered.

Another issue of hostage negotiations is the choice of negotiator. The negotiator should not be a decision maker, because:

- The stalling-for-time tactic will not have the same effect: it will make the decision maker less credible when claiming that he/she must approve every step.
- A decision maker may lose his/her objectivity and may even lose control of the entire situation (Antokol, Nudell, 1990, p. 10).

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<sup>7</sup> Frederick J. Hacker argues that there are three types of terrorists and each type is characterized by specific goals: criminal-type (e.g. Al Capone), crazy- type (e.g. Charles Whitman, Ted Bundy), and crusader-type (e.g. PLO, Al-Qaeda, MRTA, IRA etc.) Information retrieved from: [http://c21.maxwell.af.mil/amedd/hostage\\_negotiation.htm](http://c21.maxwell.af.mil/amedd/hostage_negotiation.htm) last accessed on 3 September 2005.

<sup>8</sup> In Hostage Negotiation Manual (1983) are presented other four tactics used: obtaining information, calming a hostage- taker, establishing rapport, and persuading (pp. 5- 9).

### **C. FAILURE IN HOSTAGE RESCUE OPERATIONS**

Defense scholars Eliot Cohen and John Gooch (1991) have proposed a theory of failure in military operations. They consider three basic types of failure as the main factors in “military misfortunes” failure to learn, failure to adapt, and failure to anticipate. The three types of failure often result from circumstances such as overconfidence in an operator’s or operators’ abilities, a lack of contingency planning and preparation, and the critical need to accomplish a mission by any means during a limited window of opportunity.

In his book *Perilous Options*, Lucien Vandembroucke (1993) illustrates four factors as persistent problems for SOF operations: faulty intelligence, reduced interagency cooperation and coordination, insufficient information and advice to decision makers, and an unnecessary control of the mission from afar.

By combining Cohen and Gooch’s theory and Vandembroucke’s four factors with selected crisis management procedures to approach two case studies, this paper will identify the measures that are and those that are not implemented in hostage operations with minimal casualties versus operations with major casualties. Through this analysis, the study will identify prerequisites for successful hostage rescue operations.

### **III. CASE STUDY: HOSTAGE RESCUE OPERATIONS WITH MINIMAL FATALITIES**

#### **A. CRISIS MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES FOR THE GERMAN GSG 9 IN OPERATION MAGIC FIRE, MOGADISHU, SOMALIA, 1977**

##### **1. Background**

During 1968–1977 period, West Germany faced a series of terrorist attacks, launched primarily by one of the famous left-oriented terrorist groups, the Red Army Faction (RAF).<sup>9</sup> After a number of RAF bank robberies, car bombings, and killings, the German authorities felt forced to respond with aggressive tactics, but were open to any strategy that would end the crisis. After two principal RAF leaders were imprisoned in June 1972, subsequent terrorist attacks were intended to free the prisoners. Ultimately, the German authorities would use those terrorist attacks to support new laws for combating terrorism.

On September 5, 1972, the German authorities were tested in a major international hostage crisis at the Olympic Village in Munich. Eight members of the Palestine group Black September managed to kill two Israeli athletes and to take nine prisoners.<sup>10</sup> The main reason for the attack was the restriction of Palestine athletes from competing in the 1972 Summer Olympic Games because Palestine was not recognized as a state. The hostage takers made two principal demands: that Israel release the two imprisoned RAF leaders, which showed a degree of solidarity with the RAF, and another 234 prisoners held in Israel. During the crisis the German government planned to release their prisoners, but they encountered firm opposition from the Israelis, who opposed meeting the hostages' demands. The Israeli government, while it refused to meet the

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<sup>9</sup> The group was also called the "Baader-Meinhof gang." Andreas Baader, one of the founders of the group, was first caught by the German police in 1968. With the help of the journalist Ulrich Meinhof, he escaped in May 1970. This marked the gang's origin. Eventually, both were captured, in June 1972, after a series of bank robberies and bombings. Both committed suicide in prison, Meinhof on May 9, 1976, and Baader on October 18, 1977, right after the GSG 9 rescue mission in Mogadishu. For more information visit: <http://www.baader-meinhof.com/index.htm>. Last accessed on October 6, 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Black September was formed as an instrument of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) against King Hussein of Jordan for the expulsion of thousands of Palestinians from Jordan. For more information visit: <http://www.tkb.org/Group.jsp?groupID=153>. Last accessed on October 6, 2005.

terrorists' demands, failed to find a substitute concession that would appease the group (Aston, 1982, p. 75). Facing a difficult and complex situation that seemed intractable, the Germans chose to attack the hostage takers during their transfer from helicopters to an airplane. Unprepared for what followed, the police marksmen found that they could not pin down the hostage takers without endangering Israeli lives. As a result, during an hour-long gunfight with the German forces, Black September members managed to kill all the hostages. This event had an enormous effect on both the authorities and the security forces involved in the crisis and led ultimately to the creation of one of the most feared counterterrorist units, GSG-9. The German authorities proved to be effective after only five years.

The so-called German Autumn<sup>11</sup> of 1977 drew the world's attention to another international hostage crisis, this time in Mogadishu, Somalia. However, prior to the Mogadishu crisis, three major terrorist incidents, two murders and one kidnapping, had already placed German officials in a difficult situation. On April 7, 1977, RAF members killed the chief public prosecutor, Dr. Siegfried Bubeck, and, on July 30, Herr Jurgen Ponto, the chairman of Dresdner Bank. Last, on September 5, 1977, Dr. Hans Martin Schleyer's car was ambushed, he was kidnapped, and all four bodyguards were shot dead. In return for Schleyer's release, the RAF kidnapers demanded the freedom of their imprisoned comrades and DM11 million. Although Chancellor Schmidt refused to negotiate at the start, later he used a Swiss lawyer, Denis Payot, to open negotiations with the kidnapers, in the hope that this would give them enough time to locate Schleyer. Realizing that a support operation was needed to persuade the German government to release their prisoners, the RAF asked a radical PFLP member, Zuhair Akache (otherwise known as Captain Mahmoud), to mount an operation against a Lufthansa Boeing 737, Flight LH 181, en route from Majorca to Frankfurt (Taillon, 2002, pp. 125–126).

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<sup>11</sup> *Deutscher Herbst* in German. This was a sequence of major events in September and October that marked the end of the RAF's first generation. For more information visit: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/2340095.stm>. Last accessed on October 6, 2005

## **2. The Case**

On October 13, 1977, four Palestinians, two men and two women, hijacked the Lufthansa airplane with eighty-six passengers and five crewmembers on board. They ordered the crew to land at Leonardo da Vinci Airport in Rome, where Captain Mahmoud issued their demands: the release of the RAF prisoners in West Germany. At the request of Werner Maihofer, the West German interior minister, the Italian authorities tried to delay the aircraft. Meanwhile, Chancellor Schmidt established a crisis management group authorized to make all necessary decisions. The commander of GSG 9, Lt. Col. Wegener, was also informed and a counterterrorist unit was alerted.

Schmidt then sought international support from James Callaghan, the British prime minister, who recommended that he not release the prisoners. In the meantime, the Palestinian terrorists threatened to blow up the aircraft if the Italian authorities did not provide the requested fuel.

At 5:42 p.m., the airplane left Rome and headed for Larnaca, Cyprus. There, the hijackers demanded that Turkey release two Palestinian prisoners. At 10:50 p.m. the airplane headed to Beirut, but the authorities refused it permission to land. After futile attempts to land at Damascus, Amman, and Kuwait, the pilot got permission to land temporarily in Bahrain. During that halt, between 1:52 a.m. and 3:24 a.m., Captain Mahmoud sent his demands through Denis Payot, the negotiator employed by Schleyer's kidnappers. Mahmoud set a deadline, 8:00 a.m., October 16: If it was not met, he threatened that all the hostages, including Dr. Schleyer, would be killed (Taillon, 2002, pp. 126–127).

At the beginning of the crisis, the German authorities had sent specialists with an aircraft to Cyprus. The delegation included the head of the Federal Office of Criminal Investigation anti-terror department, foreign office specialists, anti-terror experts from the interior ministry, agents from German internal and external intelligence services, Lufthansa specialists, a GSG-9 command group, and a commando element. The Germans staged themselves at the British base at Akrotiri, just 55 miles from Larnaca. This was a significant development in the

hostage crisis, for it was the first time that the German authorities and the terrorists were in the same area at the same time. The German authorities saw it as an opportunity to launch an assault on the hostage takers, but the Cypriot government denied their request, and the aircraft was able to refuel and depart without incident (p. 127).

Around 6:00 a.m. on October 14, the Lufthansa 737 arrived in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE), where the terrorists requested drink, food, and a negotiator. Sheik Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktum, the defense minister, who took charge as the chief negotiator, asked the hijackers to release any young or elderly passengers in exchange for fuel. Although the terrorists refused, they exposed themselves later when they needed to replace a broken airpower unit on the aircraft. German mechanics were sent in, but as they approached the plane, they attempted to contact the crew. Captain Mahmoud, recognizing their accent as German, started to fire at them with a handgun. No one was hurt, however, and the German aircrew, who now realized that the terrorists did not have automatic weapons, informed the German authorities. Following this leak, the aircrew transmitted another coded message indicating that there were only four hijackers on board, information that was critical to the execution of a rescue operation.

As noted above, Chancellor Schmidt had asked assistance from Great Britain. Now, in light of the historical relationship between Britain and Dubai, the Germans asked the British authorities to use their influence to persuade the Dubai officials to approve a GSG-9 action, should an opportunity present itself. The British agreed to help and, in addition, sent two experienced Special Air Service members, Major Alastair Morrison and Sergeant Barry Davies, to assist in any technical, tactical, or diplomatic issues.<sup>12</sup>

Nonetheless, several problems arose during the GSG-9 preparations, which prevented the Germans from launching a rescue operation. First, the

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<sup>12</sup> Wegener and two of his personnel were under local police close watch. The SAS members proved to solve this occurrence, and quickly initiated the training for siege-breaking (p.129).

relationship between Jurgen Wischnewski, the German state minister who was acting as liaison for the German crisis group, and Rashid Al-Maktum, the Dubai defense minister, began to deteriorate after Wegener remarked, in effect, that the UAE squad was useless.<sup>13</sup> Second, a German government representative revealed that a GSG-9 team had been sent to Cyprus, which caused the hijackers to attempt a return to Bonn. The German news media, however, helped officials to trick Mahmoud into believing that the GSG-9 group had returned to Cologne, a trick that averted the highjackers' departure. Finally, during the night of October 15–16, the plane's power generator collapsed, and the terrorists feared that a rescue force would storm the aircraft. At 5:30 a.m., Mahmoud insisted that the plane be refueled or he would kill the pilot, Jurgen Schumann. He then asked the pilots to take off an hour before the deadline.

When the Boeing 737 approached the Aden airport without Yemeni permission, Schumann was forced to land on a rough airstrip parallel to the blocked runway. Schumann asked to refuel the airplane and was allowed to check the landing gear. Though Yemeni soldiers immediately seized him, they later allowed him to return to the aircraft. In the meantime, Mahmoud had been influenced by a radio report, and immediately after Schumann's return, executed him for passing information to the Yemeni authorities (Antokol, Nudell, 1990, p. 78). Mahmoud then ordered the co-pilot, Jurgen Vietor, to fly the short distance to Mogadishu, Somalia.

Once there, Mahmoud demanded that Mogadishu release all RAF prisoners by 3:00 p.m. or he would blow up the jet. In a desperate move, Minister Wischnewski told the terrorists that Germany had agreed to meet all the terrorists' demands. Mahmoud responded by moving the deadline to 2:45 p.m., October 18. With the assistance of the Somali Air Force,<sup>14</sup> a GSG-9 group and thirty medical personnel arrived at Mogadishu at 7:30 p.m., in a special Lufthansa

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<sup>13</sup> During a combined training, UAE military were uncooperative by refusing to cut the source of power to a Gulf Air 727 (p. 130)

<sup>14</sup> Wegener asked the Somali Air Force commander to cover the GSG-9 landing. The Somali Air Force employed some of their fighters in the next hours as the GSG-9 approached (Taillon, 2002, p. 132).

707 (Thompson, 1986, p. 30). That same evening, following a phone call with Chancellor Schmidt, Somali President Siad Barre approved a rescue operation. Earlier, Mahmoud had dumped Schumann's body on the runway, a disrespectful act on Muslim soil, because Shumann was a Christian. It had a dramatic affect on the Somali government, alienating them from the goals of the hijackers. Thus, the German authorities became convinced that a rescue operation was necessary (Taillon, 2002, 131).

With Somali support, Wegener and a Somali Armed Forces (SAF) officer carried out reconnaissance in the area and formulated a plan. As soon as the GSG-9 group arrived, Wegener briefed his teams and moved them into position. By 11:30 p.m., their preparations were complete. During this same time, Wischnewski had a final conversation with Chancellor Schmidt, who approved the operation. (Interestingly, right after the GSG-9 arrived, an Israeli journalist reported in a radio transmission that antiterrorism units were ready to attempt a rescue [Taillon, 2002, p.132].)

### **3. The Seven-minute Rescue**

Wegener took command and was responsible for conducting the operation. His only concern was having intelligence information about the terrorists at the time of the assault. He arranged sniper teams on the surrounding hills, so he would know at all times what was happening in the aircraft. He also staged the Somali troops to make a diversion in front of the aircraft to deflect attention from the GSG-9 attack (2:05 a.m.), hoping it would cause the terrorists to run toward the cockpit. But the assault teams experienced technical difficulties. The team members with radios found communication difficult due to the high humidity. And the rescue group's ladders were too long for the aircraft (Taillon, 2002, p. 133).

Despite those difficulties, the rescue operation became one of the smoothest and fastest on record. Around 2:00 a.m. the Somali SAF soldiers started to fire in front of the cockpit. The reconnaissance team simultaneously reported that two terrorists were in the cockpit. As part of the deception plan, the negotiators distracted Mahmoud by opening a new phase of negotiations,

drawing his attention away from the incipient attack. At 2:05 a.m. the code signal “Magic Fire” was given, rescuers threw three stun grenades toward the cockpit, and six teams stormed the aircraft through all entrances and the emergency exits. When the gunfire began, two terrorists were killed instantly. Lethally wounded by a Smith Wesson revolver, Mahmoud managed to throw two Russian-type grenades. They rolled under the seats, which significantly reduced the explosion. The fourth terrorist, a woman, was killed when she was found in a toilet. After just four minutes of fighting, the rescuers evacuated the hostages out the rear exits, where a reserve team assured that no hijackers were hidden among them. By 2:12 a.m., the terrorists were dead with just three out of ninety hostages slightly wounded. At 2:17 a.m., rescuers sent the code “springtime” to Minister Wischnewski: the mission had ended. At 2: 18 a.m., the hostages were sent to a medical station set up at the terminal (Taillon, 2002, pp. 134–135).

#### **4. A Brief Analysis**

The success of the rescue operation depended on numerous factors. The international support, especially the Somali and British assistance, was crucial. Intelligence information, deception tactics, and the element of surprise all contributed significantly to the final outcome. The Somali government allowed the GSG-9 team to operate with Somali troops under a German commander. More important, Minister Wischnewski did not interfere in any tactical decisions and allowed Wegener to have all the necessary resources (Taillon, 2002, pp. 136–137).

Although the GSG-9 operators were highly trained professionals, they nonetheless had technical difficulties with their radios and the ladders used, which forced them to adapt to the ongoing situation. And they were lucky. No one could have known that grenades, once thrown, would explode under seats. Had they not, the result would have been completely different, perhaps with a large number of casualties.

## **5. Crisis Management Procedures**

As stated in Chapter II, this analysis will focus on requirements that present the greatest risk to hostages during a hostage crisis and that revolve around the rescue operation.

### **a. Security and Medical Measures**

In this case, the nature of the self-contained aircraft and the secured airports meant that there was no need to establish a security perimeter (cordon). The most crucial aspect was the cooperation between the German authorities and the other governments at all levels. At each airport where the hijacked aircraft landed, the authorities made good use of their assets to secure and delay the aircraft, thereby helping the German authorities gain more time to prepare the rescue operation. What seemed vital in this case was the fact that the terrorists could neither leave the aircraft nor get reinforcements.

The Somali government contributed greatly to the rescue operation. Though it took an international effort to encourage the Somali authorities to allow GSG-9 to operate on their soil, the activities coordinated with the Somali forces proved to be very efficient. First, the hijacked aircraft was moved to a position right in front of the control tower. This site was preferable not only because it offered a complete view of the airplane, but also because it was near the sand dunes that would hide the GSG-9 approach (Taillon, 2002, 131). Second, the Somali Air Force used their fighters to cover up the GSG-9 team's arrival at the airport. Finally, SAF troops successfully deceived the terrorists by firing in front of the airplane, thus helping the GSG-9 teams to storm the plane.

As to the medical measures involved, the German authorities prepared for a worst-case scenario. They sent thirty German medical personnel, who were responsible for setting up a medical station at the terminal as soon as they arrived. Luckily, these preparations were ultimately unnecessary; the medics needed only to treat the few wounded hostages. They treated most of them simply for shock.

**b. *Negotiations. Stalling for Time***

Without fuel, food, or drinks, the terrorists were forced at all times to negotiate. Although they refused attempts to release any of the hostages, they were delayed by subsequent negotiators. Moreover, the negotiations with Captain Mahmoud allowed GSG-9 to gather critical information about the terrorists in a very short time. These various negotiations enabled Minister Wischnewski to spend enough time negotiating with Captain Mahmoud that he actually, to some degree, gained his trust, a factor that later proved essential to the operation. Mahmoud remained on the phone with Wischnewski during the initial minutes of the assault because he believed Wischnewski's assurances that there was no rescue operation, though he could hear the SAF gunfire.

**c. *Handling the Media***

Of all these factors, the media appears to be the aspect that had the most impact on the hostages. Antokol and Nudell (1990) indicate that "democratic governments generally have not been successful in establishing working relations with the media which allow both government and journalists to do their jobs without jeopardizing the lives of hostages" (p. 176). This precise dynamic was involved in the only hostage death in the crisis. The terrorists heard a radio report that Schumann had provided information to the Yemeni authorities. The Yemeni government had been unable to prevent the broadcast, which subsequently prompted Mahmoud to kill Schumann as soon as he returned to the aircraft. Even before this incident, a German government representative had revealed important information about the counterterrorism unit, which resulted in the aircraft's premature departure from Rome. The Israeli radio transmission, which could have endangered the entire mission, is another example of the media's detrimental affect on the German plan. Had the terrorists heard the broadcast, it would have had a disastrous impact on the whole operation. At each of these points, indiscriminate media coverage endangered the lives of the hostages and scuttled the planned rescue operations.

## **B. CRISIS MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES FOR SAS IN OPERATION NIMROD, LONDON, ENGLAND, 1980**

### **1. Background**

Great Britain had and has greater issues in countering terrorism than Germany. For more than three decades, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) has challenged the British government<sup>15</sup> over the northern district of Ulster, where the majority of the population is Protestant. Since the late 1960s, the IRA's end objective has been to end British rule in Northern Ireland and to join the Republic of Ireland, which gained independence in 1920. For that, the IRA has killed more than 1,800 people, of which more than 650 were civilians. The IRA varied its targets, from British troops and police officers to judges and informers in Ulster. They also used hostage-taking tactics, though mostly to persuade the hostages' family members to first transport explosives to military facilities and then to set off the bombs. The British government had to be prepared for this type of operation, therefore, wherever and whenever it occurred.

Shifting from Britain's domestic policies to its foreign policy, Great Britain has long been sensitive to the international impact of the Iranian Revolution. British policy makers had multiple reasons to be upset with Khomeini's<sup>16</sup> anti-Western campaign. Prior to Iran's occupation of the U.S. embassy in Teheran, there were many Iranian attacks on the British embassy in Iran that featured Molotov cocktails and drive-by shootings. Subsequently, all British diplomats were withdrawn. In addition, Iran's anti-Western discourse prompted Great Britain to cancel its economic investment in Iran (DeYoung, 1988, 1; Marshall, 1988, p. 3).

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<sup>15</sup> Also called Provisional IRA or the Provisionals, they apparently ceased fire after the April 1998 accord (Good Friday accord) where the main political parties from Ireland, Great Britain, and Northern Ireland relinquished violence, freed prisoners, and created a new legislative body in Northern Ireland. However IRA has been accused for a Belfast bank robbery in December 2004, and because of that they did not disarm but promised they will keep cease-fire agreements. Information retrieved on 22 October from: <http://www.terrorismanswers.org/groups/ira.html>. For more detailed information about IRA read *The IRA: A history* by Tim Pat Coogan (1990) or *The Great Shame* by Thomas Keneally (2000).

<sup>16</sup> The religious leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, coordinated an Islamic revolution in Iran in January 1979 and declared an Islamic Republic of Iran in April 1979 after he gained military support in February 1979. Information retrieved on 22 October from: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/1/newsid\\_2521000/2521003.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/1/newsid_2521000/2521003.stm)

## **2. The Case**

On April 30, 1980, six anti-Khomeini militants armed with submachine guns and grenades stormed the Iranian embassy in London. A separatist group called the Arabistan Independence Movement took twenty-six hostages, including two British soundmen from the BBC and a British police officer, Trevor Lock, who was on duty at the embassy entrance. At 11:45, just thirty minutes after the ordeal began, Dusty Gray, an ex-SAS member, believing that their assistance would be required in the near future, notified SAS headquarters in Hereford (Strawson, 1984, p. 221). Before he was taken by the terrorists, Constable Lock had managed to alert the Metropolitan police (Met), so the anti-terrorist squad, C13, and the technical support branch, C7, set up surveillance and control points. A Met D11 unit also set up a cordon around the embassy (Thompson, 1986, p. 33).

Around this time, the leader of the separatists, Oan Ali Mohammed (Salim), issued the group's demands, which included the independence of Arabistan, the southern Iranian province of Khuzestan, the release of ninety-one Arab prisoners in Iranian jails, and safe conduct to Arab countries. Since Britain had no authority covering the first two demands, on the second day Oan managed to talk with Sadegh Ghotzbadegh, Iran's Foreign Minister. Ghotzbadegh was convinced that Oan was an instrument of American foreign policy and refused to comply with his demands, stating that it would be an honor for hostages to die for the Iranian revolutionary movement. Soon afterward, the Iranian government announced that Britain, Iraq, and Israel were responsible for the London crisis and emphasized that Iran would never negotiate with hostage takers (Nudell & Antokol, 1990, 109; Davies, 2003, p. 199). To some extent, this was true, since Iraqis had trained and paid the assailants, who were sent to London with Iraqi passports (Connor, 2000, p. 157).

By the second day, the Iranians had released two of the hostages who were sick. An ambulance arrived to take charge of them. The second hostage released, Chris Cramer, a BBC soundman, gave the police important information about the terrorists and their location in the building. Meanwhile, an SAS B

squadron, a Pagoda troop, moved to the Regents Park barracks where they began to train for and rehearse a rescue plan. At the same time, the SAS commander, Mike Rose, and some antiterrorist specialists in civilian clothes obtained information on the embassy and its surroundings for making a scale model. During the night, a tactical support team revealed that a skylight over the embassy rooftop could be opened. These details are important because, throughout the crisis, they saw only the official police cordon, which was a critical factor in the mission's success. Even though more than two hundred journalists were at the scene, the SAS managed to prepare the rescue without detection.

From the beginning of the crisis, a crisis management cell called COBRA (Cabinet Office Briefing Room), under home secretary, William Whitelaw, developed the first course of action. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher already knew that the assailants would not leave the country. Therefore, police negotiators made all the efforts for a peaceful resolution and persuaded the hostage takers to reduce their demands. By the fourth day, the assailants had reduced their demands to only one: safe passage to Arab countries. In subsequent Whitehall meetings, the home secretary invited Arab ambassadors to assist him in finding a solution. At the outset of the crisis, Whitelaw had decided that the SAS would not get involved in the situation unless two hostages had been killed. Their logic was that, even if a first hostage was killed, whether by accident or intention, a peaceful surrender could still be negotiated, but if a second were killed, the peace option would be ruled out (Connor, 2000, p. 159).

On the morning of the third day, Oan became very frustrated because his demands had not been broadcast. He had promised that two additional hostages would be released after the broadcasting of his statement. The group's demands were broadcast that evening on the nine o'clock news and the two hostages were freed (Davies, 2003, p. 200).

In the following two days the police managed to keep control of the terrorists by adopting a sympathetic negotiating approach, thereby trying to gain the SAS troops more time. But there was little movement toward resolving the

crisis, either positively or negatively. On May 5, however, the situation worsened. Oan threatened that he would start killing hostages. After a dispute with one hostage, Abbas Lavasani, a press attaché, Oan shot him dead at 1:31 p.m. At this time, the police negotiators tried to convince Oan that a bus would take them to the airport. The SAS teams were in position by 3:50 p.m. waiting for the launch order. Around 6:30 p.m., three shots were heard and Lavasani's body was pushed out of the embassy. This was the SAS's first proof that a hostage had been killed, even though, after hearing shots earlier, they had suspected it. With this proof, Whitelaw obtained Thatcher's approval for the rescue operation. At 7:07 p.m. Assistant Commissioner John Dellow handed over tactical control of the operation to Rose (Connor, 2000, p. 160; Davies, 2003, p. 201).

### **3. The Eleven-minute Rescue**

At 7:23 p.m., Operation Nimrod was launched. With the main assault team attacking from the rear, the SAS stormed the embassy from three directions. The hostage takers were located on all three floors and the hostages on the second floor. With flame charges and stun grenades, assault teams entered the building and cleared each room of the building from top to bottom. On the first floor, Oan was still speaking with the police negotiator, but, after hearing the blasts, he ran toward a window to see what was happening. He saw an SAS operator at the front window, was tackled by constable Lock, and was killed by the operator. Realizing that the embassy was being assaulted, the two terrorists in the telex room started shooting at the hostages, killing one and injuring two others. Just before the SAS members got to them, they threw down their weapons (on the advice of the hostages); but when they were identified, they were killed instantly. The terrorist located on the ground floor was shot dead before he could open fire.

While the SAS operators searched for the other two terrorists, a trooper noticed a man with a grenade in his hand. He hit him in the back of his neck and two SAS members shot him dead. To make sure that the grenade would not harm the hostages, an operator used the assailant's body to cover the grenade's explosion, which, however, failed to occur. The last hostage taker, Fowzi Nejad,

managed to escape with the hostages. But the reception team and police immediately identified and arrested him. The two injured hostages were hospitalized along with an SAS operator who got stuck on the rappelling cord and received serious burns during the assault (Connor, 2000, pp. 161–163; Strawson, 1984, pp. 222–223; Davies, 2003, pp. 201–202).

#### **4. A Brief Analysis**

The crisis cell seemed to solve the problem without the support of the Iranian authorities. From the beginning, Whitelaw knew that, eventually, an armed response would be necessary, but he believed that the assailants could be influenced to surrender. Whitelaw later noted that the hostage rescue proceeded as smoothly as an exercise because the Cabinet had been practicing such operations in anticipation of an IRA hostage-taking (Taillon, 2002, pp. 71–72). Thatcher made the ultimate decision about what should be done, but in an excellent example of decentralized command and control, like Chancellor Schmidt, she did not interfere in the operational or tactical decisions. She left tactical decisions to Whitelaw, who, in turn, delegated the power and the decisions about necessary resources to Rose.

As seen from a tactical perspective, the operation encountered only a small number of problems. A lack of intelligence about the terrorists and hostages prior to the assault almost killed one of the operators when constable Lock intervened (Connor, 2000, p. 165). Furthermore, while the swift assault did not allow Oan to order the execution of the hostages, they remained vulnerable. The two terrorists in the telex room had enough time to kill one and injure two others. Undoubtedly, the terrorists could have killed all of them within seconds. Only the hostages and their ability to convince their captors that they would be arrested persuaded them to drop their weapons.

Obviously, a capture of terrorists could lead to other terrorist incidents, as the British experience with the IRA and the German experience with the RAF confirmed. In this regard, many local witnesses believed that Thatcher ordered the SAS to kill all the hostage takers (BBC, 1980). However, police evidence showed that the assailants were armed when the SAS operators killed them

(Connor, 2000, p. 165; Strawson, 1984, p. 222). Leroy Thompson (1986) argues “that once the terrorists started killing hostages, they were justifiably ‘bought and paid for,’ and anyone not willing to admit that is very naive about terrorists and murderers of any ilk” (p. 37). All together, what made this rescue operation a successful one was not the killing of the assailants, but the fact that almost all of the hostages were free.

## **5. Crisis Management Procedures**

### **a. Security and Medical Measures**

The police forces had a chance to secure the area before anyone could reach the Iranian embassy, especially the Press. This could be attributed in large part to Trevor Lock, who alerted the police. As in the German case, the police effectively isolated the hostage-takers. During the hostage crisis, the only individuals who could approach the embassy were medics (ambulances) who treated the released hostages. Indeed, the police helped the assault teams to reach their initial positions, using their surveillance teams to give them information on the terrorists’ movements. The security forces helped the reception team in identifying the last assailant, arresting him before he could harm anyone.

### **b. Negotiations. Stalling for Time**

This case was a classic example of authorities stalling for time in order to prepare an assault to rescue hostages. For six days, the police negotiators, without responding to their demands, persuaded the assailants not to kill any hostages. This enabled the negotiators to reduce the hostage takers’ expectations, while also allowing the SAS to gather more intelligence on both the assailants and the hostages. Moreover, they managed to release six hostages, thus reducing the number of hostages at risk. More important, the negotiators kept Oan in a detail-coping mode by concentrating on details that would help the assailants leave the country unharmed. At the moment of the assault, Oan was preoccupied with details for the requested bus. This gave the assault teams time to start clearing the rooms and prevented hostage bloodshed.

One could argue that the negotiators could have prevented Lavasani's execution. Knowing the assailants' behavior, the police could have proposed a rescue operation on the last night of negotiations. As the decision makers knew that an armed intervention would be required, the question remains: why didn't they send the assault teams before Lavasani was killed? The intelligence information about the hostage takers and hostages was the same before and after the execution. Had they stormed the embassy the night before, they could have saved one more life. They did not choose the assault option at that time because of their fear that it would put the hostages further at risk. Once the captors begun to execute hostages, however, the calculations changed, turning to that of preventing further loss of life.

***c. Handling the Media***

Unlike the German case, in this incident both the decision makers and the police negotiators coped very well with the media. The authorities managed to keep the press informed about details that would not affect a later decision to storm the building. This is a perfect example of the technique of regularly briefing the media so that they will think they are being kept abreast of all developments, which makes it less likely that they will investigate the situation and uncover other preparations that are going on (Antokol, Nudell, 1990, pp. 78–79). This tactic is critical for operational secrecy. It allowed the police and later the SAS to move into their initial and surveillance positions without media exposure, which would have compromised the operation. The presence of the assault teams and their plan to rescue the hostages was not disclosed to the media until the actual assault. Although reporters managed to give a live broadcast of the rescue operation, they did not cover the main assault from the rear, which means they were not aware of the whole operation. Finally, the police negotiators kept the reporters from interviewing the hostage takers. Given the fact that the media had broadcast the terrorists' demands by only the third day, the denial of interviews demonstrated again that the government maintained control of the situation.

## **C. CRISIS MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES FOR PERUVIAN SPECIAL FORCES IN OPERATION CHAVIN DE HUANTAR, LIMA, PERU, 1997**

### **1. Background**

On May 13, 1982, the Peruvian government had to deal for the first time with Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru (MRTA).<sup>17</sup> The Amaru revolutionary movement developed from a series of negotiations among several leftist groups. Its basic goals were to establish a Marxist regime and to rid Peru of all imperialist elements, mainly U.S. and Japanese influence. For almost fifteen years, with no more than six hundred fighters, MRTA conducted bombings, kidnappings, ambushes and assassinations (Davies, 2003, p. 57). The movement's targets varied from government officials and businessmen to military and police installations.

In addition, to gain popular support, they planned numerous attacks (kidnappings) against media elements. In February 1984, MRTA kidnapped newscast personnel from the *Radio Imperial* and *Radio Independencia* radio stations, forcing them to broadcast MRTA's intention to overthrow the government. In June 1985, MRTA transmitted its first underground radio message by intercepting and using the Channel 5 audio signal. In February 1987, MRTA members occupied seven radio stations in Lima and confirmed their anger at the increasing militarization.

Since 1989, the Peruvian government had managed to pinpoint some MRTA locations and developed new measures for use against the guerilla forces. In February 1989, the Peruvian police captured the movement leader, Victor Polay Campos, imprisoning him in Canto Grande prison in Lima. However, in July 1990, Campos and forty-six other MRTA members managed to escape from prison through a 315-meter underground tunnel. On April 28, 1989, military forces surrounded a MRTA unit and, after heavy fighting, including air bombings, sixty-two insurgents were captured and killed.

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<sup>17</sup> They named themselves after an eighteenth-century leader, who confronted Spanish colonial rule. That leader had taken the name Tupac Amaru, who was the last ruler of the Incan empire.

After President Fujimori was elected in 1990, the military struggle against the guerillas was much disputed. In 1991, several attacks, including car bombings against the ministry of interior and the U.S. embassy, forced Fujimori to pass the so-called November Decrees, which amplified the military response to the violence in Peru. Relying on the support of two men, the commander of the armed forces, General Hermosa Rios, and the director of the ministry of intelligence, Vladimiro Montesinos, Fujimori dissolved the Congress, closed the courts, and surrounded Lima with military troops. Following his instigation of a coup, Fujimori revised the constitution, created a single-house legislature, and reformed the judicial process (Garrison, 2002). In 1992, the arrest of Abimael Guzman combined with other captures, helped Fujimori win the following elections.<sup>18</sup> By 1993, the leadership of MRTA had been captured, including Victor Polay Campos and some of his most important lieutenants. In 1996, the Peruvian government declared that, with four hundred of its members imprisoned, MRTA was no longer a threat. However, Nestor Cerpa Cartollini, the most important member of the MRTA hierarchy at the time, promised his imprisoned comrades, who included his wife, Nancy Gilbonio that MRTA would continue its acts of violence until the prisoners were released. As the leadership regrouped, there several factors contributed to a revival of MRTA support: 70 percent of the Peruvian population was listed as below the poverty line; more than 60 percent suffered from malnourishment; and 20 percent of the population in urban areas was illiterate, with no skills in either reading or writing (Garrison, 2002).

## **2. The Case**

On December 17, 1996, fourteen MRTA members entered the Japanese embassy during a birthday celebration for the Japanese emperor and took more

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<sup>18</sup> Chairman Gonzalo, the founder and leader of Sendero Luminoso (The Shining Path), a Maoist terrorist organization that had been trying to bring down the Peruvian state since 1980. Information retrieved on 29 October, 2005 from: <http://www.gci275.com/peru/sendero.shtml>

than six hundred hostages.<sup>19</sup> Although the group engaged the embassy security forces in a fierce gun battle, there were no deaths and only minor injuries in the siege. The timing of the attack was designed to net a group of hostages that contained many eminent persons. The celebrants-turned-hostages included Peru's foreign minister, Francisc Tudela; the agriculture minister, Rodolfo Munante Sanguinetti; and Peru's supreme court president, Moises Pantoja. Ambassadors from Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cuba, Panama, Poland, Romania, South Korea, Spain, and Venezuela were also present, along with Japan's ambassador, Morihisa Aoki, and his seventeen staff members. MRTA had possibly the most eminent hostage list ever.

The leader of the assailants, Nestor Cerpa, issued their demands in a phone call to a local radio station. They included the release of some four hundred and fifty prisoners from Peruvian jails; an economic program to help Peru's poor; transfer of the freed prisoners and assailants to a jungle hiding place; and payment of an unspecified amount as a war tax. Immediately, a Red Cross representative, Michel Mining, tried to negotiate with Cerpa for the release of the hostage takers. The hostage takers were unaware that Fujimori's mother and sister were among the first hostages released, though his son would remain a hostage until the end of the crisis. Rodolfo Reategui, the commander of the Peruvian Navy, escaped with the second group, which comprised waiters and other staff. The hostage takers shot at Reategui, but without harming him. At this point, the hostages were divided into two main groups, 150 on the first floor and the remaining 231 on the second floor. The most highly valued hostages, the ambassadors, ministers, state representatives, military leaders, and business people, were held on the second floor (Perez, 2004, p. 44).

Within minutes of the siege, the embassy security forces began to implement antiterrorist procedures. By the night of December 18, members of the

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<sup>19</sup> How they entered the embassy has never been established. Some sources state that they entered disguised as waiters, others claim that the assailants just rushed over the high concrete walls that form the embassy perimeter. However, most agree that there was at least one explosion before the hostage takers started shooting and shouting "Viva MRTA," which marked the takeover. Information retrieved on 29 October, 2005 from: <http://www.isanet.org/noarchive/garrison.html> and Davies, 2003, p. 212.

special tactics forces, Sub-Unidad de Acciones Tácticas (SUAT), positioned snipers on the nearby rooftops. Meanwhile, Cerpa threatened that he would start killing hostages if the authorities did not respond to his demands. But the deadlines passed without any harm to the hostages. At the end of the day, MRTA released three hostages with medical problems and four diplomats, the ambassadors of Canada, Germany, and Greece and the French cultural attaché. Cerpa released the diplomats for the explicit purpose of negotiating the situation. The diplomats read a statement in which they said that they had been sent to find a solution that would avoid any loss of life. The Canadian ambassador, Anthony Vincent, proved very useful in providing information about the terrorists. President Fujimori disagreed with MRTA's attempt to negotiate through the ambassadors, however. He asserted that the chief negotiator on his behalf was still the education minister, Domingo Palermo, assisted by two other negotiators, Archbishop Juan Luis Cipriani and the Red Cross representative, Michel Mining.

During the next two days, the residence's power and communications lines were cut off and five hundred packages of rations were sent to the hostages. Representative Mining negotiated for the release of an additional forty-three hostages, including the president of Nissan Motors. After pressure from American and Japanese officials, Fujimori stated that he would not give in to the terrorists' demands, but he would find a solution. At this point, the differences in the American and the Japanese positions toward dealing with terrorists began to widen. The American authorities suggested that Fujimori should not respond to Cerpa's demands as a means to gain the release of the prisoners. On the other hand, the Japanese, who were known for their dealing with terrorists by concessions, proposed that any measure should be taken that would assure saving lives. There were also rumors that an international rescue force made up of U.S. Special Forces, SAS, and Israeli Special Forces was being sent to support the Peruvian authorities. These press rumors contributed to the release of seven American hostages. On December 22, two hundred and twenty-five hostages were released, leaving a hundred and three, mostly Peruvian and Japanese officials.

On December 28, Palermo and two assistants, Cipriani and Mining, met with Cerpa to convey the message that Fujimori might grant the hostage takers safe passage to a third country in exchange for the remaining hostages. Cerpa then released another twenty hostages and called for better conditions in Peruvian jails, but he did not discuss the MRTA prisoners. As the negotiations began to improve the situation, journalists were allowed to take close-up photographs. Subsequently, another seven hostages were released. On December 31, however, the situation worsened when a Japanese journalist sprinted toward the residence in an attempt to gain an interview with Cerpa. Cerpa used this as an opportunity to send a message rejecting Fujimori's offer to Fujimori and the public: "If I had wanted to leave, I could have left clandestinely, as surely many dedicated people have done. We reiterate our request that our comrades be liberated" (Garrison, 2002).

After seeing the broadcast, Fujimori stated that he would make no other offer. He also appointed replacements for some of the official Peruvian hostages, including the president of the Supreme Court, the security chief, and the head of the anti-terrorist police. By those actions, Fujimori attempted to reassure the Peruvians that the hostage crisis would not hold back Peruvian progress. By that time, the ongoing Red Cross visits to bring food supplies were the only interactions occurring between the two sides.

After turning down all international offers of counterterrorist rescue forces, Fujimori told the public and the Japanese government that a military response was not an option. Moreover, he proposed again to offer safe passage to the hostage takers. Conversely, he asked MRTA to withdraw its demands and to release the remaining four hundred and fifty prisoners. Cerpa again took a hard stance, stating that there would be no negotiations unless the Peruvians accepted the release of the MRTA prisoners. By January 15, the Peruvian government agreed with the proposal, although Fujimori's committee was still debating the issue. Fujimori rejected a proposal that a Guatemalan representative be part of the guarantor commission. Although Cerpa stated that he would release no hostages, he released Peru's top antiterrorist policeman and

General Jose Rivas Rodriguez, who were both ill. This move would turn out to be a big mistake for Cerpa, because General Rodriguez's information about the terrorists would prove crucial in planning the eventual rescue operation.

Meanwhile, the hostage takers shot at police troops for being too close to the residence. No one was hurt, but the policemen then began throwing stones into the residence, creating a cycle of violence. The Japanese government expressed its fear that some incident might occur that would harm the hostages. On January 26, the police set up twelve loudspeakers at the embassy entrance. In the following weeks, patriotic hymns were played, which marked the beginning of a propaganda battle between MRTA and the police. Actually, the police were using the noise to cover the noise made by twenty-four miners from the government-owned Centromin mining company who were digging underground tunnels toward the embassy (Davies, 2003, p. 216). Realizing that the terrorists had mined and booby-trapped the area around the residence, the Peruvian Special Forces had decided to storm it from underground.

The Peruvian forces, a combination of elite forces from both police and army units, which had begun training right after Christmas, were under the direct command of Gen. Hermosa Rios Montesinos. Montesinos was in charge of the intelligence operations, but Fujimori was the commander in chief of all forces. In early January, a replica of the embassy residence was constructed at the Peruvian Army commando school in El Chorrillo. And, although both the United States and Britain denied any direct military assistance to the Peruvian authorities, both supplied Peru with experts and intelligence assets. The CIA sent an unmanned aircraft with a forward-looking infrared camera, a U.S. Air Force RG-8A, to monitor the assailants and their hostages. Britain sent four SAS experts to help the Peruvians plan the rescue operation.

Unaware of the two-way radio hidden inside it, Archbishop Cipriani smuggled a guitar into the residence, which reached Vice Admiral Giampetri. From that point on, Giampetri transmitted more than thirty messages a day that proved vital to the assault plans (Davies, 2003, pp. 214–215; Perez, 2004, p. 80).

On February 6, Mining and Cipriani negotiated a medical examination of the seventy-two remaining hostages. Fujimori met with the British Prime Minister, John Major, who advised him to continue negotiations. On February 9, who Japanese reporter, Tsuyoshi Hitomi, who already avoided the perimeter security, once again managed to enter the residence and provided the terrorists with radio equipment for interviews. There were rumors also that Cerpa had informers from outside who kept him informed about the Peruvian authorities' progress. Partly as a result of that, the security cordon moved the press back ten meters from their initial location in early April, so they could keep better control over them.

At the beginning of March, Fujimori visited Cuba to request that Fidel Castro offer asylum to the fourteen terrorists. Though he disapproved of MRTA's actions, Castro agreed. No one knows if this was part of a deception plan or of a plan to assault the rebels en route. Meanwhile, the terrorists suspected that tunnels were being dug under the residence. While the police denied the rumors, newspapers published photographs of vehicles removing dirt from the perimeter site.

Fujimori continued to state publicly that a military assault plan was a last resort. Some say that the subsequent resignations of the minister of Interior and the chief of the Peruvian National Police (PNP) were in protest of the military rescue plan. Others say that Fujimori forced them to resign in response to a disappointed public and to take responsibility for what would follow. Polls showed only 38 percent support for Fujimori's handling of the crisis, his lowest approval rating in his seven years as president (Garrison, 2002). On April 21, Giampetri informed some hostages that a rescue was planned and that they should wear light-colored clothing so the rescue force could identify them.

### **3. The Thirty-five-minute Rescue**

On April 22 at 2:20 p.m. Giampetri transmitted the code "Mary's sick," indicating that the hostages were prepared for the rescue operation (Perez, 2004, pp. 77–78). At 3:23 p.m. the hostages heard three blows followed by an intense explosion. A 140-man commando team emerged from five different directions around the residence; rebels found outside playing soccer were killed

instantly. Those inside the building were killed as the assault teams cleared the rooms. The last terrorist, who had barricaded himself on the second floor, fought for over thirty minutes until two commandos rappelled from the rooftop and neutralized him with a demolition charge.

Some hostages later claimed that, after most of hostage takers had been killed, the commandos executed three more who had surrendered. During the assault, two police officers died, one of whom was a member of the security team assigned to protect Fujimori's son. And one of the hostages, the Supreme Court judge, Carlo Giusti Acuna, died from a heart attack after being shot in the leg. Among the other seventy-one hostages, twenty-five had minor wounds; two others needed surgery. After the assault teams occupied the building, President Fujimori took charge of the situation in a televised walk-through.

#### **4. A Brief Analysis**

Prior to Fujimori's decision for a rescue operation, he took into account the U.S. and Japanese proposals; but he kept the international support for a rescue operation secret from the Peruvian committee. Thus the negotiators and the Japanese authorities were unaware of the rescue plan. The minister of interior and the PNP chief resignations also signified that President Fujimori was solely accountable for the final decision. However, Fujimori's decision to storm the embassy was known and supported by both Hermoza and Montesinos, allies that would eventually contribute to Fujimori's demise.<sup>20</sup>

In defense of their accordance with human rights regulations, the Peruvian government reported that all the hostage takers had been annihilated during the assault, but TV footage revealed that some of the assailants' bodies were mutilated and even dismembered. In an apparent effort to prevent further investigations, the assailants' corpses were buried in unmarked graves

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<sup>20</sup> The footage and other reports of payoffs and abuses of power contributed to a 19 percent rating approval in June 1997, down from the 65 percent that Fujimori had enjoyed right after the rescue. The international community did not sanction Fujimori after reports revealed severe electoral tampering. Fujimori won the 1998 reelections, but he was forced to remove one of his oldest allies, Gen. Hermoza, who opposed the reelection bid. Eventually, in 2000, when Montesinos got caught bribing a Congress member, Fujimori resigned and asked asylum in Japan. Information retrieved on October 29, 2005, from: <http://www.isanet.org/noarchive/garrison.html>.

(Garrison, 2002). This circumstance contributed to the terrible image of the Peruvian military. Most of the assault team members were tried by a so-called Truth Commission and faced charges of assassination.

This case demonstrates that the information provided by hostages is crucial. Indeed, it enabled the Peruvian forces to plan a rescue operation. Given the fact that the MRTA terrorists were expecting an attack by helicopters, the underground tunnels maximized the surprise factor. And Fujimori deceived the assailants into believing that an airplane would take them into Cuba. The Peruvian Special Forces pulled off a rescue that became known as one of the most stunning rescue assaults of the decade.

## **5. Crisis Management Procedures**

### ***a. Security and Medical Measures***

As in the other two cases, after they tried to get the terrorists released from the residence, the Peruvian Police secured the perimeter. For a hundred and twenty-six days, with few exceptions, they managed to restrain the Press and to control the information flow. Later there were incidents between the MRTA members and the police cordon that could have cause injuries not only to the hostages but also to the police it. Fortunately, those altercations ended when the police set up the twelve loudspeakers, with the loud music and patriotic hymns that covered the noises made by the miners.

As far as medical measures are concerned, the Red Cross was allowed to visit and treat the hostages. Their visits gave the authorities a bigger picture of what was going on inside the embassy. Representative Mining made sure through negotiations that if any of the hostages became sick, they would be released. Ultimately, after the rescue operation was completed, medics immediately treated the twenty-five wounded hostages.

### ***b. Negotiations. Stalling for Time***

Palermo and his assistants negotiated the release of more than 90 percent of the hostages. After several days of siege, the negotiators also manipulated the hostage takers' environment, cutting off the communication

systems and the electricity, thereby forcing the assailants to negotiate for them. Moreover, during the four-month crisis, the MRTA terrorists eventually released hostages in return for food rations.

Fujimori's firm position against the release of the 450 MRTA prisoners finally brought the terrorists to accept the offer of free passage to Cuba. The fact that the hostage takers did not kill any hostages and overlooked the deadlines showed that negotiators from inside and outside the residence knew how to deal with MRTA and its leader.

The 126 days of negotiations allowed a rescue force to gather intelligence on both the hostage takers and the hostages. It also made the assailants more confident in their ability to keep control over the residence. One of the key elements in the rescue plan was Vice Admiral Giampetri's ability to supply daily information about the rebels through a concealed two-way radio.

***c. Handling the Media***

President Fujimori's regime and the international value of the hostages attracted many journalists to the scene seeking information on the hostage crisis. But letting the journalists stay close to the residence gave one Japanese reporter an opportunity to sprint to the residence, not once but twice, which broke the Peruvian regime's control over the information flow. The reporter's interview with Cerpa and the fact that he provided the terrorists with radios had a negative impact on the negotiations and worsened the situation. Fortunately, none of his actions harmed the hostages. However, the authorities' control of the situation had been reduced.

The footage of the vehicles removing dirt could have compromised the whole operation. Therefore, local authorities must very well protect this type of information and all tactical matters linked to a rescue attempt. For instance, the journalists could not reach the rescue force's training compound, but they raised suspicions among the assailants about the authorities' intentions. One

could argue that, since the assailants believed that they were safe as long as they did not kill any hostages, any assault could have been detrimental to the government.

Finally, rumors in the local news about an international rescue effort made the assailants release most of the hostages, leaving only those with links to the Japanese and Peruvian governments. This time the Press scared the terrorists, which worked as a deterrent factor, even though they claimed that they were releasing hostages as a benevolent Christmas gesture

#### **D. CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter presented three cases of hostage crises in which the rescue operations ended with only minor fatalities. Their focus on crisis management procedures allowed the decision makers to reflect before the actual assault. Now we discuss some useful lessons drawn from those three crises.

First, in the initial phase of the crises, local authorities implemented antiterrorist measures as soon as possible. To that end, the local/national police secured the perimeters and alerted all the necessary players responsible for carrying out such processes. In the cases described, both the decision makers and the rescue forces were alerted within minutes. Two cases were embassy cases that involved a relationship between a host government and a representative government. The German hijacking case involved a relationship between a host government and the governments that approved the airplane's landings. Among the three cases, the governmental relationships were structured differently, but all had something in common throughout the crises: control of the situation. In the British case, although the relationship was made difficult by their diverging political stances, the Iranian government eventually agreed with the British line of decisions. In the other cases, approval of the rescue operation was given either explicitly or, in Peru, tacitly. In addition, their relations favored an exchange of information about the hostage-takers' backgrounds and their *modus operandi*.

Second, the cases demonstrated that governments need to control all those who speak with hostage takers. In all three cases, a chief negotiator was named and he then coordinated with the security forces, the political decision makers, and the rescue force commanders. Excepting in the Peruvian case, the security forces maintained control over the crowds and the Press, and, most important, did not allow the hostage takers to escape or to obtain reinforcements.

Third, even though none of the three hostage crises required extraordinary medical efforts, the authorities managed to get medical treatment for both the hostages and the security forces during and after the crises. In the German case, in which the military forces were deployed outside their country, more than thirty medics were sent to treat potential injured hostages. In the other two cases, medical assets were prepared by and employed from local resources.

Fourth, all the negotiators had the ability to persuade the hostage takers not to kill the hostages. In London, assailants killed the press attaché after having a political dispute with him; the German pilot's killing was the fault of the media. In both those cases, the negotiators handled the situation well. More important, the negotiation tactics provided the authorities time for intelligence gathering. In all of the cases, none of the terrorists' demands were met, and thus they did not result in any political changes in the involved countries.

Finally, in most cases, the host governments managed to prevent the media from discovering the tactical details of the hostage rescues. Indeed, it was the media that killed the pilot in the German case by revealing the fact that he was providing intelligence about the terrorists. Also, in the Peruvian case, the Japanese reporter created confusion and caused both the authorities and the hostage takers to retract statements pertaining to the negotiation process. However, in all cases the media also assisted the governments in deceiving the assailants or deterring them from discovering the authorities' proposed actions. For instance, the German authorities deceived the hijackers through a radio communication, which stated that the GSG-9 had left Greece and had stopped chasing the hostage takers. In the Peruvian case, a local news program

announced that international rescue forces were prepared to deploy to Peru, which caused the assailants to release all but the hostages related to Japan and Peru.

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## **IV. CASE STUDY: HOSTAGE RESCUE OPERATIONS WITH MAJOR FATALITIES**

### **A. CRISIS MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES OF ALPHA AND VYMPER IN THE MOSCOW THEATER: MOSCOW, RUSSIA, 2002**

#### **1. Background**

The Russian-Chechen conflict, which seems new to Americans, actually began a century and a half ago. In 1858, the Russian empire conquered the region of North Caucasus after a three-decade resistance by Chechen clan groups led by Imam Shamil. A Chechen-Ingush republic was established in 1934, but in late 1944, Stalin sent 400,000 Ingush and Chechens into exile in Central Asia and Siberia for suspected cooperation with the Germans. Under President Khrushchev in 1957, the Chechens as well as other deported nationalities were allowed to return to their reestablished republics.

After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Chechen president, Dzhokhar Dudayev, declared independence, but Boris Yeltsin, the current Russian president, refused to recognize Chechnya's independence. And in late 1994, assisted by anti-Dudayev groups in Chechnya, 10,000 Russian troops invaded Grozny, the Chechen capital. The struggle escalated until, in April 1996, Dudayev was killed in a missile attack. Nevertheless, the Chechen counteroffensive continued, and, in August 1996, succeeded under the leadership of the notorious guerilla leader, Shamil Basaev. Finally, the Chechens had won back control of their capital. This led to several agreements between Moscow and Grozny and, by December 1996, had forced the Russians to withdraw their troops from Chechnya.

In January 1997, the Chechens elected Aslan Maskhadovas as their new president, who was officially recognized as legitimate by both Moscow and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Throughout the following two years Chechnya was very unstable, with widespread lawlessness and organized crime. The anarchy reached a climax in December 1998 when four Western telecommunications engineers were abducted and decapitated.

One of the most noteworthy incidents of the 1994–1996 conflict was a raid on the southern Russian town of Budennovsk led by Basaev in June 1995. Basaev, with more than eighty Chechen fighters, attacked the local police station and seized the main hospital. They took some 1,600 hostages, including doctors and patients. Basaev then demanded that all Russian troops be withdrawn from Chechnya. The next day, Russian Special Forces attempted to rescue the hostages, but they managed to seize only the ground floor. After Prime Minister Chernomyrdin called to agree to a ceasefire, Basaev released 227 hostages. A second assault failed to bring the Chechens out of the hospital compound and, during the assaults, over a hundred hostages died and more than four hundred were wounded. Finally, after a six-day standoff Chernomyrdin guaranteed Basaev safe passage to Chechnya in exchange for the rest of hostages. This event greatly embarrassed the Russian government, which proudly asserted that there would be no more terrorist attacks on Russian territory.

In 1999, the Russians were famously proven wrong when Basaev once again instigated conflict, creating a situation of violence throughout Chechnya and the neighboring countryside. Though he was not a government official, Basaev imposed Islamic law in Chechnya through his network of armed guerillas. The government was powerless to stop Basaev in this, and they could not rein him in when, in August, he led radical Chechen groups in a failed attempt to take control of the neighboring Russian territory of Dagestan. But when several car-bombings in Moscow were also attributed to Basaev's group, the events forced President Yeltsin and the then–prime minister, Vladimir Putin, to send 100,000 Russian troops to recapture Dagestan and reestablish order in Chechnya. The offensive drove the rebels into the mountainous areas and more than 250,000 Chechen refugees into Ingushetia.

By 2000, the newly elected President Putin's government continued the military operations, now described as "anti-terrorist operations," and the Federal Security Service (FSB) was given control. Although a settlement was reached at the end of 2001, today Russian troops have still not been withdrawn from

Chechnya. And Russia's number one enemy, Shamil Basaev, has claimed responsibility for two sensational hostage takings.

## **2. The Case**

On October 23, 2002, at 8:15 in the evening, forty Chechen terrorists, nineteen women and twenty-one men, stormed a Moscow theater and took more than eight hundred hostages. The hostages were watching the second act of the Russian musical *Nord Ost*, which was to become the colloquial name for the siege and subsequent hostage crisis, known to the international community as the siege of Dubrovka. After the Chechens fired several times on the stage, they rounded everyone up in the auditorium and placed explosives around the building. The nineteen Chechen women wearing bomb belts were positioned in the audience: at the leader's order, they would explode the charges. Movsar Barayev, who assumed leadership of the terrorists, issued a statement that they would start executing hostages unless the Russian authorities ordered an end to the war in Chechnya. No deadline was set for carrying out the threats, but Barayev stated that the assailants could hold out for a week.

Barayev was very well known, not only for fighting against the Russians in Chechnya, but also because of his uncle's reputation. Arbi Barayev, a Chechen warlord, was famous for the 1998 kidnapping and beheading of the four engineers, three Britons and a New Zealander. Barayev's renewed activity embarrassed the Russian authorities. They had claimed that he was killed in Chechnya ten days earlier. This and the fact that more than seventy hostages were international citizens soon attracted the media's attention (HBO, 2004; Davies, 2003, p. 221).

Although police quickly surrounded the theater, they gave very little information to the media. The assailants, unhappy with the lack of media attention, told the hostages to use their cell phones to call their families, the media, and the government. One hostage called radio station Ekho Moskv, explaining that more than eight hundred hostages were inside the building. After

that, all radio stations and TV channels became focused on the hostage crisis; and, despite the government's attempt to control the flow of information, word spread quickly to the outside world.

From the start the authorities were resistant to the terrorists' demands. Knowing full well how the authorities usually responded to such situations, the hostages and their families expressed considerable fear that the authorities would storm the theater, ending the crisis with a bloodbath. As things turned out, their fears were completely justified, though in a very different way than they had anticipated.

The FSB chief, Nikolai Patrushev, after consulting with President Putin, presented the government's offer: free passage from Russia. Barayev refused, declaring that the hostage takers were prepared to die with the hostages, though he released forty-one hostages, Muslims, children, and a pregnant woman, as a sign of his goodwill. Russian security forces questioned the released hostages about the hostage takers' positions in the theater. In the meantime, Putin cancelled scheduled trips to Germany, Portugal, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC) summit in Mexico, where he was scheduled to meet with President Bush (Davies, 2003, p. 222; CBC, 2002).

Astonishingly, after six hours of the siege, a twenty-six-year-old shop assistant who lived nearby entered in the theater. No one knew how she managed to pass through the police cordon. Claiming that the terrorists were "just some clowns" and the hostage taking was "just a masquerade," she told the hostages to leave immediately. The rebels, believing she was an FSB spy, pushed her down the auditorium stairs and shot her (HBO, 2004).

After rejecting the government negotiators, the rebels demanded that Grigorii Yavlinsky, leader of the Russian opposition party, Yabloko, should come to the negotiations table. Yavlinsky, they said, would be more neutral, because he had often condemned Russia's military actions in Chechnya. Yavlinsky promised to arrive on October 24. In the meantime, Barayev allowed a number of politicians — the former president of Ingushetia, Ruslan Aushev; the former

Russian prime minister, Yevghenii Primakov; and the leader of the Union of Right Forces, Boris Nemtsov — into the theater to open the negotiations. Nemtsov was able to talk by phone with the hostage takers. A journalist, Anna Politkovskaya, also played a key role, and Barayev allowed a pediatric physician, Leonid Roshal, to treat the hostages (Dunlop, 2004).

The rebels, however, did not have a coherent negotiation position, a circumstance that altered the negotiations process. Yavlinsky stated that they wanted the Russian troops out of Chechnya immediately, and when the negotiators proposed that the rebels release hostages for each peaceful day in Chechnya, they agreed. However, when the negotiators reminded them that October 23 had been a peaceful day in Chechnya, the rebels said they must talk to Basaev or Maskhadov. The reporter, Politkovskaya, and the Right Forces leader, Nemtsov, stated that the rebels were not highly educated and did not know how to negotiate gradually. Yavlinsky told Putin that a step-by-step negotiation remained possible, but by October 25 he suspected that Putin had his own, quite different solution for the crisis. Politkovskaya then discovered that, at the operations headquarters, ministry of interior representatives and FSB officers were debating whether to continue negotiations until exhausted the assailants were exhausted or to assault the theater (Dunlop, 2004; Moscow Times, 2002).

By October 25, the rebels were becoming increasingly agitated at the authorities' failure to remove the Russian troops from Chechnya. They allowed the hostages, who had to ask their female captors' permission to leave their seats, to use the orchestra pit only for necessities. Though the Red Cross managed the release of a few more hostages, children and those in bad condition, the tension continued to increase. Finally, Barayev announced that, after midnight, he would execute ten hostages an hour if their demands were not met. At 8:30, Sergei Mironov, the chairman of the Federation Council, addressed the assailants from the Ekho Moskvyy radio station. Declaring that, as the rebels had already achieved their objective by capturing the world's attention through the international media, they should leave the theater and Russia.

At 11:00, General Kazantsev, the Kremlin representative for the southern federal district, phoned Barayev's right-hand man, promising to negotiate with them at 11:00 the next day. The rebels considered this a small victory and rewarded the hostages by handing out cartons of juice. They would postpone the executions, they said. The government now had a deadline, a threat, and a dilemma: Make progress in the negotiations or face retribution. Kazantsev, however, made no preparations to fly to Moscow. It was all part of a Russian plan of deception. Putin had already decided that the only solution was to storm the theater (HBO, 2004; Dunlop, 2004).

At midnight, a man came into the theater. He had come to fetch his son, he said. But when no son stepped forward, the terrorists took him outside and killed him. Then one of the gunmen shot at a young boy, though without harming him. Panicked, the boy ran toward the big bomb. Then two hostages were killed instantly; two others were wounded. Amid the chaos, Barayev, declaring that it was all an accident, called immediately for an ambulance.

### **3. The Three-hour Rescue**

Behind the scenes, the Russian Special Forces had been planning to storm the building since the onset of the rebels' attack on the theater. By mixing with the negotiators inside the theater, they were able to plant electronic and acoustic surveillance devices. Therefore, unbeknownst to the hostages and terrorists alike, their movements were being closely monitored. On October 25, Alpha and Vypel teams rehearsed the assault plan.<sup>21</sup> By 1:00 p.m. October 26, they were ready.

At 5:00 other teams used the air-conditioning system to pump a lethal anesthetic gas into the theater.<sup>22</sup> For almost a half hour, the Alpha and Vypel teams waited for the gas to put the gunmen and hostages to sleep. Unexpectedly, one of the hostages came out of the building, showing no

<sup>21</sup> Both Alpha and Vypel are counterterrorist units that work under the FSB Operations Center. Information retrieved on 2 November 2005 from: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alpha\\_Group](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alpha_Group)

<sup>22</sup> It was later revealed that the gas was an analog for fentanyl, probably remifentanyl, used combined with other drugs or by itself as anesthesia. The article describing the gas also discusses whether the Russian authorities violated international law. Information retrieved on November 2, 2005, from: <http://cns.miis.edu/pubs/week/02110b.htm#fnB2>

symptoms of inhaling the potent gas. Five minutes later, the teams stormed the building. Finding a small number of male captors still conscious, the Special Forces killed them all. During the rescue operation, they also shot the sleeping female rebels and neutralized their explosives.

It took less than fifteen minutes for the Special Forces teams to eliminate all the hostage-takers. It would take more than two hours to release the hostages from the auditorium. With the help of medical teams, the military troops pulled or carried hostages outside the building, where they attempted to give them the prescribed antidote. But there were not enough stretchers or enough medics to administrate the antidote. And therefore, a hundred and seventeen hostages with heart or respiratory conditions died, both inside and outside the theater. Another forty-two were hospitalized. Later some doctors would claim that they had not been told about the gas and thus did not know how to treat the hostages. Others said that FSB officers “advised” them not to talk about the gas. The final death toll was a hundred and twenty-nine hostages (HBO, 2004; Dunlop, 2004).

Altogether, the rescue operation saved more than six hundred hostages and killed all the Chechen captors. President Putin praised the Russian Special Forces, awarding six men, including the officer who pumped the gas. He also thanked Yavlinsky for his part in the negotiations. The Russian populace and governments and people around the world were horrified by the Russian authorities’ use of gas. The government pointed to the discovery of more than two hundred pounds of explosives inside the building as proof that their drastic measures had prevented a greater disaster (Davies, 2003, p. 223; Dunlop, 2004).

#### **4. A Brief Analysis**

One might argue that the principles for the hostage rescue were well implemented. The intelligence provided by hostages and the surveillance devices planted in the theater gave the special forces the information they needed to plan and rehearse the hostage rescue. And General Kazantsev’s ability to convince the Chechens that he would come and negotiate with them gave the rescuers time to develop and implement the plan. This also allowed the operational

headquarters to choose the best time strategically for storming the building. Everyone, including the hostage-takers, knew that the Russians would eventually storm the theater, but only the planners knew exactly when it would happen (Dunlop, 2004). More important, only a few knew that they would use gas to put both the hostages and the rebels to sleep, thereby allowing the assault teams to take them completely by surprise.

Compared to the other crisis cases discussed here, this incident case has some unique characteristics. The extremely large number of hostages resulted in some spontaneous and dangerous reactions by both the hostages and the hostage-takers. The rebels were also well aware of the Russian authorities' tendency to use military force in times of crisis.

## **5. Crisis Management Procedures**

### ***a. Security and Medical Measures***

Although the police and military troops took immediate control of the theater perimeter, they were not able to maintain it. Two people were able to enter the theater undetected, one on the first night of the siege, the second on the final night. Those events clearly showed the incompetence of the security cordon. The intruders' sudden and unexpected appearance created renewed panic among the crowd of hostages and rebels, which resulted in both their deaths and, in one instance, hostage deaths as well. The security forces' inability to prevent these episodes was a serious and embarrassing failure.

It was the lack of medical teams at the scene, however, that made this one of the most dramatic hostage crises ever. Barry Davies (2003), a former SAS officer, argues that, in cases like this one, using gas is a feasible method to pacify hostage-takers, but, he emphasizes, it requires immediate medical support on a large scale (p. 224). In this case, the operatives did not plan sufficiently for medical support; thus the medical teams called to treat the hostages were hopelessly disorganized, which, indisputably, contributed greatly to the large death toll. The medics somewhat absolved themselves when they revealed that they were not aware of what was in the gas. In the final analysis, the Russian authorities were blamed: if they had informed the physicians about the gas, they

could have prevented much of the tragic outcome. Led Fedorov, head of the Russian Union for Chemical Safety, made a scandalous observation: “What was in the gas? We are never going to know exactly what chemical it was because in this country the state is more important than the people” (Dunlop, 2004).

***b. Negotiations. Stalling for Time***

The negotiators seemed to make a sincere effort to persuade the hostage-takers to release hostages. In the end, the number of negotiators, whether too many or too few, was not an issue. No one told them about the planned assault, and though they had only suspicions, they were able to act natural in front of the hostage takers. Surprisingly, General Kazantsev, who made only one phone call, played an important role in the rescue plan. Because of his past outspokenness about the plight of the Chechens, the terrorists believed Kazantsev and ignored the deadline for the hostage executions. Kazantsev convinced to postpone the deadline for twelve hours, just enough to give the assault teams time for to prepare the raid. We will never know what would have happened if, instead, the terrorists began executing hostages and the teams were ordered to storm the theater. Quite probably, given the circumstances, a rushed and disorderly rescue would have had catastrophic consequences.

***c. Handling the Media***

In this hostage crisis, the Russian authorities were unable to control the media. There was fierce competition between the media groups, and they became very aggressive in their attempts to get information. In light of their past experiences, the media knew that the authorities would probably lie about current events, so they tried to obtain interviews with the hostages and hostage-takers during the crisis. And whatever information they managed to get, they broadcast. This meant that it was the media, not the government that controlled the flow of information into and out of the theater. Politkovskaya's involvement in negotiations as well as in a much-publicized interview with Francheitti was also effective: it enabled the hostage-takers to maintain a hard stance during negotiations. Had the hostage-takers dealt only with the government, they may

have made difficult and crucial concessions, but worldwide attention reinforced their ability to blackmail the government and hold tight to their demands.

Not surprisingly, therefore, as soon as the standoff ended, the Russian authorities implemented various measures against the media for their release of information during the crisis. First, the Russian Media Ministry shut down the *Moskoviya* television station for broadcasting a hostage interview calling for an end to the war in Chechnya and showing footage of the special operation troops surrounding the theater. Second, authorities closed down the *Ekho Moskv*y radio-station website until the station agreed to remove a video of a half-hour interview with the rebels. Third, the Russian Press Ministry issued a list of sixteen recommendations to the major media representatives, warning journalists that coverage of sensitive security information could endanger people's lives. Moreover, they added, interviews with the hostage-takers would create panic and negatively affect the negotiations process. Rustam Arifdzhanov, the editor of *Versiya*, a Russian newspaper, had the same opinion in regard to coverage of tactical details of the military's counterterrorism plans, but he disagreed with the ministry's recommendation that the press not analyze such operations afterwards. "Special forces exist not for the sake of special forces, but for the sake of society," Arifdzhanov said, "and it is [the media's] duty to discuss their performance" (PBS, 2002).

But in mid-November 2002, the disputed recommendations came to fruition in a number of anti-terror measures that were approved by both the upper and lower house of the Russian Duma. The secretary of the Russian Union of Journalists, Mikhail Fedotov, agreed emphatically with the measures. "Lives are more important than the right to information," he said. "If you understand that your words could worsen the hostages' situation, then you should shut up" (PBS, 2002). Although President Putin vetoed the amendments, he condemned the media coverage of the Moscow hostage crisis: "The main weapon of terrorists is not grenades and submachine guns and bullets, but blackmail, and the best means of such blackmail is to turn a terrorist act into a public show" (PBS, 2002).

In what might be considered a final word on the matter, as the general secretary of the International Federation of Journalists, Aidan White, pointed out: “Media and journalists are only too well aware of the horrifying consequences of terrorism and they don't need lectures from politicians about how to tailor their coverage to suit the public interest” (PBS, 2002).

## **B. CRISIS MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES OF THE ALPHA AND VYMPER IN THE BESLAN SCHOOL CRISIS: BESLAN, RUSSIA, 2004**

### **1. Background**

Historians note several incidents prior to the Beslan hostage crisis that would later prove significant. On May 9, 2004, a bomb attack at a stadium in Chechnya killed the pro-Moscow Chechen president, Akhmad Kadyrov, and thirteen others. It was allegedly reported that the bomb was set up during the stadium's reconstruction. On August 24, two Chechen females killed over ninety people in separate suicide bombings on two airplanes. A week later, another suicide bomber killed ten people near a Moscow metro station after security forces deterred his entrance. All of these terrorist attacks were forgotten in the subsequent horror of the Beslan hostage crisis.

### **2. The Case**

On September 1, 2004, thirty-two Chechen radicals, in a Gaz 66 truck and a UAZ Russian jeep loaded with weapons and equipment — rocket propelled grenade launchers (RPGs), submachine guns, sniper rifles, gas masks, and even remote-control surveillance cameras — seized School No. 1 in Beslan, N. Osetia. They killed twenty-one people outright before taking numerous hostages, most of them children, pushing them into the school gymnasium, where they set up improvised explosive charges surrounding them.

In the confusion just before and during the takeover, some of the hostages got away. One of them, a police officer, who escaped while the gunmen were moving their weapons and equipment, quickly informed the local authorities about what was happening. Twenty-seven children also escaped. It soon became obvious that the gunmen planned to do more than simply hold people

hostage. Their ultimate purpose was terror. When the terrified children could not be quieted, the hostage-takers shot dead a man male in front of them as an example. Their leader, Ruslan Tagirovich Khuchbarov, nicknamed “the Colonel,” then killed one of his subordinates who protested the capture of the children. Later, in the courtyard, he would blow up the only two female terrorists for the same reason (Plater-Zyberk, 2004, p. 2).

The Chechens first demanded that the local authorities bring four people to the school: the president of North Osetia, Aleksandr Dzasokhov; the president of Ingushetia, Murat Zyazikov; Putin’s advisor, Alkhanov; and a pediatric doctor, Leonid Roshal, who had been one of the negotiators in the Moscow theater crisis. The Moscow authorities, however, feared that the terrorists intended to execute the four, and, from the start, President Putin sent mixed messages.

On September 1, Putin announced that Russia intended to “counter terrorism consistently and severely, as much as necessary.” Yet, on the second day, he stated that “the main thing in the Beslan siege is to save people’s lives.” That same day, Andreyev said simply that there was “no alternative to dialogue” in the case of hostage-takers (Plater-Zyberk, 2004, 4), which seriously confused the issue. The question in everyone’s mind was: Would the government seek to resolve the situation militarily, or would it pursue a negotiated approach.

There was also confusion about the number of hostages. According to the local officials, there were “only three hundred and fifty-four hostages” in the school, a number repeated over and over on Russian TV. This made both the families and the hostage-takers very uneasy. The hostages’ relatives began to make their own list, to prove that there were many more than three hundred and fifty hostages. The terrorists were so angered by the news that they cut-off the water supply for the children and threatened to kill hostages until only three hundred and fifty-four remained. Only when the newspapers made a correction did the authorities acknowledge that there were more than nine hundred hostages in the school.

Initially, a cordon formed by local police and 58th Army troops surrounded the building. But when the actual number of hostages was publicized, local armed volunteers, fearing a repeat of Dubrovka and similar situations, in which the actions of Russian forces caused high casualties, joined the security ring. They were determined to prevent Alpha and Vypmel Special Forces teams from storming the school. Andreyev, the head of FSB Patrushev and the local FSB claimed that, given the sensitive nature of the situation, with such a large number of children involved, they had no such plan. In a radio interview during the siege, Aleksandr Yermolin, former head of the Vypmel operations department, pointed out that, if Special Forces teams attempted to storm the school, the armed volunteers would no doubt shoot them without notice. Eventually, an inner security cordon was formed that consisted of a mix of untrained local volunteers and the special teams (Plater-Zyberk, 2004, p. 4).

On the second day, Dr. Roshal's negotiations with the gunmen were unsuccessful; Khuchbarov refused to exchange children for adults and to allow food and water to be brought to the school. The gunmen wanted to talk only to Ruslan Aushev, former President of Ingushetia, who persuaded them to release twenty-six women and children. Through Aushev, the hostage takers sent Putin a note with their demands, setting a deadline "no later than September 4" for Putin's response. Two of the demands were very extreme, if not outlandish: the Russian troops must withdraw from Chechnya and Putin must resign. In addition, the hostage takers stated that the hostages would not be allowed to either eat or drink and would be given no medicines until their demands were fulfilled.

Dzasokhov set up an operational headquarters in Technical School No. 8, not far from School No. 1, and a few hours after the siege began, Patrushev, the head of FSB, and Nurgalyev, the minister of internal affairs, joined him. At that time, the authorities, both federal and local, believed that there were only seventeen gunmen.

On September 3, the rebels requested the removal of the twenty-one bodies in the school backyard; they agreed to admit four men to carry them out.

At approximately 1:00 p.m., as the officials of the Emergencies Ministry approached, the crowd heard two explosions in the school. Survivors said later that one of the improvised mines peeled off in the heat, exploding on impact. However, other witnesses claimed that someone had tripped a wire attached to explosives. In any case, one of the groups of armed volunteers either panicked or decided to storm the school (Plater-Zyberk, 2004, p. 5).

### **3. The Eleven-hour Rescue**

Local volunteers and terrorists were soon engaged in a fierce battle, and within a half hour, special antiterrorist teams joined the assault. Then the hostage takers began to detonate the bombs and eventually the gym roof collapsed. As the rebels started shooting at children fleeing from the upper floors, the hostages' relatives broke through the police cordon and ran towards the school. Three armored personnel carriers approached the school and Special Forces teams blew holes in the walls so the hostages could escape (BBC, 2004).

The troops found and killed some of the captors in the school basement; they found one gunman outside the building hiding under a truck. Shortly after midnight, when all but one of the terrorists lay dead, the shootout ended. Later, the security forces would claim that they had gained control of the school almost nine hours earlier.

In the aftermath, there were not enough civilian and military ambulances to transport the wounded, so local volunteers and military personnel used private cars to take many of the hostages to hospitals. A field hospital set up near the school provided the survivors with food and water.

Three hundred and thirty-eight hostages were dead; more than half of them children. More than seven hundred hostages were wounded. The FSB lost nine officers, one NCO, and thirty were wounded. They killed thirty terrorists and captured one; a mob beat another to death. In the official investigation that followed, officers found twenty assault rifles, two antitank grenade-launchers, two additional grenade launchers, eight handguns, and six bombs at the scene of the terror.

#### **4. A Brief Analysis**

In the Beslan school crisis, those at the operational headquarters dealt with tasks that eventually put their operatives and the hostages at great risk. Given the disparity between the decision makers' statements, some argue that those in charge had no plan for either negotiating or rescuing the hostages. In addition, their poor control over the media and the crowd of family members and other locals at the scene forecast an appalling outcome. Consequently, the public believed that the police and Special Forces' had handled the situation in the worst possible way, and public confidence in and support for authority declined accordingly (Oliker, 2005, pp. 35–36).

The local authorities did not establish an effective security cordon and failed to foresee the disastrous outcome of the crisis. Once local civilians joined the cordon, the authorities lost control of both the crowd and access to the hostage takers. The media also played a significant role, vociferously criticizing both the government and those at operation headquarters. When the special forces proved unable to take the appropriate measures to deal with the hostage takers' violent reactions, that inability eliminated any hope for a mature response to the crisis. As a result, the local authorities waited for orders from the Kremlin, which never came, on how to cope with the unfolding events.

The tragic ending of Beslan hostage taking had an enormous impact throughout Russian and, indeed, the world. Some military analysts compare it to 9/11 in terms of the horrendous shock to the nation. The federal and local authorities, confronted with their failure, began to consider more effective ways to deal with terrorist situations. In light of the tragedy of Beslan, governments must develop policies regarding hostage takings that are based, first and foremost, on protecting and saving lives (Plater-Zyberk, 2004, pp. 9-11).

#### **5. Crisis Management Procedures**

##### ***a. Security and Medical Measures***

In Beslan, the lack of coordination among the forces that participated in the security cordon was a critical factor in the violent outcome. The 58th Army and OMON troops (a special purpose militia detachment)

established a security ring before the special operations troops and local volunteers arrived at the school. But they were unable to prevent the extra forces from joining the security cordon. As a result, no one person or group was in command and control of the crowd, many of whom did not trust typical military methods. This meant that the operation headquarters had a very difficult task. Even if the special teams had developed a rescue plan, they would probably not have been unable to carry it out (Plater-Zyberk, 2004, p. 5).

The security forces positioned themselves just three hundred feet from the school, and, therefore, they found it very difficult to keep people out of the area. Both President Dzasokhov and the local leaders would later acknowledge how difficult it was to control the local armed men and the hostages' families. Moreover, the military commanders and the locals disagreed both among themselves and with Dzasokhov about how to maintain the perimeter. If they had established the security perimeter two blocks farther away, they would not have had to deal with the desperate people who tried to break through the cordon at the least sign of violence from the school. With the crowds farther away, the authorities could have kept secret the developments on the school grounds.

Most of the locals had relatives in the school, and everyone knew that it was common practice for the military to use force in this type of situation. Thus, the locals, terrified that the federal and local officials would choose to attempt a rescue mission rather than negotiate with the hostage takers, swarmed to the site, greatly complicating an already tense situation.

Another factor that shows the pitiful gaps in the security measures is that the security teams made no attempt to evacuate the residents of the surrounding buildings. Some, therefore, witnessed the shoot-out and were shocked to see terrorists on the school roof shooting at hostages, including large numbers of children.

As for the medical measures, the local authorities were not prepared because they did not expect such an outcome. After the gym's roof

collapsed, most of the hostages tried to flee the school. Those who were not seriously hurt were treated at a nearby field hospital. More than seven hundred people were injured, and the medical teams were quickly overwhelmed and could not respond efficiently. Soldiers seized military and civilian ambulances and cars to take the injured to the various hospitals. This reduced the risk that the hostages in critical condition would die from a lack of medical attention. If the Beslan authorities had had a plan in place for a worst-case scenario, a terrorist incident with many injuries and casualties, they would have had many ambulances and medical personnel in position from the beginning.

***b. Negotiations: Stalling for Time***

Because the hostage takers' demanded specific negotiators, the local authorities found themselves in a critical position when those appointed could not reach a solution. The assailants' hard stance against Dr. Roshal should have prompted the local and federal authorities to choose other negotiators. Obviously, the media reports about the hostage numbers also made the gunmen act impulsively, and they refused to make even small concessions. The local authorities looked to the Kremlin for assistance because they were completely unprepared for such an extreme incident.

***c. Handling the Media***

The authorities did not understand their own reactions and how those reactions would affect their decisions. They must have realized that the hostage crisis could end with a lot of casualties, but by holding to the official figure of only three hundred and fifty-four hostages for two days, they angered both the hostage takers and the public. Once the families announced their own projections about the number of hostages, the government quickly lost control over the media, which publicized the actual figures. When the siege ended, the people attacked many of the TV crews, saying they had "lied" about the numbers. As an OSCE report put it: "a triple credibility gap arose, between the government and the media, between the media and the citizens, and between the government and people" (Haraszti, 2004, p. 2).

## **C. CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter discussed two cases in which poor management of a crisis determined appalling outcomes. Though the two hostage crises occurred only two years apart, the assailants in the second case were the only ones prepared for a hostage scenario. In the first case, the government had a well-prepared rescue plan for saving the hostages. In the second case, there was no plan and deficient command and control. More important, in the first case, the response was not one that was likely to deter future hostage takings.

The security measures in the cases had a great impact on the hostages' lives. In the first case, at least four hostages died because the security forces at the perimeter were inadequately deployed. In the second crisis, the operational headquarters lost control of the crowd and the security perimeter. That failure led to the disastrous outcome. In all likelihood, the combination of Special Forces teams and armed volunteers was a major factor in the resulting hundreds of casualties.

As for the medical procedures, both cases illustrate that the local authorities were largely unprepared. In the first crisis, the lack of medics and information about the hostages' condition contributed to its tragic ending. At Beslan, the local medical resources were not used efficiently, mostly because there were no contingency plans.

In contrast to other cases, the Russians had no negotiators who could gain the assailants' confidence. In Moscow, General Kazantsev's intervention had a crucial impact on the hostage takers' course of action. In the second case, the negotiated interventions never occurred or were planned to come too late.

In both incidents, the Russian media was a main contributor to both the negotiation processes and the final outcomes. In the Moscow hostage crisis, for instance, the involvement of a reporter and a radio broadcast in the negotiation efforts worked to the detriment of the local authorities. In the second case, the

local authorities used the media to misinform the public, which led to a mass revolt when the information was challenged and the true extent of the crisis was revealed.

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## **V. POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES FOR ROMANIAN AUTHORITIES AND MILITARY**

### **A. THE ROMANIAN GENERAL-BASED MODEL: LESSONS LEARNED**

The purpose of this project was to analyze various hostage rescue operations, to assess their procedures, and to isolate the crucial elements of hostage rescue practices. Ultimately, the goal was to provide preliminary guidance to the Romanian Special Forces as they develop a doctrine and operational strategy for hostage rescue operations. This section draws on the case studies presented in the previous two chapters and attempts to describe an ideal process for dealing with a hostage crisis.

#### **1. Security Measures**

A democratic government's fundamental principle in dealing with a hostage crisis is to show the people that it is actively involved in reinstating order and restoring security. In its response to the crisis, the government has an opportunity to show that it will do everything in its power to defend its citizens. This is absolutely necessary if the regime is to maintain the public's positive opinion about the government (Aston, 1982, p. 164).

The case studies demonstrated that officials' first task in effectively responding to a crisis is to establish a distant and effective perimeter. In the successful cases, the local/national police employed physical security measures that illustrate this dynamic. In contrast, in both the Russian cases, the authorities' lack of coordination and effective maintenance of the security perimeter led, in the Moscow case, directly and, in the Beslan case, indirectly to the killing of hostages.

The cases also showed the importance of information gathering. The police or military operatives can use information gathered at the scene to plan an appropriate approach to the situation. In this regard, the crisis cell must know how to choose effective negotiators and how to give the public accurate information without revealing aspects that could jeopardize a rescue operation. If possible, and with police assistance, these forces should plan and prepare the

mission in an area away from media representatives. When that is not possible, their maintenance of an effective security cordon can be critical for the delicate task of information management. Information leaks were a key issue in several cases: they compromised the rescue operations. Finally, in the successful rescue operations, the police/military personnel created an effective security cordon that enabled them to control activities within the target area. In the Russian case, however, the officials' failure to maintain the security cordon and a sufficient perimeter resulted in an intrusion of "volunteers" into the operation.

## **2. Medical Effectiveness**

As was clear in all the cases, in the post-incident phase, sufficient medical personnel and ambulances must be in position ready to attend to the injured or sick hostages or rescue teams and to deliver them to nearby hospitals if necessary. This rule applies to all rescue operations, because it is impossible to know in advance whether there will be minimal or major casualties, or no casualties at all. In the German case, there were thirty medics to treat the injured hostages, while in the Moscow case, there were not enough medics, a circumstance that resulted in unnecessary deaths. Both cases demonstrate the importance of a well-planned and implemented strategy for the post-rescue phase. In the Beslan case, planning for and implementing medical care at the scene proved especially critical because the field hospital was overwhelmed by the number of injured hostages. The authorities were simply not prepared with contingencies for such outcomes. They failed to anticipate circumstances, such as an explosion, that would create a mass medical emergency among newly-freed hostages. The consequences were dramatic not only because of the number of dead hostages, but also because the previous case two years earlier demonstrated similar circumstances and similar results.

## **3. Handling the Media**

Antokol and Nudell (1990) point out that terrorist acts such as taking hostages are newsworthy and, regardless of how reports are prepared, they will spread information about tactics and procedures, and offer encouragement to others to think of terrorist activity as a way to publicize their cause (p. 77). The

authors also state that “the decision-makers must be responsive to the needs of media, and reporters have to understand the sensitivities of the situation” (p. 83). The importance of cooperating with media representatives is crucial in hostage taking situations. As the above cases with major fatalities show, a lack of communication and coordination between the government and the media can lead to disastrous outcomes. The government and the media must balance two important aspects of rescue operations with the imperatives of press freedom. First, rescue operations in the planning stage must be kept secret and, second, the government must control the information that flows into and out of the hostage area. This means that the government cannot simply bar the media from covering the event as it unfolds. It also means that government and media must develop and maintain a cooperative relationship.

All the above cases, except the British case, included problems pertaining to the media coverage and the ways authorities dealt with it. First, the electronic media, especially, should be careful about what it reports concerning ongoing counterterrorism measures, such as: the gathering of tactical intelligence on terrorists, the decision to attempt an assault, and the strategic positioning of Special Forces personnel (Antokol, Nudell, 1990, p. 78). The German case provides a good example of too much publicity: the terrorists killed the pilot, Shumann, because a radio report revealed he had leaked information about the hostages’ situation. In another instance, from the Peruvian case, the Japanese report of an interview froze the negotiation process.

The cases with major fatalities show that careless media coverage is often a main factor in disastrous outcomes. Journalists’ involvement in negotiations puts pressure on both the hostage takers and the local/national authorities. In the Moscow case, the journalist’s involvement reminded the hostage takers of one of their goals—publicity for their cause—and they then became uncooperative. On the other hand, in Beslan, the Russian authorities used the media as a tool to misinform the public, also with disastrous results. When they reported a much smaller number of hostages than there actually were, the hostage takers responded by stating that they would kill off hostages until the number of those

living matched the one reported. This use of the media, therefore, not only created panic among the hostages and their families, but also had a negative impact on the terrorists, who had no compunction against killing hostages. In the end, the whole incident caused an erosion of public confidence in both the authorities and the media. The decline in confidence, in turn, undermined the legitimacy of the government and the media. The local citizenry reacted by forming a corps of volunteers and joining the security professionals. Ultimately, they were responsible for the storming of the school before a coherent rescue operation could be planned.

The general-based model presents a guideline for a crisis management process that minimizes the risk of hostage deaths. To date, there have been no Romanian cases in which hostage rescue procedures could be implemented. The next section will focus on the freedom of the media in Romania and its influence. As the model shows, the relation between the media and the local government can contribute in a major way to the occurrence of fatalities in a hostage crisis.

## **B. ROMANIA'S MEDIA FREEDOM AND ITS INFLUENCE**

Since the fall of communism, the birth or survival of national media outlets has depended primarily on a state's political and economic circles. In Romania, the government has had substantial control over the press, though recently, there have been indications that this control may be decreasing. But government control over the media is a double-edged sword: while it could prevent such problems as those that occurred in the Russian hostage crises, it also poses a major problem for democratic consolidation.

Many local and international organizations in Romania strongly criticize the ruling party's use of the media to influence public opinion. For example, the Social Democrat Party (SDP), the ruling party from 1990 to 1996 and 2000 to 2004, has been warned several times that freedom of the press has declined under its rule. In its 2004 report, the Media Monitoring Agency (MMA) shows that

pressure was put on the electronic media to present government policies in a positive light and to promote government actions.<sup>23</sup> For instance, at election time, the press published transcripts of the SDP's permanent delegation meeting, which was considered a scandalous subject, but one with major public appeal. It received barely any coverage in the electronic media, however, which created considerable resentment among the populace.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the lack of investigative journalism in Romania's TV news and the press led the international community to believe that there had been no substantial progress in assuring the freedom of the media.

The Romanian media, therefore, is considered highly politicized. A good example of this is the TV channel Antena 1, rated the number two channel in privatized TV. Antena 1 periodically changes its issue prioritization according to the agenda of its primary patron at the time. Dan Voiculescu, the president of the Conservator Part (the former Humanist Party) owns Antena 1. Reports claim that, in just one year, 2004, the channel changed its agenda-setting three times. Yet before the Humanist Party signed an alliance with the SDP, Antena 1 had been relatively critical toward the government. It was only after the two joined forces that the station suddenly began to cover only the opposition's actions. After the general election, the Humanist Party broke the alliance, and Antena 1 resumed its critical approach toward the SDP.

The Freedom House 2004 rankings rated the Romanian press "partially free," placing it at 104 out of the 194 countries that were surveyed. Compared to other countries analyzed, the press in Romania would place between the Peruvian media, "partially free," and the Russian media, "not free".<sup>25</sup> This ranking raises the question whether Romanian authorities would be able to control the

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<sup>23</sup> The report analyzed the positive, neutral, and negative effects of electronic media on different politicians from both the government and the opposition. Retrieved on 22 November 2005 from: <http://www.mma.ro/BAZA%20DE%20DATE/Politic/freeex2004/freeex2004.doc>

<sup>24</sup> For more about the SDP transcripts and a full report on the Romanian media, see: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/nitransit/2005/romania2005.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Peru is placed at 90, with 40 negative points, and Russia at 151, with 68 negative points. Romania has 47 negative points. See: Freedom of Press 2005. Retrieved on 24 November 2005 from: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/pressurvey/fop05.pdf>

media coverage during a hostage crisis without jeopardizing freedom of speech. The press's lack of freedom is due partly to the politicized nature of the news coverage and partly to the lack of transparency in media ownership. Although since April 2003, the law prohibits public servants from running businesses, there is still no transparency of media-outlet ownership.

In any case, the following incident seems to indicate that the Romanian media may not be prepared to handle greater autonomy, even if it were granted.

### **1. The Case**

On March 29, 2005, three Romanian journalists and their official guide, Muhammad Munaf, a citizen of the United States, Romania, and Iraq, were kidnapped in front of their hotel in Baghdad. Two of the journalists sent cell phone messages to their colleagues at Prima TV in Romania. One of the journalists, Marie Jeanne Ion, is the daughter of a Romanian senator, Vasile Ion. That evening, the kidnapers supposedly called a Syrian businessman, Omar Hayssan, in Romania, asking him for \$4 million in ransom for the Romanian prisoners. Hayssan and Munaf have had a business relationship for more than twenty-five years. Munaf said that he had paid the journalists to do a report about the Sunni minority in Iraq.

The next day, President Traian Basescu organized a crisis cell within the Supreme Council of National Defense (SCND),<sup>26</sup> and the Romanian Secret Service facilitated negotiations between the Romanian authorities and the kidnapers. After three days, the kidnapers issued a video tape in which they demanded that the Romanian government withdraw its troops from Iraq. President Basescu stated that he would head a crisis headquarters that would

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<sup>26</sup> The SCND is the deciding body concerning the following matters: the strategic concept of national defense, the national defense system, declaration of war, and cessation of war. It also coordinates responses during crises. The following officials are statutory members of the SCND: the president, the prime-minister, the minister of economy, the minister of national defense, the interior minister, the minister of foreign affairs the director of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), and the director of the External Intelligence Service (SIE) (The Romanian Parliament, 1990, p. 1).

coordinate negotiations to free the hostages. He then asked the Romanian media to reserve their opinions regarding the evolution and possible outcome of the crisis.

Over the next three weeks, the crisis cell appealed to various international organizations for support, including those in Iraq. The Romanian authorities kept the press informed about the journalists' condition but did not release details about the progress of the negotiations. Also, they reported that, at one point, the kidnapers had transferred the prisoners to another, purportedly more radical group. The negotiations continued with the new group of kidnapers. On April 22, another video, this time on Al-Jazeera, showed the prisoners repeating the terrorists' demand that the Romania withdraw its troops from Iraq. At this point, they set a deadline: April 26 at 6:00 p.m. During this time, meetings and demonstrations supporting the kidnapped journalists and protesting their kidnapping took place throughout Romania. A snap poll taken that week found that 70 percent of Romanians surveyed, up from 50 percent before the crisis, were in favor of withdrawing the troops from Iraq.<sup>27</sup> Some opposition party representatives in parliament proposed to withdraw the troops in a sequential order as part of a crisis solution. After negotiations took place between the Romanian officials and the kidnapers, they changed the deadline to the next day. Under pressure by parliament, President Basescu convened an emergency session of the Security Council. Just before the deadline, the Romanian government used the press to ask the captors to delay the deadline. The state authorities also asked the kidnapers to use the mass media for further negotiations. Between the deadline and May 14, when the negotiation process resumed, several official and unofficial leaders in Iraq and from the Romanian Arab community requested that the prisoners be released. Finally, on May 22, they were released in Baghdad.

The three Romanian journalists were escorted to Romania; Munaf was held by the U.S. military. A police investigation proved that Hayssan and Munaf

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<sup>27</sup> Information retrieved on 28 November 2005 from: <http://www.curs.ro/>

had planned the journalists' kidnapping. Since 2003, Hayssan had been under an interdiction to leave Romania due to his dubious business affairs. In kidnapping the Romanian journalists, he hoped to leave the country for "negotiating" their release. On May 27, 2005, both Hayssan and Munaf were charged with terrorism.

The fact that the kidnapped Romanians were journalists had a tremendous effect on the press: it failed to present information on the crisis in a balanced, impartial, and responsible manner. Newspapers and magazines rushed to produce stories and provide continual updates. They took a partisan stance, urging the government emphatically to meet the hijackers' demands. The press demonstrated that, in this case, it was not an impartial recorder of events, according to the strict standards of media outlets worldwide.

In addition, because of the competition to be the first to break the news of ongoing developments, and because of journalists' professional and emotional connection to the hostages, the press failed to check the facts and to verify the stories they broadcast. As one Romanian media analyst noted:

Romanian media outlets entered a competition of scenarios and single-sourced stories about the kidnapping. The same star journalists who opine publicly on anything from tennis to politics to business have instantly turned into kidnapping experts and have enlightened the public with their thoughts and theories regarding the events. The kidnapping was labeled as "atypical", "strange", and even as a "prank". Maybe this is what it was, but until journalists lay their hands on real information, any speculation is not only farfetched but deceitful to the public as well (Ulmanu, May 2005).

In situations like this, the Romanian media may be in danger of discrediting itself as a reliable source of news, a dynamic similar to that uncovered in Beslan. Also, their frenzy over being the first to break a story could lead to dynamics similar to those that repeatedly delayed and jeopardized the German efforts to rescue the Lufthansa hostages. In sum, the Romanian media is immature, influenced by its owners, and irresponsible.

### C. ROMANIAN HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION

According to the new Romanian Constitution, approved through a national referendum in October 2003, article 20 reflects the Romanian state's commitment to international human rights treaties:

(1) Constitutional provisions concerning the citizens' rights and liberties shall be interpreted and enforced in conformity with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with the covenants and other treaties Romania is a party to.

(2) Where any inconsistencies exist between the covenants and treaties on fundamental human rights Romania is a party to, and internal laws, the international regulations shall take precedence.<sup>28</sup>

Among the international organizations to which Romania has obligations regarding human rights, the two most important are the United Nations (UN) and the Council of Europe. So far, the Romanian state has signed and/or ratified most of the international conventions and protocols related to human rights. According to the Council of Europe list of conventions and treaties, however, Romania still has to sign ninety-six separate treaties on various matters.<sup>29</sup> Romanian human rights legislation is current based on several documents: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a regional human rights treaty, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and the Romanian Constitution.<sup>30</sup>

In ratifying the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights, Romania permitted Council of Europe judicial and control bodies to intervene in the Romanian legislation process. Since 1998, the Council using its two main instruments — the European Court for Human Rights and the Committee of

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<sup>28</sup> Romanian Constitution, Article 20. International human rights treaties. Information retrieved on 2 December 2005, from: <http://www.romania.org/romania/constitution2.html>

<sup>29</sup> Information retrieved on 2 December 2005, from: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/ListeStats.asp?PO=ROM&MA=999&CM=17&CL=ENG>

<sup>30</sup> The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations in 1948. It was ratified by Romania in 1955. The Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms was adopted by the Council of Europe in 1950; it was ratified by Romania in 1994. Information retrieved on 2 December 2005 from: [http://legislatie.resurse-pentru-democratie.org/legi\\_drepturi.php#01](http://legislatie.resurse-pentru-democratie.org/legi_drepturi.php#01)

Ministers — to guarantee protection of human rights among its fifty-five European members.<sup>31</sup> The EU can use these two instruments also to influence Romanian legislation, either while it is under debate in the legislature or after it has been ratified.

However, the Romanian Constitution contains clauses related to freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of religion that may violate accepted human rights standards. Thus, there is some potential that the supranational institutions could exercise their powers against Romania. According to a 2004 U.S. Department of State country report, for example, Romania's legal prohibitions against "defamation of the country" and "offense to authority" limit the freedom of the press. In that same year, the penal code was amended to delete the crime of "insult," thereby removing the possibility of a prison sentence for defamation. Even so, journalists and media representatives are still harassed and dragged to court or pay huge amounts for "moral damage," insult or defamation. Through those practices, Romanian law inhibits press freedom not only in theory, but also in practice. As for freedom of religion, under the law, there is no clear procedure for registering religious groups. Only seventeen religious groups are officially recognized by the law and are provided with state financial support. Some religious minorities have allegedly reported cases of harassment by the orthodox clergy.<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, a number of international and domestic nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have reported concern about other fundamental human rights. The reports identify continuing problems stemming from discrimination against the Roma (Gypsies) and trafficking in women.<sup>33</sup> To demonstrate that the Romanian state is prepared to join the European Union in 2007, it must first meet international human rights standards.

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<sup>31</sup> For more about the Council of Europe, the European Court of Human Rights, and the Committee of Ministers, go to: <[www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)> Last accessed 4 December 2005.

<sup>32</sup> Information retrieved on 6 December 2005  
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41703.htm>

<sup>33</sup> Information retrieved on 6 December 2005 from  
<http://www.amnestyusa.org/countries/romania/document.do?id=ar&yr=2005>

The gap between reality and the Romanian legislature must be closed. To that end, Romania accepted various co-operative programs designed to establish an institutional and legal framework consistent with European standards. The Council of Europe expanded its assistance programs to help Romania develop the legal and policy tools necessary for combating racism, discrimination, and intolerance. The programs are also intended to enhance Romanian legislation regarding the protection of freedom of expression by providing legal expertise to amend existing national legislation.

#### **D. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE ROMANIAN SPECIAL FORCES**

To complete this study, this section will present two sets of recommendations that could improve the Romanian Special Forces' performance during hostage crises: do detailed planning and develop efficient interoperability of all the force components.

General Shlomo Gazit (Ret.) (1981), a military analyst who contributed to the development of hostage-taking studies, provides a set of four principles to ensure smooth planning of rescue operations:

- *Search for bright, original, and even crazy ideas.* One must look for ideas that will promote surprise in all three phases of operation, thus increasing the success with minimal casualties. Surprise is an element in any military operation. Whereas the key to a normal military plan is the correct employment of military force, the key to a successful rescue operation is the maximal employment of imaginative concepts.
- *Save time in planning and preparations.* The military command should not wait for the political directive to draw up contingency plans, but should initiate such preparations so as to be ready when the decision is taken to proceed.

- *Involve political decision-makers early and often* so that they will be able to evaluate the planning ideas as they arise. A constant dialog is vital for two reasons: it will “kill” any ideas that are unacceptable because of certain political considerations, thus saving time and energy on their detailed planning; and it will avoid a situation where the military presents the political leadership with a single plan, leaving only the options of taking or leaving it. Establishing a system of positive feedback between the head of state and the planner is so important that this interchange should be carried out through direct meetings. Only then will each understand the constraints on each other.
- *Include the rescue force commanders in the planning process from the earliest possible moment.* In addition to benefiting from their ideas, the military command will be able to avoid plans that the force commanders themselves believe infeasible (pp. 120-121).

As far as the interoperability of Romanian Special Forces components is concerned, Major Dobocan (2004) has approached this matter with vital implications for Romanian Special Forces structure:

- The complete and direct subordination of all special operations units to a Special Operations Directorate established at the general staff level.
- The establishment of permanent liaison teams to coordinate intelligence flows between the Special Operations Directorate and the intelligence community.
- The development of joint regulations, tactics, techniques, and procedures for all special operations forces.
- The creation of specialized education and training programs addressed to the members of the SOF community primarily, but not exclusively.

- The development of combined/joint training exercises involving all services, agencies with responsibility in the national defense arena, and foreign partners (p. 137).

The last recommendation above could be the starting point for the creation of counterterrorism teams within the Romanian Special Forces that would be prepared for a hostage crisis situation. However, the circumstance that is most important for the Romanian Special Forces community is to maintain the interdependence of all hostage crisis procedures. If not handled efficiently, they could lead to unnecessary hostage deaths before, during, or after the actual rescue operation and could also seriously compromise the whole operation.

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