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THE BUCKS START HERE

by RICH ORMBREK

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Senior-level emergency management people were on their way to the crime/terrorism site in northeast Wyoming. They were members of FEMA's Incident Management Assistance Team for Region Eight. The Wyoming National Guard's 84th Civil Support Team (CST) had already arrived from Cheyenne. The CST was Hazmat certified for chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear incidents. They had brought a mobile laboratory and decontamination equipment. Some had secured the area next to Black & White Road, others had gone to Clark to check for radiation contaminated people, livestock, and property.

A call to FEMA Denver, concerned the overall manager enough to alert other FEMA regions, who thereupon decided to send people to Wyoming for assessments. An 84th CST 1st Sergeant had told Denver, "These were real stupid dumpers. They left the packaging which showed where the waste had originated. Still, there was sophistication in the use of the missile which crashed here, but there were no radiation nor chemical residues burnt into the metal debris. The pieces only had coverings blown across them by the wind."

These were startling facts. The first pointed to a routine jealousy to get a waste disposer fired. But overall it could herald terrorists' penchant to publicize their infamous achievements – recruiting. FEMA had advised Homeland Security, which issued a No – Fly Zone above the site. An agent said, "No damn news helicopters – all we need is a Columbine guy reporting which doors the swat team is at, with the two killers taking a popcorn break watching air coverage on local TV. No one but the 84th CST and pertinent Federal officials were now allowed near the site."

The Homeland Security order was a little late. An ambitious reporter from Bridger had already secured a small Sesna to overfly the scene. He had covered all the medical debris, two generators and, with a very low pass, excellent definition of the crater and missile

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remnants. The evening newspaper was a value in notifying people to avoid the area, but the photos, which would win them a Pulitzer Prize, were worrisome to the authorities. Terrorists were reliant on photographic accounts; only auditory screams by someone whose head was being cut off surpassed the Kodak moment.

Reporter Roland Fitch had noticed something on the first low pass and requested one more. As the plane circled around, Roland loaded a new camera card in for a special image he would keep. He intended to ride a surfboard of sensationalism to a large paper on the West Coast.

A Belfry reporter was too late. The 84th Air National Guard was then on the scene with planes and helicopters far enough away not to stir up trouble or allow the curious to do likewise. The Belfry reporter was relegated to take an image of Lovers Ln in town, with a cryptic story of an increased glow, worthy of Kirlian photography.

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With the press patrolling every security site in Cheyenne, agency heads met at a place whose name automatically drew press coverage on the east coast. No press was at Cheyenne's Hampton Inn. The meeting room was spacious but, of course, unsecured. Before introductions were made, a machine was turned on which blocked out any ambient transmission. Local participants: Homeland Security, FEMA, and the FBI welcomed the director of the NSA Data Center from Bluffdale, Utah. Also present were host agency associates from various regions of the nation. The EPA, which always did a fine job, was absent - as were the guilty people, company, corporation, or nation which drew the assembled. The Wyoming governor had ceded authority of Homeland Security to the wider range which included four states now, hence the FBI. He had concurred the 84th CST should only secure the two blocked sites, the contaminated area and abandoned trucks. With all the wild rumors, the FBI needed all the time required to arrive at a factually-believable investigation. Consequently, CST would continue to monitor and modify at the town of Clark.

A long rectangular table was surrounded by twelve chairs and, since the assembly exceeded that number, no one would take a chair. A few sat in the casually arranged chairs against the outer edges of the room. But since 911, no one was willing to suggest *walls* - which greatly aided the enmity of that day.

"What the hell is going on here?" An Indiana Homeland Security man asked, breaking the non-protocol ice.

The local Homeland Security person advised, "Let's let the FEMA Incident Commander start this off, then others can add what is known so far. ... Vala."

Vala moved to the center of the room and turned ever so often, making eye contact with everyone in the room, "FEMA, Region Eight, received a call three nights ago from a Park County Sheriff

from Cody asking about a FEMA relief team. It seems people impersonating a FEMA group were blocking roads near a low-level radioactive contaminated crash scene. They were asking local law enforcement to set up roadblocks, which three did. After several hours the sheriff from Cody called for the promised relief team. He then sent out his Cody Fire Department in Hazmat suits to check the site. They found contamination, but no impersonators. They went to the nearest town to quarantine it with the help of the Clark Police Department.”

Vala coughed and walked to the table to drink some water - she resumed, “We contacted our CST unit here with the 84th. They took over the contaminated area and manned the road blocks. The CST also located several side dumping trucks with the same contamination levels on a remote road in the area.”

FEMA, Region Four, asked, “You mean they just left several hundred thousand dollars worth of trucks?”

“And a train engine with two cars,” the Regional FBI Director advised.

The assembled all turned to look at the director. The Home Security agent from Missouri asked, “I thought the days of train robberies were passé.”

“Leased.” Eyes returned to the director, “A foreign government was using them to teach their workers how to load cars and repair locomotives.”

“You bought that?” An incredulous agency director asked.

The FBI man cocked his head, “We wanted to see where it would lead us – wire taps, sensors on the spur tracks.”

“Then why do you think -”

“When we were alerted to the contamination, we got a warrant to check on the train, in case this incident was a diversion. No one was there, the two train cars had traces of similar contamination.”

“Where,” another regional head asked, “did the contaminated wastes originate from?”

“A truck from a processing site in Canon City, Colorado on its way to the Clive, Utah disposal site was hijacked,” the Colorado FBI Chief advised.

“Have we no Amber alerts for such an event?”

The Colorado FBI man smiled wryly, “The driver was hit with a tranquilizer. He and his empty truck were hidden out of sight. When he awoke and reported the incident, those involved were long gone.”

FEMA, Region Two, asked, “Someone is going to a lot of trouble. Hardly the calling card of a terrorist’s lifetime achievement award!”

“That’s right, the terrorists we’d expect would want weapons grade nuclear wastes and head for L.A. or Vegas.”

The Director of FEMA, Region Nine, shook his head, “Too heavy. A crane would be too obvious.”

Ohio’s Homeland Security Director asked, “What’s the end game here? A tranquilized man, then dangerous cargo dumped in an obscure place?”

With varying outwards signs of body English, the Cheyenne department heads knew why he was not in the diplomatic corps.

The Director of the NSA Data Center now showed his worth, “We collect patterns. When something is so out of phase, it points to something else. Not harm from the event, but harm from the reaction to the event. ... What’s worse: fake news of real events, or real news of fake events?”



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