

The result of the work of the Election Commission was a 93% poll of the eligible voters. 63% were cast for Mugabe who won 57 seats; 24% for Nkomo who got 20; 8% for Muzorewa who won only 3 seats. The Rhodesia Front had previously won all the 20 White seats.⁴ The voters chose peace, believing that Mugabe would provide it. Muzorewa, the Methodist Bishop, was the "fall guy". He had promised peace and equal pay for Black and White but had not been able to deliver either.

The presence of Gordon Fairweather, the distinguished New Brunswicker who had contested nine Canadian elections, ensured that at least one of the Commonwealth Observers had practical political experience. He remarked to me that he was much moved by the success of this Commonwealth undertaking; in particular, by his realization at the London briefing, that all his colleagues understood election procedure on the Westminster model, whether they were from Papua-New Guinea, Nigeria or Australia. They well-understood the powers of governors, councils, courts and the police and they had a common language.⁵ The election had been a demonstration that the sun may have set on the British Empire but that the Commonwealth that lives on is a force for peace, reconciliation and good government.

Footnotes

1. *Time*, 28 April 1980.
2. *Gazette* (Montreal), 19 Dec. 1979; *Globe & Mail*, 21 Dec. 1979; *Newsweek*, 31 Dec. 1979.
3. *Gunner Magazine*, no. 112 (March 1980), p. 5.
4. *Time*, 17 March 1980.
5. The author thanks Mr. Gordon Fairweather for granting him the interview from which much of the information in this article was derived.

SWIFT AND BOLD: AN APPRAISAL OF HOSTAGE RESCUE OPERATIONS

by David Charters

In the rush to judgement and print during the next few months the armchair strategists and instant historians of the American hostage rescue operation in Iran will find much to criticize. This is unavoidable; the story released thus far leaves many questions unanswered. Since, however, the operation was not carried through to conclusion and the complete plan has not been explained, it is worth introducing a note of caution; any analysis at this early stage is likely to be highly speculative. Above all, facile comparisons with obviously "successful" operations, such as Entebbe, are to be avoided. Nothing emerges more clearly from the historical record than the fact that in all hostage rescue operations, the

margin between success and failure is very slim indeed. By focussing on the components of success and failure, illustrated in two cases and reinforced by recent experience, this study will attempt to draw out the kind of lessons against which the American operation might be judged. It may be possible then to suggest some general guidelines for Canadian approaches to the hostage rescue problem.

Stanleyville¹

In August 1964, at the height of the civil war that marked the early years of Congolese (Zaire) independence, rebel forces of Christophe Gbenye captured the major town of Stanleyville. Initially, Americans, Belgians and other Europeans taken as prisoners were well treated, but as the fortunes of war turned against the rebels the non-Africans were harassed and threatened. Missionaries in outlying areas were raped and beaten. Early in November the rebels decided to treat all whites in Stanleyville, now numbering some 1300, as hostages in the bargaining for a cease fire (300 more were held at Paulis, about 250 miles northeast of Stanleyville). Negotiations started in Nairobi, Kenya under the auspices of Kenyan Prime Minister Jomo Kenyatta, but the discussions were one-sided. The rebels insisted that the hostages would be freed only if the Congo government's army stopped advancing on Stanleyville, which the rebels regarded as their capital. Moreover, Gbenye's control over his rebel forces, who called themselves "Simbas" (Lions), was clearly tenuous and as his anti-American rhetoric heated up, there was a very real danger that the hostages would be massacred.

On instructions from Washington, the American ambassador broke off negotiations. The American, British and Belgian governments agreed to cooperate in mounting an airborne rescue operation. Twelve U.S. Air Force C-130's and four C-124's air-lifted the Belgian *Regiment Para-Commando*, totalling 600 men, to the British airbase at Ascension Island in the South Atlantic, where the force was held in readiness while planning was completed. They were then flown to the airfield at Kamina, some 600 miles from Stanleyville; Kamina became the mounting base for the operation. Stanleyville possessed two airfields, only one of which was serviceable. Since rapid evacuation of the hostages would be essential, the airborne forces decided to capture the operational field.

At about 5:00 a.m., November 24, 300 paratroopers jumped from seven C-130's and quickly took control of the airfield. Twenty minutes later, the second wave of 235 soldiers landed in the aircraft, bringing with them a number of light vehicles.

The Simbas had seen the paradrop and began to collect, assemble and murder their hostages. Sixty died before the Belgian troops arrived and put a stop to the slaughter. The remaining hostages were evacuated by aircraft. Four hours after the paradrop, Congo government forces entered Stanleyville and gradually took control of the town. Two days later the Belgians jumped into Paulis and freed the remaining hostages. In the two rescue operations the Belgian force suffered three killed and ten wounded.

The Munich Olympics Incident²

At 4:20 a.m. on September 5, 1972, eight members of the Black September

terrorist organization penetrated the security perimeter of the Olympic Village and forced their way into the Israeli compound, killing two Israeli athletes and taking nine as hostages. Shortly thereafter, they made known their demands: the release of 100 Arabs held in Israeli jails and their transportation to Egypt, and safe passage to Egypt of the Olympic terrorist team. The terrorists indicated that if these demands were not met by 9:00 a.m., they would start killing hostages, two at a time. Specialists in international assassination and sabotage operations, the Black September terrorists were armed with machine guns and hand grenades.

Negotiations between the West German, Israeli and Egyptian governments were initiated, but proved fruitless: the Israeli government refused to capitulate to the terrorists' demands and the Egyptians refused to become involved. Unaware of the state of international negotiations, the terrorists were persuaded to extend their deadline four times, the last deadline being 9:00 p.m. The final Israeli rejection was not communicated to the terrorists. By late afternoon, it was clear that some form of rescue would have to be attempted.

During the day the police had established a command post a short distance from the hostage site and had cordoned off the immediate area around the compound. Covert surveillance was maintained and snipers and assault teams were moved into position. Early in the day, a Crisis Staff was formed at the Command Post, consisting of the Interior Minister of the West German Government, who was responsible for liaison with the foreign governments, the Minister of State for Bavaria, who exercised overall political and police responsibility for any action taken, and the Police President (Chief) of Munich, who was responsible for planning and executing any tactical action. Once it was decided that the hostages should be rescued, the Crisis Staff was confronted by the fact that none of the methods and locations for such an operation were satisfactory. Direct assault on the compound was ruled out immediately: the four storey housing complex afforded ample protection to the terrorists, who would be able to inflict casualties on both the hostages and the police during any assault. At 7:30 p.m. the Crisis Staff decided that the rescue attempt would be made when the terrorists and the hostages walked from the compound to the helipad, a distance of some 800 metres. It was recognized that the terrorists could not be shot without risk to the hostages. (A rescue at the Furstenfeldbruck air base was regarded as a secondary but unsatisfactory rescue plan. Although the airport apron provided clear fields of fire, there was little cover for sharpshooters and none at all for an assault team.)

When the terrorist leader saw the route his group would have to walk to reach the helicopters he changed his mind and demanded a bus to take them to the helipad. This, therefore, ruled out the primary rescue plan, leaving only the airport as a poor alternative. At the airport three snipers were positioned on the roof of the headquarters building, overlooking the apron, while two others were in covered positions beyond the apron, behind where the helicopters would land. An 18 man assault team, armed with pistols and positioned within the airliner on the apron, was withdrawn shortly before the helicopters arrived because the squad leader assessed the position to be tactically hazardous and his team insufficiently armed and trained. 290 policemen secured the headquarters build-

ing, which had become the new command post, and the airport perimeter. A further 24 officers and six armoured vehicles were on their way to the scene when the shooting began.

The helicopters carrying the terrorists and hostages arrived in darkness at 10:35 p.m. Two of the terrorists disembarked and walked down the floodlit apron to inspect the airliner. Ten minutes later, as they returned to the helicopters the police opened fire. The ensuing firefight lasted, with intermittent periods of shooting and silence, for about one hour, 25 minutes. During this time, all the hostages were killed, five of the terrorists were killed and three captured, one police officer was killed and two wounded.

Several factors contributed to the tragedy. The decision to withdraw the assault team, although understandable under the circumstances, left the police with no means of effecting a physical rescue of the hostages and no time to make revised plans. To rely, as they were forced to do, solely on shooting to rescue the hostages would have been very risky under the best of situations; as it was, the marksmen had not trained as a unit, and the two marksmen beyond the apron were not given specific fire orders — they were told simply to start shooting when they heard the other three open fire. Secondly, early in the firefight terrorist gunfire cut a communications cable. The control tower could transmit, but could not receive. The radio staff assumed, however, that they could do neither. Consequently, the extra 24-man unit was not called into action when it arrived on the scene. Furthermore, reserves moved from the Olympic Village and the Munich Commercial airport were delayed by crowds of curious onlookers who caused traffic jams on all roadways. There is some reason to believe that the crowds were caused by leaking of the plan to the news media. Finally, police units at the airport did not have firepower equal to that of the terrorists and, although the entire apron was well lit, no more than four terrorists were visible at any one time. The police marksmen failed to kill or disable all of them quickly and this gave the terrorists time to kill the hostages.

Issues and Lessons

One general comment might be made at the outset: the use of force should be regarded always as a last resort; by its very nature it places the lives of the hostages and the rescuers at grave risk, as even the successful Stanleyville operation clearly illustrates. This is not to suggest that governments should avoid the use of force to the extent that they confront terrorism with appeasement. Rather, all steps short of surrender should be attempted before violence is used. America's current preoccupation with the Iranian crisis may have obscured valuable lessons of the Bogatá hostage incident. In this case Colombian terrorists seized 56 diplomats and civilians representing 15 countries, releasing more than half this number before the final *dénouement*. The terrorists originally demanded the release of 311 "political prisoners" and a ransom of \$50 million, but after long, skilful and patient bargaining by officials they eventually exchanged their remaining prisoners for a smaller dollar ransom and a flight to Cuba. The technique of "talking down" hostage-takers in a low-key manner over a period of time has a high record of success in both the criminal and political arenas. The passage of time allows the perpetrators to develop a perspective on their situation. If they can be convinced, calmly and rationally, that there is

no other “honourable” way out, they may reduce their demands or abandon them altogether, surrendering themselves and releasing their hostages. Furthermore, the bargaining process may permit the hostage-takers to develop a rapport with their captives and with the authorities. Usually, the longer a siege goes on the harder it is for the perpetrators to kill their hostages. In short, talk and time saves lives.⁴

Of course, this does not always happen. At Stanleyville and at Entebbe the passage of time appeared to place the hostages at greater risk.⁵ In the recent incident at the Iranian embassy in London the terrorists started shooting their hostages after six days of apparently fruitful bargaining.⁶ The reasons for the failure of the “talk and time” formula in some cases will be the subject of a future article; what is important for this study is the principle that security forces should be prepared to effect a rescue as soon as the hostages are abused or threatened with immediate execution. Failure to act at this point may result in a tragedy.⁷ But the ability to carry out a successful rescue depends on a variety of factors; the principal ones are as follows:

1. **Intelligence** — “The product resulting from the collection, evaluation, analysis, integration and interpretation of all available information which concerns one or more aspects of foreign nations or of areas of operations and which is immediately or potentially significant to military planning and operations.”⁸ Accurate information on the background and motives of the hostage-takers, their physical and psychological state, as well as that of their captives, and on the physical/tactical layout of the incident site, is essential for briefing the rescue team and drafting an appropriate plan. Whenever possible, much of this information should be obtained before an incident occurs. Inadequate intelligence contributed to the failure of the American rescue mission to the Sontay Prisoner of War Camp in North Vietnam in 1970 and to the high cost in lives of the successful rescue of the SS Mayaguez and its crew from Cambodia in 1975.⁹ It is equally clear that good intelligence work was central to the successful rescue operation at the Iranian Embassy in London.¹⁰
2. **Contingency Planning** — The product of good intelligence work. Obviously, it is not possible to have separate plans to cover every eventuality, but once the likely threats have been assessed and targets anticipated, general response guidelines may be drafted. Once an incident begins, on-site “think tanks” can adapt contingency plans to the peculiar circumstances of the specific incident, based on the information acquired at the time.¹¹ The experience of operations at Stanleyville, Entebbe, Mogadishu¹² and Kolwezi¹³ suggests that a successful plan is based on speed, surprise and simplicity. The longer it takes to reach the hostages the more likely are casualties to result. A complex plan leaves more things to go wrong; the army maxim to “Keep It Simple, Stupid” contains more than a grain of wisdom. The confusion surrounding the rescue operation at Munich suggests a lack of contingency planning.
3. **Trained Units** — Rescue operations demand superb skill, fitness, high motivation, split-second timing, cool judgement and teamwork — the

products of constant individual and unit training to a high standard. A unit honed to the standards of the British Special Air Services Regiment cannot be created overnight from hastily assembled volunteers of diverse organizational and training backgrounds,¹⁴ nor will it result from part-time service and training. Furthermore, a rescue force should be equipped with the highest quality weapons, vehicles and kit — it is an expensive venture. But again, one need only compare the German operations at Munich and Mogadishu to appreciate the consequences of poor training and the wisdom of investing time and money in the creation of a high quality force.

4. **Command, Control and Coordination of Forces** — The need for speed, surprise, simplicity, as well as timing and teamwork, in the execution of a rescue plan requires clear dissemination of instructions and orders to all personnel and units involved. This, in turn, demands reliable, secure communications and, above all, a clear chain of command from a single designated and recognized operation commander. Weaknesses in these critical areas were evident at Munich, where communications failed at a critical moment; in the Mayaguez incident, where there is some evidence to show that the President and his advisers attempted to influence the tactical direction of the operation,¹⁵ and in the disastrous Egyptian rescue attempt at Larnaca, Cyprus, 1978. In the latter case it appears that the Egyptian rescue force failed to clear and coordinate its actions with the Cypriot government, which had already talked the hostage-takers into surrender. Fifteen Egyptian commandos died in the ensuing firefight between the Egyptians and the Cypriot National Guard.¹⁶
5. Finally, there is one immeasurable factor present in all rescue operations, successful or otherwise — luck. It is something soldiers swear by and it cannot be dismissed lightly. It may be fair to suggest, however, that luck follows those who have developed a sound intelligence base, an appropriate plan, a superb training program and proper command and control. Preliminary reports leaked from the official inquiry into the Iran rescue mission seem to indicate that the “bad luck” which plagued the operation was due at least in part to poor planning, command and control.¹⁷

The Canadian Dimension

Canada has been spared the ravages of international terrorism of recent years and has not been threatened seriously by internal political violence since 1970. One need not be a pessimist to assume that such pristine security may not last long into the present decade. The casualties from international terrorism mount annually¹⁸ and the use of this form of conflict for surrogate warfare between states injects a new element of uncertainty into the international political equation.¹⁹ The Canadian Government and its security forces must address seriously and soon the question of Canada's preparedness to respond to politically-motivated hostage incidents. In many cases, the ability to negotiate may be sufficient; there is ample evidence to show that this task is taken seriously by police forces at all levels. But if negotiations fail, can we be sure that a rescue force which meets the criteria outlined above, will be available at the right place at the right time?

This author advocates the creation of one or more National Response Teams with appropriate supporting services. The journal will return to this subject in a later issue.

Footnotes

1. Maurice Tugwell, *Airborne to Battle: A History of Airborne Warfare 1918-1971* (London, 1971), pp. 314-15; *Time*, 4 Dec. 1964.
2. Dr. Manfred Schreiber, "After Action Report of Terrorist Activities, 20th Olympic Games, Munich, West Germany", September, 1972; Arthur B. Fulton, "Counter-measures to Combat Terrorism at Major Events", U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., 1976, pp. 1-20; Bard E. O'Neill, *Armed Struggle in Palestine: A Political-Military Analysis* (Boulder, Colo., 1978), pp. 87, 151-52.
3. *Time*, 5 May 1980.
4. Abraham H. Miller, "Negotiations for Hostages: Implications from the Police Experience", *Terrorism: An International Journal*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1978), pp. 133, 135-36, 142-43.
5. In the Entebbe case, the separation of Jews from the remaining hostages, who were released early, raised Israeli fears that the terrorists were preparing the Jews for some kind of violent treatment.
6. *The Economist*, 10 May 1980.
7. At the siege of the German Embassy in Stockholm in 1975, Swedish Police did not attempt a rescue operation even after the terrorists had executed two hostages. They were still planning to flush them out with gas when a terrorist bomb exploded accidentally killing most of the terrorists and injuring all of the remaining hostages. Sven Thorander, "Terrorist Attack Against the German Embassy in Stockholm on April 24, 1975", *International Criminal Police Review*, no. 307 (April, 1977), pp. 102-10.
8. *Jane's Dictionary of Military Terms*, comp. by Brigadier P.H.C. Hayward (London, 1975), p. 88.
9. Lieutenant-Colonel Peter A. Kelly, "Raids and National Command-Mutually Exclusive!", *Military Review*, vol. 60, no. 4 (April, 1980), pp. 22-23. The Mayaguez rescue mission cost the lives of 15 servicemen. Three more were missing in action and 50 wounded. In addition, 23 were killed when their helicopter crashed after take off during an earlier attempt to rescue the ship and its crew.
10. *Newsweek*, 19 May 1980.
11. Donald F. Cawley, "The Williamsburg Incident — Anatomy of a Siege", *Police Chief* (January, 1974), pp. 33-34.
12. German commandos of the GSG9 anti-terrorist unit rescued hostages held on a German airliner at Mogadishu, Somalia in October 1977.
13. In a virtual echo of the Stanleyville operation, French and Belgian paratroops landed at Kolwezi, Zaire in May 1978 to rescue some 3,000 Europeans held by Katangan rebels.
14. The GSG9 force, for example, draws its recruits from the police and the federal border guard, and puts them through a rigorous seven and one-half months basic and specialist training. Udo Philipp, "Combatting Terrorism in Federal Germany", *International Defense Review*, no. 6 (1979), p. 1001.
15. Kelly, "Raids and National Command", pp. 25-26.
16. H.H.A. Cooper, "Hostage Rescue Operations: Dénouement at Algeria and Mogadishu Compared", *Chitty's Law Journal*, vol. 26, no. 3 (1978), pp. 102-3; see also *Time*, 6 March 1978.

17. *Toronto Star*, 6 June 1980.

18. Data provided by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency indicates that casualties from international terrorism were 68% higher in 1979 than in the previous year.

19. Gerald Holton, "Reflections on Modern Terrorism", *Terrorism: An International Journal*, vol. 1, no.'s 3, 4 (1978), p. 266.

THE NEW McCARTHYISM

by Maurice Tugwell

Canadians would do well to ponder the injustice they may be inflicting on fellow citizens, and the damage they may be doing to their future security, by the apparently never-ending investigation of RCMP alleged wrongdoings.¹ Close and efficient political control over covert security service activities is essential in any country, particularly a liberal democracy. Failure in this area manifestly occurred in Canada in the early years of the last decade. Anyone with the briefest experience of responsibility knows that when a system fails, and when the consequences are serious, the blame rests squarely on the shoulders of the most senior individual involved. The facts that no politician accepted responsibility for this failure of leadership, and that instead the blame has been shifted down the chain of command to the men who are least able to protect themselves say something unpleasant about contemporary political morality.

The human consequences were dramatically illustrated this May by the suicide of a 30-year veteran of the RCMP immediately after he had testified before the McDonald Commission.² This was the second such incident within months. Whatever errors of judgement certain individuals may have made — and, on the face of it, there were some big errors — these men acted in accordance with their understanding of their orders to protect the country from subversives, terrorists and spies. Although by the illegal style of some operations the security men may have damaged the values they were supposed to be protecting, no one has questioned the sincerity of their motives. The RCMP has undergone month upon month of "trial by commission" before the provincial (Keable) and federal (McDonald) Royal Commissions,³ and this has been amplified and dramatized by the concurrent "trial by media". Commissions may provide a good means of uncovering facts: they are, however, poor guardians of the rights and reputations of their witnesses. If the RCMP witnesses had in fact been suspected subversives or terrorists, and we had kept them in suspense, exposed to questioning and public vilification for more than two years, without charge or trial, the hue and cry from liberal Canada would have been deafening. Apparently we see no need to bother our consciences over injustice that only affects law officers.⁴

This at least seems to be the opinion of Mr. David Lewis, a member of a delegation representing the Canadian Civil Liberties Association which on May 14 presented the Solicitor General, Mr Robert Kaplan, with a 15,000-name peti-