Army Hostage Negotiations:

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an insight into AR 190-52

Shortly before Christmas in December 1977, a lone gunman held 14 hostages in a bank on the U.S. Naval Base at Subic Bay in the Philippines. His terrified hostages lived through 47 hours of this ordeal while the gunman made demands oi cash, a getaway car, a helicopter, and food. In frustration he burned a pile of money taken from the vault on the front steps of the bank to demonstrate his determination toward his cause.

Tense moments passed during the Subic Bay hostage incident. At one point the impatient hostage-taker threatened to burn a pregnant woman hostage and knife a male hostage and put him up to the window to show the military authorities he meant business if his demands were not met.

In another incident several months earlier, a despondent soldier stationed at Fort Ord, Calif., walked into a motel near post and, pointing a .22 caliber rifle at the night manager, presented him with a note. The note read, "I am taking you hostage. Please don't do anything stupid."

The manager, his wife, and 2-year old daughter were held hostage for 4 hours while local police authorities and military police tried to resolve the matter.

In this case, the subject was extremely depressed, had attempted suicide several times in the days before the incident, and complained about his intolerable life situation to his hostages. After taking a few drinks of liquor, he told the manager's wife to call the police. When the police arrived, he fired his gun through the motel window, telling his hostages to remain calm because he would not hurt them.

In the Philippines incident, the hostages finally resolved the situation when they overpowered the hostage-taker as he threatened to burn the pregnant woman. The hostages were so enraged that they actually killed their captor.

The Fort Ord incident was resolved when the police overpowered the soldier during his attempt to release the 2-year-old. Before the police officer came into the room to take the child, the soldier unloaded his weapon and told his hostages that although they would not be hurt, "there will be a bloody scene shortly." He then confronted the police with his unloaded weapon. Although he was taken into custody, it seems obvious that he intended to end his life by prompting the police to shoot him.

Both of these incidents concern the military. One involved a civilian creating a robbery/hostage situation on a military base overseas; the other took place in a civilian community in the United States, with a soldier holding hostages in a motel near a military post.

What were the contingency plans for handling these incidents? Who had the various responsibilities for planning, coordinating, or actually negotiating such incidents involving the taking of hostages?

In all probability at the time these incidents took place there were no uniform military policies governing hostage-taking. Today Army Regulation 190-52, June 15, 1978, outlines the necessary responsibilities and procedures to counter and coordinate such matters. It is a comprehensive regulation dealing with terrorism and hostage siutations entitled "Countering Terrorism and Other Major Disruptions on Military Installations."

The regulation clearly defines the responsibilities of all levels of command in terrorist or hostage situations. Paragraph 2-1, d (11), clearly specifies that installation "contingency plans" should consider the use of CID agents as hostage negotiators.

Certainly the experienced CID agent best fits the role of the hostage negotiator within the Army's resources. Background, education, experience, and military duty have prepared these agents for the job; however, specific training is necessary to prepare them for effective use as hostage negotiators.

Even in a situation where an outside agency might have primary negotiation responsibility in the United States or abroad (for example, the FBI has been granted overall jurisdiction for domestic terrorist incidents, including those on military reservations), the trained CID hostage negotiator's overall knowledge of the military systems would be invaluable to the combined negotiation team.

Basically, whether the CID agent is in the role of a consultant to the primary negotiator or acting as the negotiator, the agent must be aware of the dynamics in dealing with the basic types of hostage-takers.

The hostage-taker usually falls into one of three basic categories: the professional criminal, the psychotic or mentally ill individual, or the fanatic or terrorist personality.[1] A fourth type of hostage-taker is any combination of the other three while in prisons or institutions.[2] This hostage-taker often is involved in a prison break attempt or riot situation.

Certainly the military is highly vulnerable to all of these threats by military criminals, mental cases, and in some cases, fanatics in the service. The many stockades and military correctional facilities are highly vulnerable to the fourth category. Of course, the military is also a

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potential target for the civilian, who may fall into one or more of the basic three categories and who by choice or chance acts out a hostage situation on a military post, as did the Philippine civilian in Subic Bay in 1977.

Professional Criminals

Swift police response may prompt the calculating criminal to seize hostages. The quick arrival of the police often forces the professional criminal to make such contingency plans to insure his escape and survival. As he knows police procedure through many scrapes with the law, he may be dealt with in a forthright manner through skillful negotiations. Once he understands the futility of the situation, he is often more than willing to make concessions where he feels he may profit, possibly by an adjusted prison sentence or perhaps by just getting the situation over with his life intact.

Mentally Ill Individuals

Although thought to be the most dangerous and unpredictable of all criminals, the psychotic or mentally unstable hostage-taker often can be effectively handled, once his basic mental instability is determined. Of course, this may require the aid of a qualified psychiatrist or psychologist. With the aid of the professional, the negotiator will find that there is a great deal of predictability in certain types of mentally unsound persons. For example, a paranoid person may seek to tell his imagined wrongs or injustices to the press. He may release the hostages if his delusions are aired on television or through the media. [3]

A depressed person, on the other hand, may be more concerned with the imagined hopelessness of his life situation.

Whereas the paranoid person might respond favorably to the prospect of "changing society" through a suggested TV news conference, the depressed person would become further depressed if forced to think about the future. In fact, a professional consultant might interpret a sudden improvement in the depressed person's mood or attitude as a danger signal that he now presents an extreme potential for killing his hostage and/or himself. [4]

Further, the negotiator must avoid bringing spouses, relatives, or other such close associates to speak to the hostage-taker until their relationship with the hostage-taker is thoroughly understood. The possibility is always present that the relative or close friend is the very reason that the unbalanced hostage-taker is in his current predicament. To make a "grandstand suicide" might be his reason for wanting them present in the first place.

FBI photo

This pile of money was burned by a hostage taker at Subic Bay in the Philippines to demonstrate he meant business if his demands weren't met.

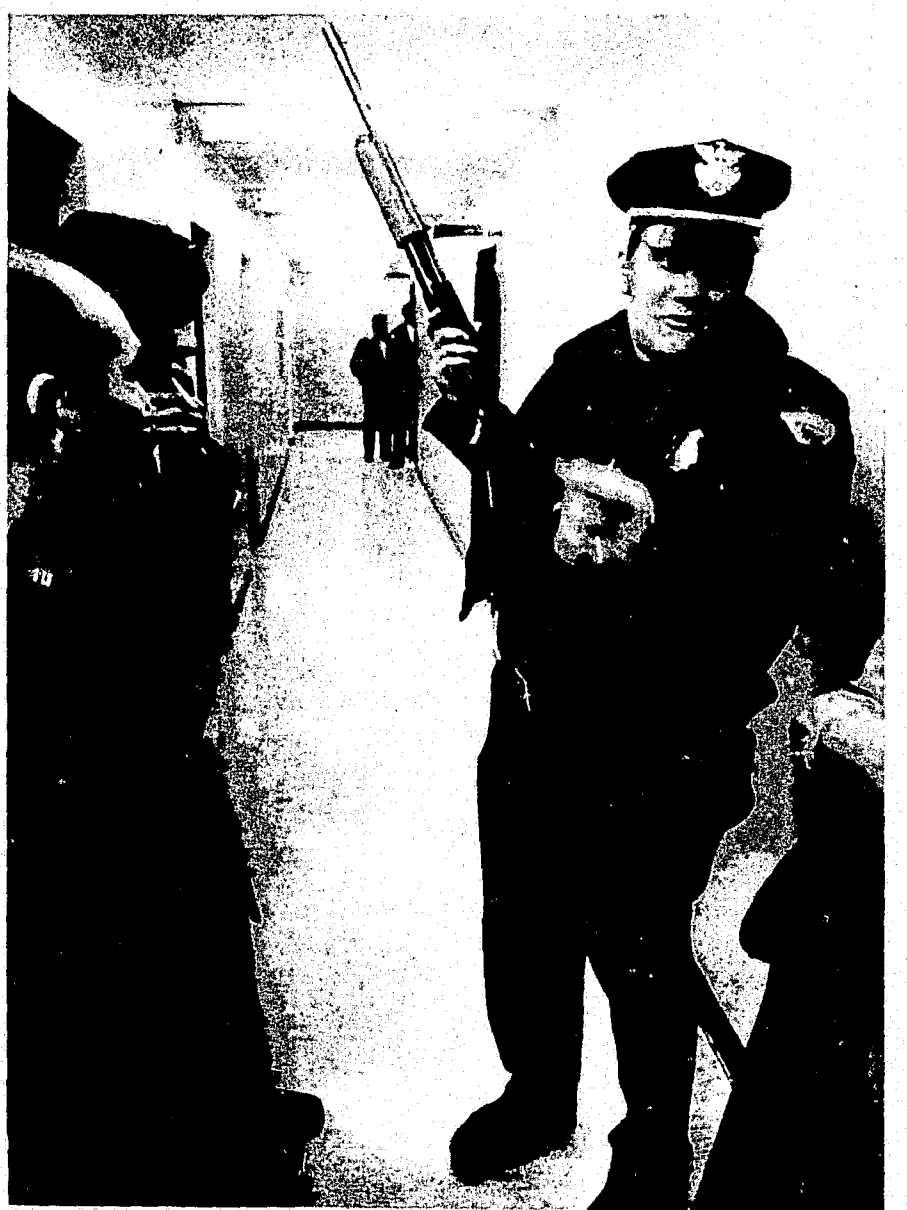
Certainly, the young soldier in the Fort Ord incident was a depressed hostage-taker. He had attempted suicide before the incident and then compounded his depression by drinking.

Liquor can hasten and deepen depression and, therefore, should never be a bargaining tool in any hostage situation. Guns and drugs also fall into the non-negotiable category.

Fanatic Individuals

Hostage taking by terrorists probably is the most difficult situation for law enforcement as the terrorist often plans and rehearses his hostage taking in advance. Whereas the criminal takes hostages as a contingency plan in his criminal act, the terrorist's act is an end in itself. His overall goal is political, and the hostages are used as pawns in his game of political chess.

From the negotiator's viewpoint, the terrorist groups constitute the most severe problems. The members are the most intelligent and often are on the brink of psychotic behavior. They are completely dedicated to their cause and most often are willing to die. They view their fanatic actions as heroic and noble, even though they are held in contempt by society. Reason is meaningless to the fanatic, as his mind is often clouded by his imagined nobility of mission.



A disturbed ex-marine, who wanted media attention, held a police chief and a clerk hostage at an Ohio police station. In 10 hours, negotiators persuaded him to release the clerk in exchange for a TV set. Forty-five hours after the siege began, he surrendered when President Carter agreed, at a prescheduled press conference, to talk with him if he would release his hostage. The policeman is guarding the area near where the hostages are being held. The hostage-taker is shown being interviewed by newsmen after his surrender.

FBI photos

The negotiator must balance time-stalling techniques with sensitivity, knowing at what point the hostages' lives are most threatened. Usually the terrorist is most interested in publicity for his cause, and that publicity can become a negotiable item in the mediation process.

Institutional Hostage-takers

Whereas the three other types of incidents can usually be handled by using time-stalling techniques, prison situations differ in that generally a quick assault will work in favor of the authorities.[5]

As a general rule, a loosely knit group without a common goal will take from 30 minutes to an hour to form leadership. Once one or more leaders emerge, inmates tend to organize quickly and work together to barricade themselves against an attack by authorities. They then produce and create weapons and defense plans and secure their hostages in such a manner that a police assault will endanger the hostages' lives, thus discouraging the aggressive police move.[6]

The Attica Prison incident in New York State in September 1971 clearly demonstrates that prolonged negotiation can lead to disaster. In this incident, 38 hostages were taken. The opportunity of a quick assault was passed by after days of negotiation with an inmate commission. The possibility of handling this incident tactically became more and more difficult. The result was many lives lost, both hostage and inmate, when the State police assault was finally initiated using over 200 troopers.

The Huntsville, Texas, incident, like Attica, started small, and again the initial opportunity to quickly quell the disturbance was passed as the three hostage-takers took multiple hostages including inmates, and male and female civilian prison employees. The incident occurred at the Central Prison Unit of the Texas Department of Corrections in Huntsville on July 24, 1974, and lasted 11 days. As in Attica, the prisoners used their time well to barricade themselves and fortify their stronghold, the prison library. They kept watch over their hostages, day and night, often using them as shields.

Whereas in the first hours of the Huntsville incident the three inmate hostage-takers were disorganized and vulnerable to attack, at the end of their 11-day hold-out they were totally coordinated and calculating in their hostage negotiations. Their main demand was an armored car for their escape. The armored car was to be parked at the base of a long ramp leading to their library fortress. At approximately 9:40 p.m. the Huntsville incident ended in a blazing shootout that took the lives of two of the hostage-takers and two female civilian hostages. The priest and several law enforcement officers were wounded.

Generally speaking, the passing of time does reduce anxiety and the factor of boredom does wear on the hostage-taker. The prison situation is a distinct exception, however, and the quick but planned assault by a well-trained tactical team is the best and most predictable course of action based on past experience in this field.

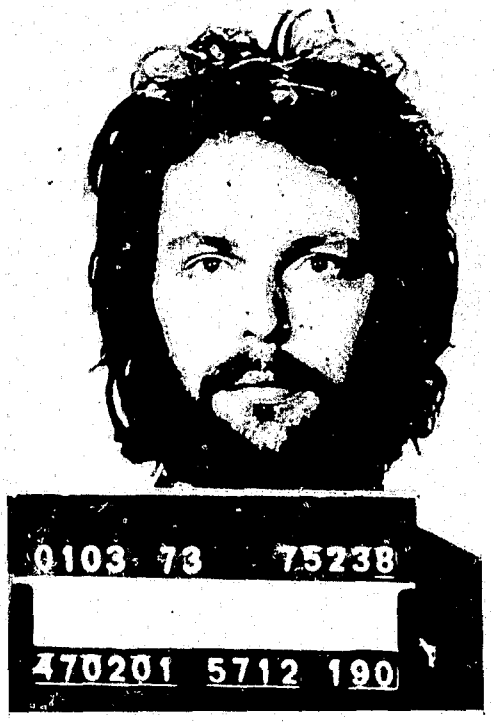
Proxemics—Consideration For Negotiation

The Proximetric Theory is an important concept for the would-be negotiator to know. Proxemics, or the theory of body space requirements is recognized by experimental psychologists as a basis of the requirements of creature comfort. Body space requirements vary with three basic factors: sex, anxiety and , culture.[7]

The sexual connotations cannot be denied, as when a person stands too close to a member of the opposite sex whom they find attractive. Yet a male's discomfort will heighten when standing close to or touching another male. The American taboo against homosexuality is no doubt the basis for this discomfort.[8]

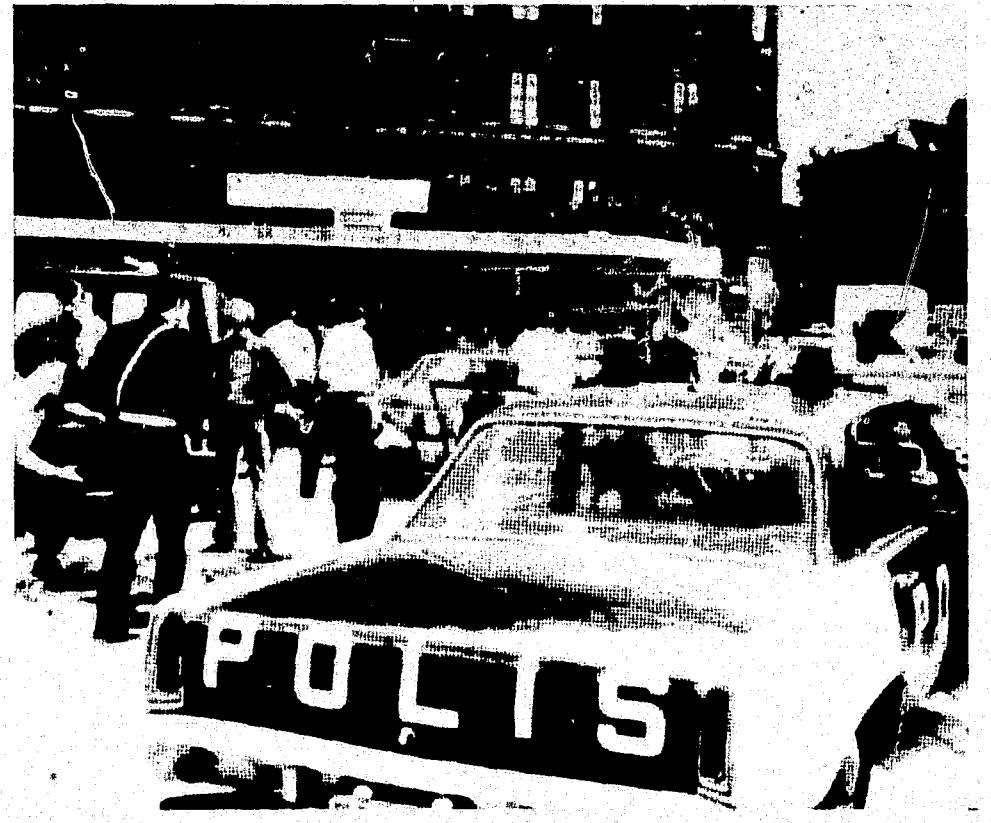
Anxiety also plays heavily on those who are guilty, distraught, or mentally unbalanced. People in these categories seem to need extended body space to remain comfortable. Studies have shown that violent mental patients and criminal inmates desire open body space and become assaultive in close quarters.[9] This knowledge certainly becomes important to a hostage negotiator.

Consider the incident that faced the Military Police about a year ago when a mentally distraught soldier slashed his wrists in the company area of his assigned battalion. The responding MPs found that members of the soldier's company had tried to persuade him to go for medical aid, as he was losing blood rapidly. The soldier barricaded himself in a building in the company area. The responding MP staff sergeant and two MP investigators, feeling an urgency to take positive action, kicked down the door to the building. With drawn .45 caliber pistols, the MPs entered the building, and found the soldier holding a hammer and making threatening gestures. The MP staff sergeant ordered him to drop the hammer. When the soldier continued



Hostage-taking history was made in August 1973 in Sweden when three girls and one male hostage were taken at a Stockholm bank. During the 6 days the hold out lasted, the hostages came to identify with their captors. The hostages willingly shielded the captors when they surrendered. This type phenomenon has since been called the "Stockholm Syndrome."

FBI photos



his advance, the staff sergeant fired his .45, striking the soldier in the head and killing him.

The simple knowledge of the dynamics of proxemics might avoid such a tragic confrontation. Sound crisis management techniques have shown that a cautious retreat in the face of a highly emotional person will have a notably calming effect; whereas, a steady advance will probably provoke panic and assault. Watching for such physiological signs of panic and stress and knowing when to back off could well turn the tide of an assault to the sophisticated hostage negotiator.

Survival Identification

Survival Identification, also known as victimization, is a predictable form of human behavior that has been recognized since World War II. When human life is threatened, the victim often reacts first with fear and hate for his captor, then with admiration and respect for him, and finally by identifying with him.[11] The military's concern with this phenomenon fell in the potential for mass collaboration in prisoner of war camps. The Code of Conduct of 1954 was designed to offset this potential.

In August of 1973, however, the phenomenon occurred during the course of an aborted bank robbery in southern Sweden, when 29 year-old Clark Olofsson and 32 year-old Jan Erik Olsson made hostage history by taking three girls and one male hostage. The bank robbery at one of Stockholm's largest banks was halted by the Stockholm police. The hostages were taken by Olsson, who as an early demand requested Olofsson to be brought to the bank from a prison where he was incarcerated.[12]

The holdout lasted 6 days. During this time hostages and hostage takers freely discussed their lives. During the early hours of the incident, both hostages and their captors, now in an inner vault of the bank, feared imminent death by police bullets which they feared would come during a tactical attack. No attack came though, and as the days passed, a strange rapport was developed within the group. At one point, one of the girls chastised the police neogtiator over the phone for endangering their lives by the police barricade around the bank. The bank robbers, she stated, were "victims of society" and death of the hostages would not come from them but from "stupid police blunders." The authorities were puzzled by the attitude of the hostages. The hostages often spoke of "we" and "us" when talking of their group of hostages and captors.

In the final hours of the 6-day incident, the hostages willingly shielded their captors when it was decided that they would surrender. The girls wanted to be sure the bank robbers were not hurt. As the police led the subjects away, the girls embraced them, and spoke of seeing them again soon. One girl, Kristin, shouted, "Clark, I'll see you again," as Olofsson was taken away in handcuffs.[13] Another girl asked her psychiatrist a few days later, "Is there something wrong with me? Why don't I hate them?"[14]

It was Brigitta in July of 1974, nearly 1 year after the ordeal, who urged her husband to let her visit the penitentiary where Clark Olofsson was a prisoner. She could not explain why but stated she felt a powerful urge to see Clark again.[15] Probably one of the most amazing results of this incident was the eventual engagement between one of the hostages and her captor.

Although police authorities and psychiatrists could not fully understand what had happened, the event came to be known as the "Stockholm Syndrome" and has been repeated many times in future years. Most notably, the Patty Hearst case brought about the situation whereby Patty, who had been brutally kidnapped by the Symbionese Liberation Army, came to strongly identify with their cause and later became a willing SLA soldier, according to her defense attorneys.

The lesson for the would-be hostage negotiator, then, is that he must be aware of survival identification, or the "Stockholm Syndrome." He must be aware of its dynamics and its development and must anticipate its occurrence and predict its effect not only on the hostages but on the hostage-taker as well.

As time passes, the hostage-taker, if free and open communications exist between him and his captives, may in turn begin to develop positive feelings for the hostage. This is one reason for promoting time-stalling techniques in the initial negotiation process and to let time weigh on the side of the police.

Along with the boredom of the situation, the hostage-taker, after 24 or 48 hours, may find it more difficult and distasteful to harm his hostage. The hostages, however, may now be more willing prisoners and may even aid in the hostage-taker's plans to thwart the police efforts to save them.

The negotiator must also be aware of the development of the Stockholm Syndrome in his own dealings with the hostage-taker. Over a period of hours

FBI photo

This professional criminal, on the 10 most wanted list, was photographed in a bank during a hostage-taking situation.

or days in deep negotiation, an unlikely bond of friendship often develops between police negotiator and the subject of the incident, when the negotiator finds he "must" get the criminal out alive "at all costs." He may become blind to the possibility of police sniper tactics and even attempt to protect the hostage-taker's life over those of the hostages.

In an incident in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1975, an FBI agent, after 22 hours of negotiation, successfully bargained a dozen hostages away from their sole captor. The hostage-taker was a lifelong criminal who had spent two-thirds of his life in prison. The agent and the bank robber exchanged mutual concerns for first the lives of their hostages, then later for each others' lives. When all the hostages were released, the bank robber told the agent to come into the bank vault alone and said that he would only surrender to the agent.

The experienced FBI man knew the career criminal had a loaded .357 Magnum handgun in the vault, and normal police procedure would have been to have the felon throw out the weapon and back out, hands over his head. Yet the agent calmly walked into the vault to take his prisoner into custody. This action was against the agent's training, experience, and better judgment. Upon entering the vault, the agent found the bank robber with the .357 Magnum aimed squarely at his chest. Tense moments passed without words, then the criminal lowered the weapon and submitted to arrest.

Later the criminal confided that "I was thinking of killing you, and then myself, but I figured you were really an O.K. guy." The agent and the long-time criminal still exchange letters and Christmas cards annually, and an oil painting hangs over the agent's fireplace. It was a Christmas gift to the agent painted by the hostage-taker, who is now serving a long prison term in a Federal penitentiary. [16]

In short, the Stockholm Syndrome is a psychological phenomenon that is based on a life-threatening situation.

The fear of death is greatest during the first few hours. As the fear of death subsides, the victim becomes to fear he "owes his life" to his captor, who has "allowed him to live" — yet the captor holds the hostage's life on a thread of hope. The fear of the police now sets in as a police seige becomes more of a danger than the criminal's actions. The hostage, after many hours, may become protective towards the criminal and even aids him in his hold-out against the police by watching for an assault or providing ideas in the escape plan. Oftentimes, the hostage refuses to leave the hostage-taker's side when allowed to go free. [17]

In summary, AR 190-52 has provided the necessary guidance to Army commanders in the handling of hostage and terrorism incidents. It also has provided Military Police and CID commanders with a basic tool with which to form detailed hostage contingency plans. The new regulation clearly identifies the CID agent as the ideal hostage negotiator; however, preparing the CID agent with the necessary skills and education for this role is the distinct responsibility of the MP and CID commander. The continuing education and

learning process in this all important field is the challenge for each CID agent so designated as a hostage negotiator.

[1] John A. Culley. "Defusing Human Bombs: Hostage Negotiations." *Federal Bureau of Investigation Law Enforcement Bulletin*. October 1974. p. 11.

[2] Conrad V. Hassell. "The Hostage Situation: Exploring the Motivation and Cause." *Police Chief*, September 1975, pp. 56 and 57.

[3] Interview with David A. Soskis, M.D., Professor of Psychiatry, Temple University School of Medicine, Philadelphia, at Quantico, Va. November 1978.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Murray S. Miron & Arnold P. Goldstein. *Hostage*. Kalamazoo, Mich.: Behavordelia, Inc., p. 99.

[6] Hassel, p. 57.

[7] Edward T. Hall. *The Hidden Dimension*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1966.

[8] Thomas Strentz. "Proxemics and the Interview." *Police Chief*, September 1977, p. 76.

[9] Augustus F. Kinzel. "Body Buffer Zones in Violent Prisoners." *American Journal of Psychiatry*. Vol. 127, No. 1. July 1979.

[10] George M. Foster. *Traditional Cultures and The Impact of Technological Change*. Harper & Row, N.Y., 1962, p. 187.

[11] Frank M. Ochberg. "The Victim of Terrorism: Psychiatric Considerations." *Terrorism: An International Journal I*, No. 2 (1978): 147.

[12] Daniel Lang. "A Reporter at Large." *New Yorker*. November 1974. p. 56.

[13] Ibid. p. 114.

[14] Daniel Lang. "The Bandit and the Hostages: Who Was the Enemy?" *Observer Magazine*. (London).

[15] Ibid. p. 118.

[16] Interview with FBI Agent. Cleveland, Ohio. Feb. 20, 1976.

[17] For more detailed information concerning the topic of Survival Identification, or the "Stockholm Syndrome," the following article by Special Agent Thomas Strentz, is recommended: "Law Enforcement Policy and Ego Defenses of the Hostage." *Federal Bureau of Investigation Law Enforcement Bulletin*. April, 1979.

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