TO SAVE THE LIVES OF HOSTAGES

David Veness

The mission statement of hostage negotiation may be simply stated as 'To save the lives of the hostages'. The short history of this statement of mission can be traced to events in the early years of the 1970's. In the terrorist category - the key events at the international level were:

1. The attack upon the Munich Olympics in September 1972 and the subsequent tragic events at Fürstenfeldbrück airport and
2. The attack upon the OPEC headquarters in Vienna in December 1975. (The attack in Vienna and the subsequent escape was led by Ilich Ramirez Sanchez also known as Carlos the Jackal.)

However, whilst Munich and Vienna occupy a particular category of significance because of the impetus they provided internationally to the need to generate counter-terrorist response, it is appropriate to recall other relevant events which occurred at this period including aircraft hijacking notably the events at Dawson's field in Jordan in September 1970, the kidnapping of politicians, businessmen and diplomats and the seizure of embassies including the German embassy in Stockholm in April 1975. In Holland there was the occupation of the French Embassy in Den Haag by the Japanese Red Army in September 1974 and the Moluccan train sieges in December 1975 and May 1977. In England there was a criminal siege at the Spaghetti house restaurant in Knightsbridge in September 1975 followed a few weeks later by the Balcombe Street siege involving the PIRA in December 1975. In New York the NYPD had reacted to events at Munich by developing negotiation techniques.

Interestingly the New York reaction was also based upon the reality that a quicker police response to *criminal* events – such as bank robberies – whereby armed police officers arrived more speedily at the scene and confronted armed criminals - resulted in many more cases where the armed criminal took hostages, who were themselves innocent victims and by-standers. The New York response techniques were devised by Simon Eisendorfer (a Police Inspector) assisted by Harvey Schlossberg and implemented by Captain Frank Bolz who was the first commander of the Detective Bureau Hostage Negotiating Team. I had the great privilege of working With Frank Bolz in New York immediately before his retirement in the early 1980's - he described the police philosophy *before* the development of negotiation as 'Kicking down the door and blowing the turkey away.' This was replaced by containment and negotiation to preserve the life of the hostage. The US contribution to negotiation philosophy was reinforced by the

involvement of the FBI and the creation of the special ops and research unit (SOARU) at the FBI Academy at Quantico, VA. The Unit Chief Conrad Hassell led a team who developed the vital inter-face between police and academic disciplines.

In Stockholm, Sweden in August 1973 there was a famous bank siege which gave its name to a much-debated syndrome concerning the relationship between hostages and their captors. Elsewhere in Europe there were many similar incidents of hostage taking involving hostage-takers who were terrorist, criminals or mentally unbalanced offenders. In many European countries the practical art of hostage negotiation became an important policing technique and training courses evolved to develop the skills of selected officers.
The course I know best is that which was devised by Scotland Yard and which began in 1976. The Scotland Yard course drew heavily on Dutch experience (and the work of Dr Richard Mulder) and the work on criminal cases in the United States led by New York and the FBI. That course has been conducted 3 to 4 times every year since 1976 and one of the keys to its development has been support from academic research and medical expertise from eminent psychiatrists and psychologists. The next Scotland Yard course will be the 80th. training programme in its unbroken series.

The developing method

The methodology may be very simply described as: isolation, evacuation and negotiation or in one word containment. The intention of the methodology is to achieve stability and safety. Thus the scene is isolated to reduce further risk of more hostages. Those who are in immediate danger because of proximity are evacuated. And then a process of negotiation unfolds with the intention of saving the lives of the hostages. The preferred outcome of the negotiating approach is release of the hostages and surrender of the hostage-takers.

If that cannot be achieved a policy of playing it long is generally regarded as conducive to intelligence gathering, which adds to chances of successful rescue. An overt hostage-taking incident is unusual in law enforcement terms: preservation of life, prevention of crime and investigation of crime are strands *all* occurring at the same time. Hostage incidents can be described as a 'crime in action' or a 'frozen frame felony'

Experience indicates that passage of time is *valuable*. It:
- increases basic human needs
- reduces anxiety
- increases rationality
- allows better command decisions. In a phrase: 'time makes bosses brighter'

But the passage of time also has negative aspects:
- tiredness
- emotional unpredictability
- temptation to take positive action
- publicity
- increased expectation of assault

Methodology has evolved to address a range of predictable practical problems:
- responding to demands
- coping with deadlines
- improving the changes of releases
- medical issues
- intermediaries
- working with interpreters
- exchange of hostages
- media dimensions

Methodology is based upon *teamwork*. Most countries avoid reliance on one negotiator and prefer a team concept supported by a co-ordinator or coach. Experience has demonstrated the importance of selection of team members - people who are:
- team operators not prima donnas
- 'people persons'
- not reliant on rank
- ready to learn and keep on learning
- equipped with a sense of humour

One very important aspect of *teamwork* is that Negotiating team members should be distinct from overall command. The rule is that commanders command and negotiators negotiate. Incidents that have gone wrong over the years have often featured on overlap between the command function and the negotiating role. Both jobs require concentration on the task in hand – above all the role of incident commander requires an objective perspective informed by all the components of crisis management. It logically follows that the methodology of hostage negotiation that I have briefly described is important but cannot operate in isolation from an

overall strategy of crisis management. If crisis management is to be successful – especially in a world where the challenges of cross-border incidents and cultural diversity are growing (see IJzerman, this volume) we need to approach the future with imagination and flexibility.

In strategic terms: crisis management operates in context of government policy and planning. Before the event we look to our governments to define planning parameters – ideally:
- a determination to avoid concessions
- a commitment to 'playing it long'
- a willingness to use force where appropriate but only when it is the last resort
- definition of roles
- commitment of resources and to demonstrate support for:
  - contingency planning
  - training/exercising
  - research

During an event we expect from our governments:
- adherence to policy
- no confusion of operational decision-making

Effective crisis management relies upon multidisciplinary, multi-agency and multi-national partnership. One of the great benefits of the experience of evolving negotiating strategy has been the partnership of disciplines – especially psychiatry and psychology and medical science. These specific disciplines have proved to be especially powerful in developing an effective research base on which to advance techniques. Psychiatrists and psychologists have also played a vital operational role – normally as *advisers* for the *overall* incident.

A *multi-agency* partnership is essential in almost every jurisdiction in order that the respective and complementary talents and skills of all relevant agencies are utilised to best effect. This is normally assisted by prior rehearsal – but training courses and conferences also enhance the effectiveness of inter-agency operations – especially between public/private sectors. If the objective is to preserve life and pursue the terrorist it is vital that energy is not wasted in inter-agency tension and misunderstanding.

A multi- *national* partnership is now almost an inevitable feature of hostage-taking cases. Almost every hostage taking involves international aspects. Almost all hijackings (planes, boats and trains) involve hostages of more than one nationality. And in *covert* hostage taking or kidnapping the circumstances in which negotiators

work together are now commonplace. There is no doubt the kidnap of European nationals overseas is on the increase and we can predict that the need for multi-national operations will grow commensurately. This makes the need for understanding of respective national management structures, legal frameworks and operating procedures absolutely critical. It is too late to understand each other when we begin to work together on a live case with human lives at real risk.

International co-operation

It is a fact of modern serious crime investigation that serious crime is almost invariably international - at the very least there is an overseas element.

The systems of co-operation formalised through Interpol, Europol and Schengen are now *routine* part of investigative activity and absorb an increasing component of the daily lives of police chiefs and senior investigators. The international law enforcement and security structures and organisation provide a powerful platform to make co-operation happen. But the *structural* approach needs to be supplemented by two additional dimensions.

The first is bilateral co-operation, which often arises on the basis of a common concern and thus an operational imperative. The second is international co-operation at the practitioner not policy level. The First European Conference on Hostage Negotiations is to be welcomed as a bonus for that need. I would hope that one outcome of this conference could be a working group of practitioners – perhaps the heads of national hostage/kidnap units – who might meet on a non-political basis to discuss operational experience and developing response methods. I would be pleased to offer the support of Scotland Yard for such an initiative.

What of the future / What are possibilities we need to anticipate?

May I conclude my paper by suggesting two issues of concern:

1. Enhanced communications
The departments of modern information technology represent a very significant challenge to the negotiating concept of *isolation.* Indeed that concept may be increasingly elusive in the mobile telephone era. Modern communications also affect how we will negotiate with hijackers on planes and ships. This is a fruitful area for further research to address a real operational problem.

2. Changing patterns of national/international terror

Finally let me look at *terrorist trends* and their implication for hostage negotiation. Xavier Raufer – the Parisian based criminologist reminds us that – *terrorism has changed more since 1990 since it emerged in modern form in 1968*. For us in law enforcement the key developments relate to the suspects – the means – the methods and the opportunities. The suspect list has grown and changed. In personality terms this is the shift from Carlos The Jackal to Osama Bin Laden. The key development is that amateur terrorists, criminals and single issue fanatics now have access to weaponry that – ten years ago – was the exclusive preserve of terrorists. In addition to the availability of conventional weaponry and the developing lethality of conventional weapons, there is the threat of CBRN materials either used alone or in conjunction with conventional weapons. We cannot plan on the assumption that these weapons will not be used. We need to plan and prepare in a manner commensurate with the risk.

The motivation of terrorism has also expanded to include the extremist and even millenarian motives - for those who take on apocalyptic view of the year 2000.

Lawless zones – where effective law enforcement is elusive – are increasingly venues of hostage taking as European business and recreational travel expands.

There is also a trend to privatisation of victims of terrorism. There were 439 targets of international terror in 1997 - 324 were business related.

International terror figures *overall* are reducing from the peaks of the mid - 1980s but individual incidents are becoming more deadly. 221 people died in international terror incidents in 1997 224 died on 7th August 1998 in Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam

Not only have terrorist methods, motives and means changed but so has the nature of the target – any major western city is a 'target – rich' environment where life depends on an increasingly vulnerable infrastructure.

In summary

Future international terrorism is more complex, diverse and unpredictable. Attacks will be intermittent but deadly. Victims will be innocent civilians. This is an era of low intensity / high impact terrorism. For us the responsibility is long term resolution and further investment in an integrated all threats, all hazards approach - our mission remains **to save the lives of the hostages.**