

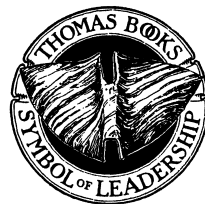
HOSTAGE/CRISIS NEGOTIATIONS

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Lessons Learned from the Bad, the Mad, and the Sad

By

THOMAS STRENTZ, PH.D.



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PREFACE

This book is the first edition of *Hostage/Crisis Negotiations: Lessons Learned from the Bad, the Mad, and the Sad*. My most favorite quote is from George Santayana who said, “Those who do not study their history are condemned to repeat it.” In law enforcement and corrections, when we do not learn from our history, people die unnecessarily. With that quote in mind and some recent experiences at negotiation conferences, it was obvious that a text that focuses on lessons learned is long overdue. I have been involved in Hostage now called Crisis Negotiations since 1973. I designed, developed, and directed the FBI program at Quantico from 1975 to 1987. Back then the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) followed the lead of the New York City Police Department (NYPD) in the development of a negotiations option to the resolution of a hostage or barricade crisis.

The NYPD was motivated by foresight. They understood that what happened at the 1972 Munich Olympics could have occurred in New York City with similar results. The FBI by hind-sight that came after a wrongful death suit known as *Downs v. US*. The incident occurred in September 1971. The case is discussed in Chapter 2. Briefly, during that hostage crisis, the FBI Special Agent in Charge (SAC) of the Jacksonville, FL, division assumed the duties of the On Scene commander, SWAT Commander, and Lone Negotiator. That is like playing the role of judge, defense attorney, and prosecuting attorney during a criminal trial. It is too much for one person to handle.

One could speculate that had the FBI acted to immediately correct that problem, Dr. Manfred Schriber, the police commander in Munich who, one year later, also assumed all three roles, might have learned from the FBI errors. However, J. Edgar Hoover was our director, the FBI had never been successfully sued, and we were all learning some new practices and procedures.

My problem is that, as I attend negotiator conferences around the country, I listen to case studies where negotiators present incidents and discuss what they learned. This idea really hit home with me when the FBI made a presentation on how sleep deprivation caused the negotiations team some

serious problems. I remember well the Hanaffi Moslem siege during March 1977, when we used sleep deprivation against them. That case is discussed in Chapter 3. A short time after that, I was at another negotiator conference and attempted to discuss *Downs v. US* with some FBI negotiators. They had no knowledge of that landmark case known well to my generation of negotiators and every law enforcement and corrections negotiator I have met, taught, or spoken with over the last forty years.

Therefore, I wrote this book. Chapter 1 discusses some history of this process. This chapter also includes some guidelines on active listening skills (ALS). I firmly believe that a good negotiator, like a good interviewer, is not a good talker but listens well. We all know that negotiators and the negotiations process work best when we use a team. Team roles and responsibilities are discussed in some detail. The next three chapters deal with the types of folks negotiators are most likely to meet during a crisis. To make my points, I have included excerpts from the negotiator/subject dialogue.

Chapter 2, titled “The Bad” focuses on the criminals who typically take hostages. Basically they fall into two psychological categories: the person with an antisocial personality disorder (ASP) and the person who was labeled “inadequate” and now is most commonly labeled borderline. I discuss the two most common psychological defense mechanisms we encounter with them. They are rationalization and projection. To more effectively deal with such people, the negotiator must understand their thought processes. In addition, this chapter presents the infamous 1973 Stockholm Bank Robbery that gave birth to the term Stockholm Syndrome. Of all the cases discussed in this chapter, the one that best describes the person with an ASP is the Arizona prison siege.

Chapter 3 is titled “The Mad” because I discuss people who were or have since been diagnosed as suffering from a major mental disorder known as psychosis to psychologists and insane to correctional staff and law enforcement personnel. I discuss two of their most common symptoms; delusions and hallucinations.

Chapter 4 deals with suicidal subjects. They are the fastest growing category for crisis negotiation team calls. To better understand them, I discuss the issue of ambivalence. If they were totally determined to die, they would be dead before the team arrived. The question is does the person have enough ambivalence or indecision for us to use to convince them to come out? Finally it is important to understand that the courts in all of their rulings have not ordered us to succeed. However, we must make a reasonable effort to negotiate before the decision is made to “Go Tactical.”

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As any author or negotiator will admit her or his efforts are never a single-person show. So it is with this text. Many fellow negotiators helped me get my facts straight for this book, and friends encouraged me to write about what I learned the hard way so others may benefit from my experiences, and in the process save a few lives and many careers.

I learned early in my FBI career that the Bureau was like the Navy. In the Navy, the Chief of Naval Operations is the boss. However, each captain of every ship is your real boss. In the FBI, the director, J. Edgar Hoover, was the boss. However, every Special Agent in Charge (SAC) ran his field office as his fiefdom. Between the SAC and Hoover there were assistant directors in charge of each division. Under Hoover, there were twelve assistant directors. If you will recall there was another leader who had twelve assistant directors. That, I think, encapsulates life in the Bureau when the new academy was being designed and built across the Potomac River in faraway Quantico, Virginia.

Geographically, the USMC Base in Quantico, Virginia, home of the FBI Academy, is some fifty miles south of Washington, D.C., on I95. However, bureaucracies being what they are, those fifty miles may as well be an ocean. On our organizational chart, the Training Division is part of headquarters. However, in functioning and fact, it is quite separate. It is so separate today that agents stationed at Quantico do not qualify for the cost of living differential available to other headquarters staff who often live next door to each other. One drives north to Washington, D.C. and is paid the cost of living difference. The other drives south to Quantico and is denied this allowance.

In the beginning, Hoover decided that the computation for the number of offices for academy instructors in the new facility at Quantico would be based on each instructor lecturing forty hours a week and sharing his office with another instructor. Preparation would be done during his overtime. Of course those agents in the Training Division knew that lecturing forty hours a week was not logical. However, that was the rule of thumb, or in this case the rule of The Director. The number of instructors increased immediately

under our new Director Clarence Kelly and the addition of university credit for most National Academy courses through the University of Virginia.

I say “his” and “he” because we did not hire our first female agent until a few weeks after The Director went to his reward. Interestingly enough, one was a former Roman Catholic Nun and the other a former USMC Captain. Interestingly enough every agent in the first Behavioral Science Unit was either a former marine or a Catholic. Some were both. As one of the first instructors transferred to the Training Division on April 1, 1972, I was told that should I ever meet The Director, I should not tell him I was a social worker or even a psychologist. I was a sociologist. So, for some six weeks between my promotion and his passing, I was a sociologist. It was never lost on me that I was the April Fool’s joke on The Director.

The point of all this discussion is that many of the men under The Director, and especially those at the Academy put their careers on the line to do what was right. They said one thing but did another because they knew it was the right thing to do. Some call this cognitive dissonance. I call it courage. High on that list was Jim Cotter, AKA Inspector Cotter, who ran the National Academy Program. Jim, with the unofficial AKA of “The Dancing Bear” because of his stature and ability to dance around directives from D.C., won the Silver Star for downing a Japanese Zero with his .03 Rifle on December 7th, 1941.

Another WWII veteran was Jack Kirsch, whose grasp of reality and reading of men brought together those of us from diverse backgrounds to form the Behavioral Science Unit. During WWII Jack was a tail gunner on a B17 in the 15th Air Force. He flew dozens of missions over Europe and Germany. Though the men Jack brought in came from around the Bureau, six of the ten of us were former marines, two of whom served during the Korean War. In those days, the majority of Special Agents who had served in the military were former marines. That heritage served us well on the USMC Base at Quantico. Men like Jim and Jack constantly ran interference for us. They gave us the freedom to do our job as it should be done while they placated folks in Washington, D.C., with whatever stories they told that allowed us to maintain our focus and academic freedom. The mindset at Quantico was that our job was to help law-enforcement, corrections, and field agents do their jobs more effectively, not keep tabs on them or report them to headquarters.

In 1973, as the final decision in *Downs v. US* was being written, the call came from Director Kelley to the Behavioral Science Unit to formulate a better response to aircraft hijacking negotiations. This decision and case are discussed in Chapter 2. What we developed was quite different from the common practice in law enforcement, corrections, and certainly within the FBI in 1973.

Conrad Hassel, an attorney with a master's degree in criminology, is a former marine sergeant. In Korea he was in Baker Company of the 5th Marine Regiment in the First Marine Division. He earned the Purple Heart because early one morning he came too close to a Chinese hand grenade. Con fought organized crime in the Boston Division and the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in Mississippi. As a member of the Los Angeles Field Division of the FBI, he is the only Special Agent who, with the help of the Coast Guard, boarded stolen vessel on the high seas, arrested the pirates, took command, and sailed it back to Long Beach. Con thought he was a hero. Unfortunately, reporters asked The Director about this before he was briefed, so instead Con was reprimanded. I am not sure how he was to write a report or even notify headquarters while sailing back to Long Beach harbor. Ah yes, life in a bureaucracy under The Director. Since his retirement, he won the Intelligence Star from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). He is the only FBI agent to be so honored and one of the few living recipients of that award.

Thanks to Jack, Con and I were selected to form what is now the Crisis Negotiations Unit. Prior to that formation, on July 1, 1976, while Con and I were in the Behavioral Science Unit, I began interviewing law enforcement negotiators to learn what worked. It became clear to me that what worked for them in a siege was what I was taught about how to conduct therapy with troubled patients. When I was in Fresno conducting a Profiling Course for the police, I went back to Fresno State and discussed this observation with my former instructors. They reminded me of what I had learned about listening. It became clear that most successful negotiators spent more time listening than talking. This tactic is called active listening and is presented in Chapter 1.

I learned active listening skills from Dr. Barbara Varley and other instructors at Fresno State and at the Atascadero State Hospital for the Sexual Psychopath in the mid-1960s. Unfortunately, we are still trying to teach this listening skill to law enforcement and correctional staff who are more accustomed to giving orders, talking, and taking charge than to listening. Too many folks think *negotiations* is a synonym for *capitulation*.

In addition, it was obvious early on that just as the tactical, or SWAT element, required a team effort to do their job, we as negotiators also needed a team. Negotiation team structure and function are covered in Chapter 1.

In those days, the FBI was encountering hostage sieges on aircraft and in banks. Most of those on the tarmac involved people suffering from Paranoid Schizophrenia. That is the hostage takers not the passengers or the crew. In banks we typically encountered robbers who had an Antisocial or an Inadequate Personality Disorder. They are discussed in Chapter 2.

Because of the events at Munich in September 1972, we were concerned with terrorists' sieges. Those few we encountered did not require much of a change from the negotiation processes and procedures we developed for dealing with criminals. One such siege is covered in depth in Chapter 3. Today law enforcement negotiators are handling more and more suicidal subjects. These are discussed in Chapter 4.

With that background on the development of this life-saving process, it is important to remember that we are dealing with people and people change. Therefore, our responses must be kept current. To keep current, I have remained active in this field. I am a member of three state negotiator associations, Louisiana, Texas, and California. I am also the editor of the California Association of Hostage Negotiators quarterly newsletter. Because of my years of service and contributions to the field, I have been selected as an Honorary Life Member of the California and Louisiana associations, which means I do not have to pay dues.

Each year I am one of the experienced negotiators who judges correctional and law enforcement teams at the annual competition sponsored by Southwest Texas State University (SWTSU) in San Marcos. It has been run these many years by Dr. Wayman Mullins, who is the co-author with Dr. McMains of "The Bible" for negotiators, titled *Crisis Negotiations*, which is now in its fourth edition. He and Dr. Mike McMains have been my friends and inspiration for many years. They helped me with my first and second editions of *Psychological Aspects of Crisis Negotiations*. I call my efforts "The New Testament." They have also helped me with this text.

What little tactical knowledge I have comes from Dr. Tom Mijares—a retired SWAT Commander from the Detroit Police Department who is also on the staff at SWTSU. He is the co-author of *The Management of Police Specialized Tactical Units*, now in its second edition, and two other texts in press. He takes great delight in telling his audience that I was one of his instructors in negotiations when he was a young man on the Detroit P.D. I think he means that as a compliment.

John Sieh, recently retired from the U.S. Army Special Forces, has afforded me the opportunity to teach and train with him and his crew in the "States" and overseas in Kosovo and Tajikistan. In our state-side efforts and in developing countries, we focused on the need for close co-operation between his tactical and my negotiating elements during a hostage siege. Our instruction always concludes with a joint exercise. As a former "operator," John knows well the value of these elements training and then working together to successfully resolve a siege. We interpret success as rescuing the victims and capturing as many subjects alive as possible. Neither of us adheres to the expression "Kill them all and then let the Lord sort them out."

I should note that as an instructor at Quantico, I shared my office with Ed Kelso, a former Marine EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) Officer, who was a “bomber.” I learned enough about bombs from Ed to stay as far away from them as possible.

I taught for many years at LSU with George Bradford. We met during the Hanafi’s Moslem Siege in Washington, D.C. that is presented in Chapter 3. Each time I taught with George, I learned something new. He retired from the Washington, D.C. Police Department as a lieutenant who was the commander of their SWAT and Negotiation teams. Max Howard, who retired from the FBI, was also active in this program and as a judge in San Marcos. Max has been a good friend and an excellent sounding board for me.

Bill Hogwood carefully reviewed the material in Chapter 3 on his siege and made several changes to my initial write-up. Sgt. Russ Moore, Detective Mike Rand, and Deputy Debbie Eglin from the San Diego Sheriffs office provided excellent information on some San Diego suicidal subjects and sieges discussed in Chapter 4.

Jan Dubina, retired from the Phoenix Police Department, was of great assistance and encouragement as I labored through the material on the Lewis Penitentiary Siege. She stressed the fact that the successful resolution of that siege was a team effort. I certainly hope my write-up conveys that fact. To make certain that this information is passed on, I will tell you here that more than thirty negotiators worked that two-week siege. They came from the Arizona Department of Corrections; the Arizona Department of Public Safety; the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office; the Glendale, Phoenix, and Tempe Police Departments; and the FBI sent negotiators from Phoenix, Quantico, San Diego, and Birmingham.

In addition, the FBI firearms staff at Quantico experimented with rifle shots through the same type of glass as they had in the tower. The cost of the glass was more than \$50,000. The tests on the academy range convinced everyone that this siege, like that with the Hanafi’s in Washington, D.C., had to be a negotiable incident. The resolution of that siege was indeed a team effort.

For two of the most recent cases presented in Chapter 4, I owe a special thanks to Sgt. Russ Moore, Detective Mike Rand, and Deputy Debbie Elgin for their efforts on scene and later reading my version of their efforts. In my judgment, the people of San Diego County are much safer because of the efforts and dedication of these dedicated public servants.

Certainly the pastors at my church, Pastors Carol and James Kniseley, continue to play a significant role in my life and my efforts to remain focused in my faith and work. Their sermons are consistently meaningful, and their service to our congregation is spiritually enriching. They are the embodiment of spiritual caregivers.

Without the assistance of my son, Steve, this book would not have any photos. Finally, to my Carole, who is gone from our earth but remains forever in my heart.

Thanks to everyone who helped me better serve those who call on us to assist those in peril and others in their quest for more effective ways to save lives.

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HOSTAGE/CRISIS NEGOTIATIONS

Chapter 1

THE BAD, THE MAD, AND THE SAD: LESSONS LEARNED

The subtitle of this text tells it all. Typically those encountered by correctional and law enforcement crisis negotiators fall into one of three broad categories:

1. **The Bad** are those caught in criminal activity to include those motivated by escape, political, social, or religious protests. Psychologically, they tend to have Antisocial Personality and/or Inadequate Personality Disorders. They are not insane, psychotic, crazy, or nuts. They are self-serving people of every race, color, and creed who are criminals and whose life theme is “It’s all about me.”
2. **The Mad** includes those who are severely mentally ill and some motivated by political, social or religious delusions or issues. Typically, they are insane or psychotic and are experiencing hallucinations and delusions.
3. Finally, **the Sad** is a growing category of subjects* who are contemplating suicide. More simply said, these folks are criminals, crazies, and crestfallen.

In addition, **Crisis Negotiations** has replaced our first title of Hostage Negotiations because a growing majority of subjects with whom crisis negotiators deal are not holding hostages. They are lone

*In FBI parlance, the term *subject* refers to the criminal or focus of the investigation or siege. If I were a former NYPD officer, I would use the term *perpetrator*. Subject is shorter and easier to spell. Perhaps that is why the Bureau uses it.

suicidal subjects or barricaded gunmen. Certainly one could argue that any person who decides to confront dozens of heavily armed officers of the law is probably at some psychological level suicidal.

Many books have discussed crisis call outs from the perspective of the negotiator or tactical team. These sources will be identified when appropriate. This book will include excerpts of siege dialogue and discuss the “behind-the-scenes” efforts of those in the command post and other locations whose efforts and energies play an integral role in this life-saving process. Again, the goal of this process is the reservation of human life, not saving time, and money or taking revenge.

That said, there are times when the on-scene commander must make the difficult but necessary decision that to save lives a life must be taken. An example of this is the September 2010 siege at the Discovery Channel building in Silver Spring, Maryland, where a heavily armed gunman, who also had explosives in his backpack, took several employees hostage as he ranted on for hours about the station’s role in overpopulating the earth. That’s right; he was holding the Discovery Channel responsible for over populating our planet. Further, he was a repeat protester who, with each subsequent Silver Spring appearance, was more heavily armed, more vocal, or more intransigent. The bottom line is that his efforts were escalating. Escalation of repeat subjects is one of several signs that an on-scene commander must consider when making the difficult decision to use deadly force. This pattern of escalation will be discussed in this text as we have encountered it in aircraft hijackings.

There was a time in the early 1970s when the hijacking of an aircraft somewhere in the world occurred at the rate of almost two each week. In the United States the rate was just under one each week. For more than a decade we had the dubious distinction of leading the world in this category. For what it is worth, the FBI also led the world in taking hijackers into custody rather than killing them. This was the result of the on-scene commander carefully coordinating intelligence, negotiation and tactical efforts, options, and capabilities.

It is not the intent of this text to make light of a serious practice and process in corrections and law enforcement that has saved hundreds, if not thousands, of lives here and abroad. It is my intent to shed insight into a practical police and prison process that uses our tax dollars to save the lives of our fellow taxpayers.

For those who question the presentation of material that to some might seem sensitive, I will remind them that the process of Crisis Negotiations was initiated and is now a common practice designed and dedicated to saving lives. For those who read this book and seek insight into this life-saving process to outwit the authorities, I hasten to remind them that Crisis Negotiators strive to save lives. To accomplish this, we train and negotiate from a position of strength. That strength is provided by our tactical element. If one decides to play games and attempt to use this text to frustrate law enforcement and correctional negotiators then he or she will face the strength of our tactical elements; . . . they do not play games.

Crisis Negotiations Defined

Crisis negotiations is defined as a process designed to save the lives of responders, victims, civilians, and the subject. We take time to listen so the crisis can be resolved by bringing the subject to his senses, not necessarily to his knees. The key to successful negotiations is the proper use of time. Just as a surgeon delays an incision until the anesthetic has taken effect, so the crisis negotiator uses time to gather intelligence and fatigue the subject so that our tactical element can make a painless entry or ensure a painless exit that will save lives.

Who Am I?

With all that said, you should know that I have been in this business for almost forty years. Back in the early 1970s as a Special Agent, I designed, developed, and directed the FBI Hostage/Crisis Negotiations program at and from our Academy on the Marine Corps base at Quantico, Virginia, for eleven years.

My first full-time job was in the USMC. I served in and rose to the rank of sergeant at Camp Pendleton, California. I returned home and finished college. With a bachelor's degree, I worked as a social worker and then a social work supervisor with a master's degree in Social Work (MSW) from Fresno State. I worked in the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program at the Fresno County Department of Public Welfare from 1961 to 1968. My MSW program, two years long between 1964 and 1966, included classroom work and field placements or internships where I worked full time with paroles or patients

under the close supervision of a carefully selected member of the staff. I served two internships, an Adult Parole Agent for the California Department of Corrections. The other was a Psychiatric Social Worker at the California Department of Mental Health hospital for the sexual psychopath at Atascadero, California.

I have included this brief biographical sketch so the reader will understand my background and with that knowledge put my comments and observations in perspective. Along those lines, for many years, I thought of myself as rather light hearted and inclined to see the humorous side of things. During my MSW years, I learned I was whimsical. Years later, while stationed at our academy in Quantico, I attended Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), called by some during the Vietnam War “Viet Cong University,” where after nine years of daily driving to and from Richmond, as I worked full time at the FBI Academy, I earned my doctorate. The topic of my dissertation was hostage survival.

On a more personal note, after I received my letter of acceptance from J. Edgar Hoover, my parents told me that at an early age, about five, I said I wanted to be a “G man.” They thought that joining the FBI was a lofty goal for a preschooler. What I meant was a garbage man. I was very impressed with them because, back in those pre- and early World War II days, they drove teams of horses pulling large open refuse wagons in our Chicago alley. Their command and control of those powerful animals certainly made an impression on me.

It is of personal interest to me that early in life I was talking about working at a job that was important and required some skill. Frankly, I think most kids talk about their adult ambitions, in one form or another. That is normal. However, and as you will read in my chapter titled “The Bad,” there are those, typically folks who have an Antisocial Personality Disorder, whose focus is quite different. One of my patients at Atascadero said, when teased about wanting to kiss his kindergarten teacher, he would have to kill her first. So, I was dreaming and talking about working while he was fantasizing about killing. Heredity, environment, or demonic possession, no one knows for sure. In the case of my former patient, I think one can make a strong case for a combination of the three.