

The United States is yet again in grave danger. An Islamic Jihadist, Abdullah-ibn-Khan, who is also a nuclear Physicist, is planning to detonate a dirty bomb on US soil. The team must travel the world to stop him, but first find him.

The Apostate

By Henry H. G. Mungle

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THE APOSTATE

DEFENSE
INTEL

HENRY H. G. MUNGLE

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About the Author

Henry H. G. Mungle is a highly decorated Vietnam combat veteran after multiple tours and has been awarded the Silver Star, Purple Heart, and Legion of Merit and several Intelligence medals. He retired from the US Army Criminal Investigations Command as a Chief Warrant Officer. A retired federal law enforcement supervisory special agent and polygraph examiner working for the Department of Defense IG (Tailhook Investigation), and US Customs (Office of Professional Responsibility), as well as the Central Intelligence Agency and Defense Intelligence Agency. He has served in Iraq and Afghanistan and a host of other countries throughout his 47-year career. He completed a Bachelor of Science in Psychology at The State University of New York, Albany, and a Master of Science in Criminal Justice at The George Washington University, Washington, D.C. He is retired and lives in Arizona with his wife.

CHAPTER SIX: **A Border Village in Pakistan**

* * *

The deadly group of men moved along the ravine of a small canyon. The narrow defile took them to their objective, still 5 kilometers out. The team dropped at the landing zone by two MH-6G Pave Hawk helicopters far from the target to avoid detection. The ancient Chinese had a saying that described skillful warriors as swift with precision, and their force derived from releasing a trigger like the force of a catapult. These men were of such caliber.

Operational Detachment Alpha-647 was an exceptionally skilled Special Forces team trained for precisely this mission, thrust upon them by events. Detachment leader and commanding officer, Captain Joe Miller, expected his team to operate as one large weapon that can be highly destructive, if needed, and just as quiet when called for in any given situation. All his men were highly qualified professionals with skillsets for peacetime or war and were all melded into one, moving quickly and quietly through the darkness.

Several sources had initially produced actionable intelligence. A DIA polygraph examination then vetted the information to verify the story, and the internal directorate, known as J2X, authorized the mission. Their mission was to find, capture, if possible, or kill the targets. In this case, the targets were a group of five or six men, all experienced bomb makers who had managed to avoid capture repeatedly by special operations.

The last attempt was by a SEAL Team, and the bomb makers evaded them by leaving their secured positions a day ahead of the raid. Command believed that one of the assets might have warned the bomb makers. A quick go for action was issued, backed by another spy; the information looked compelling. Abu Omar did not know that several intelligence agencies were tracking him. Verifying his operational information and location through debriefings followed by polygraph

supported his intelligence as being correct. The polygraph results also confirmed the team was not walking into an ambush.

Captain Miller and his team fully briefed before departure from their forward operating base, Snow Leopard, outside of Kandahar, Afghanistan, knew actionable intelligence has a short window for tactical forces to respond. The US Special Operations Command analyzed information in this environment, making decisions within hours to move forward to a target. Accordingly, they flew north along the mountains to engage their assigned target in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region.

As ODA-647 approached the small village, they slowed their pace and then stopped making sure their night optical devices or NOD's were fully charged and in place. The soldiers rechecked their ammunition pouches and any backup weapons such as a knife or handgun and medical supplies.

This brief check served two purposes, a moment of rest and a moment to focus on each team member's objective. Each man knew this action could turn highly violent in the first minute of contact. Their primary aim was to capture these terrorists alive. No matter which way it unfolded, the team prepared to function by deadly brute force.

If they were extremely fortunate, they could capture all the targets sleeping, and subdue them by sheer force, if they were not expecting any Americans.

Captain Miller whispered into his comms, "Sergeant Hart, move your men to the alpha point near the southeast side of the village and eliminate any sentries." Sergeant Hart moved with his three-man team; all had suppressors on their weapons held in the ready position as they advanced. They split left and right as they approached the village edge and, within 50 meters, stopped spotting a sentry.

Sergeant Hart whispered in his comms to his teammate, "Kill the sentry." Without another word, one of the men moved forward slowly and deliberately. Darkness still covered his movement on this moonless night. Tim stalked the actions of the sentry just long enough to get a

sense of his slow-moving direction. Since the sentry was moving toward the SF soldier, he waited silently. The sentry approached within 20 meters of the SF trooper, and the slight pop from a silenced weapon announced his death.

Without hesitation, the advance team moved quickly to the side of the hut containing the bomb makers. Sergeant Hart whispered, "Alpha point is secure." The rest of ODA-647 moved to the mud hut, leaving a sniper and spotter overlooking the building from a small hill allowing the sniper team to see clearly down the village's only street.

Inside the hut were six men. It was quiet. The only noise heard was the faint sounds of sleeping men with an occasional movement. The little light in the room, fueled by a lamp, was running low on whatever energy fueled the fire.

Captain Miller spoke quietly to his sniper, "Any movement near us?"

"No," came the response.

Captain Miller said, "Check the door to see if it is locked." Quietly, one of the team members reached up and tried the door. It was unlocked. Captain Miller gave the team a hand signal to form on him as they prepared to enter the hut.

Captain Miller was the first one through the door and moved left out of the way of the next man, who stepped right, and the third man walked straight into the sleeping men. The entry was intentionally loud and fast to disorientate. The fourth man into the room was Sergeant Hart, who headed straight for the furthest sleeping man, trying to close the distance to prevent him from raising his rifle, an AK-47, into action. The weapon went off, hitting Sergeant Hart in the left arm. He returned fire with his silenced M-4 striking the terrorist in the mouth. The AK-47 awakened the rest of the village, and as expected, lights started to come on.

The sniper watched and prepared to engage anyone with a weapon. The rest of the team members fell upon the remaining sleeping

terrorists pinning them to the ground. One fought back with a knife stabbing one of the Green Berets in the leg. The terrorist was not so lucky as the trooper who engaged him; the terrorist died with a gagging sound; the trooper's knife stuck in his throat.

Four terrorist bomb makers were still alive, and two ODA-647 troopers were wounded. Captain Miller ordered the men to set up a secure perimeter around the house. He asked for his sniper to give a situation report or SITREP and then commanded his intelligence officer, Chief Warrant Officer Taylor, "get busy!"

The sniper called in a SITREP to the Captain of several people looking around down the village street, and so far, no one was armed. The entire team was on the alert to all movement. Most villagers stood and looked at the heavily armed Americans they barely could see and did not approach them.

CWO Taylor, an exceptionally skilled interrogator, needed to quickly learn if any of these men were the long-sought-after bomb makers that had been killing and wounding US and allied forces throughout Afghanistan. CWO Taylor also could speak Pashto, at least to a degree, to make himself understood.

The first terrorist looked like the one described in an intelligence report and was pulled immediately into another room where CWO Taylor and Master Sergeant Danny Lopez questioned him.

Lopez's dark complexion and an elongated scar along his right side of his face from a hunting accident many years previously, and his single gold front tooth exposed when he smiled, gave him a menacing look. Lopez was a very intimidating soldier who seemed to take up most of the small room space. Perfect Taylor thought. The visual aspect of this was what they needed for a short and productive interrogation. Lopez pulled out a long knife, sat in the corner with a sharpening stone, and slowly sharpened his blade while staring at the terrorist.

Wasting no time, Taylor spoke in English, "What is your name? What can I call you?"

His interpreter presented the question directly to the terrorist. No answer.

Taylor stated, "I will ask once more than my friend with the knife will be asking." The terrorist looked at Lopez before the question could be translated, thus giving away the fact, he understood English. The translator repeated the question anyway.

The terrorist replied, "Ahmad Durrani, and you will die for the violation of this village," speaking perfect English with a slight British accent.

Taylor and Lopez looked at each other, and both smiled. Taylor responded, "Right, and you will also die if we choose this as our best course of action."

Taylor asked, "Ahmad, we do not have time for the niceties of your tradition of tea and cookies, bringing me right to the point of this forced meeting. You make bombs, and you and your men are responsible for killing many Muslims, Americans, and other allied forces. There is no doubt you have the expertise to make and fashion weapons of destruction. We have known of you for several years; it's no accident we are here. As we speak, other forces are entering your home in Lahore and seizing your family for a thorough interrogation." Taylor monitored Ahmad's reaction.

Ahmad gave Taylor a stern look. To add to the pressure, Taylor informed, "We also plan on removing your sons to a different area of the country, and you should count on them gone for many years." Ahmed's eyes started to water, and his rage grew. Taylor and Lopez patiently waited on him to fully grasp his predicament. Then Taylor spoke. "Your chances of seeing your family again will increase with your cooperation, and it will decrease with your silence. Your chances will increase with your truthfulness and decrease with each lie."

Taylor knew he would get nowhere with physical abuse or threatening to kill Ahmed since he expected to die anyway. Psychological pressure and manipulation were so much better than physicality to extract information. It is a game played with sincerity

and strength, and it must have consequences. With the help of analysis, Taylor and Lopez had studied Ahmed's profile and noted his Achilles heel was both of his sons.

Telling Ahmed information about his family, life, and friends' locations substantially impacted how Ahmed handled his betrayal to the Islamic fight.

In the other room, Miller's team pulled all the documents and laptops together, getting them ready to be carried to the extraction point. CWO Talbot was the team's physician's assistant. A super medic could perform medical procedures anywhere in the field, including some operations that doctors typically perform.

Talbot went to work at once. Hart's wound showed a bullet had passed straight through his upper arm. Talbot examined the wound because it was an AK-47 round that typically leaves about a 25cm path of minimal tissue disruption. Some muscle damage and tearing occurred, but he would survive.

Talbot said, "Hart, you will live, and the wound is not as bad as it looks."

He stopped the bleeding with a powdered substance known as a quick clot and applied a dry dressing to help prevent the narrowing of arterial blood flow associated with ischemia. He then cleaned and treated for infection with an antibiotic.

Another teammate was attending the trooper with the knife wounds to ensure the leg wound had not severed an artery. Talbot immediately irrigated and debrided the injury with clear sterile saline to prevent infection and started an antibiotic of cephalosporin via IV. No artery damage or leakage was detected. He wrapped dry bandages around his wound. He would be able to walk short distances, with help, to the extraction or exfil point.

Talbot would go into the surgery room to assist the doctors when they returned to the base camp. His team knew this about him. It

provided a certain level of comfort to the wounded, knowing they were in good hands.

The dead terrorists were photographed, searched, and discarded. The remaining three terrorists in the room underwent a search, and plastic handcuffs placed over their hands behind their backs and a burlap bag placed over their heads completed the necessary security steps to transport them to the exfil location. One terrorist was so scared he was visibly shaking and throwing up. The other two just sat there on the floor.

Taylor left the room and pulled Miller aside.

“Sir, I confirmed the guy in the room is Ahmed, and he does speak fluent English. Our ploy worked as he gave up the others as bomb makers. These are our guys, no doubt. Also, he is holding something back that we need but refuses to explain it. I think it is his big bargaining chip for his sons, but I am not sure. Whatever it is, it’s crucial to him. He tried to bargain with me asking us to leave him behind.”

Miller said, “No way, he is going with us. Let’s keep him interested in his sons. Do the other three understand English?”

Taylor shook his head, “No”.

Miller checked with his sniper. “All clear, boss,” came the reply.

Taylor re-entered the room and placed plastic handcuffs on Ahmed’s wrists, a burlap bag on his head, and stood him up. Taylor gave him a stern warning about talking to anyone but him, as it would cancel his deal and his son’s whereabouts. He was then guided into the other room.

Miller instructed the security element outside of the hut, “Each man take one of these guys, keep them upright, moving and no talking. We are heading 220 degrees southwest to exaction point Bravo and wait there for the exfil.” He then instructed his communications NCO to contact Snow Leopard for exfiltration from the Bravo point and tell

them they had four Tango's in custody and two wounded in action to transport.

Three exfiltration points predetermined operational decisions and needs. Bravo was the closest with two wounded men and four prisoners of war. With their POWs and one interpreter in tow, the twelve-man Special Forces team moved out two hours after entering the village. Miller's team had managed to eliminate five bomb makers and one technical guy, killed by Hart, who was sitting on laptops full of intelligence.

The team arrived at the exfil site without incident, security was set up, adjusted their NOD's and separated the prisoners. The entire group sat in complete silence in the dark.

The stars in this part of the world blanketed the sky from horizon to horizon but offered no light; it was ink-black, Miller noted. Without the NOD's, you couldn't see anything, not even your hand in front of your face. In the distance, the low thumping of the MH-6G's coming for extraction was heard. No navigation lights, and suddenly, the helicopters were there and set down. As the doors opened, the interior red glow was visible, and all ODA-647 with their prisoners boarded in a matter of seconds, lifting off, returning to Snow Leopard.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: **HALO Over Serekhs, Turkmenistan**

* * *

Sergeant First Class Bradley Lee, ODA-647, his oxygen mask in place, stood on the lowered ramp of the C-17, flying at 31,000 feet. His faceplate firmly down on his helmet made sure his oxygen was flowing correctly. His M110 sniper rifle broke down, with the attached scope and suppressor securely tucked away tight against the left side of his body.

Lee's rifle was snug against his body by the D ring of his reserve chute, yet out of the way of his parachute so it would not interfere with the opening. His attention was riveted on the lights located on the inside of the aircraft to his immediate right. He watched a yellow bulb burning brightly in the darkness. He waited on the bulb beneath the yellow one to light up green. All he could hear was the roar of the jet engines. A momentary glance at the jumpmaster, also wearing an oxygen mask, gave him three fingers up, signaling he has three minutes until he steps into the dark void.

As Lee waited, he contemplated his Chinese ancestors. Warriors of remarkable skill and stamina steadfast in their purpose. Cautious yet dangerous as they focused on their mission, the horde traveled from one hazardous land to another. He had resolved to honor this tradition with his heritage by joining the best of America's special operations.

One finger and then the jumpmaster pointed at him, thumbs up, and the light turned green. Sergeant Lee shuffled toward the darkness, and with no hesitation, went over the edge of the ramp into free-fall, heading to earth at a terminal velocity of 180 to 200 mph. Lee smoothly transitioned his body into the classic Delta shape, bending his head and chin down against his chest to avoid the force of the wind snapping his neck, the cold air biting his face, pushing it out of shape.

Quickly knifing through the night sky with air buffeting his body, his wrist altimeter continued to glow red and green, indicating his

elevation has just reached 20,000 feet. However, the height counts down feet per second, which showed his free fall was too fast. His GPS also indicated a slight course correction to the left was needed. Spread eagle slowing his descent, he slightly pivoted his body, affecting the necessary course correction, then returned to a Delta position picking up speed.

At 2500 feet, slightly below mission dictated SOP, Sergeant Lee deployed his MC-4 Ram Air parachute; at the count of four, Lee looked up to make sure his chute was correctly deployed. Observing the horizon to judge his descent, he confirmed the accuracy of his GPS coordinates of the landing zone.

In the distance, he saw lights from towns in Iran, assuring the location of the border. As he landed, he quickly collapsed his chute, dug a shallow hole, and buried it, adjusted his equipment. He assembled his sniper rifle screwing on the suppressor. His GPS reflected he must move slightly to the west and then straight to the low-lying hills in front of him. He pulled his night optical device down beginning his short hike.

Lee reached his destination at the crest of the hill, set up his comms, and called, “Nighthawk seven-zero, this is Rocker two-two, in position.”

“Roger Rocker two-two.”

Then silence, under the night sky, his only companion the stars above. Lee did a time check, 0045 hours, sitting back under the dome of darkness.

* * *

The C-130 landed at the K2 base in Uzbekistan. All the men loaded onto trucks and were immediately driven to a secured building on the airbase to begin their final preparations for insertion into Turkmenistan.

Jack listened to the ongoing conversation but did not ask questions or interrupt since he was an outsider to the team.

Captain Miller gave final instructions to Sergeant Lopez, “Danny, if something goes wrong on this mission, make sure we can get air cover for our extraction.”

“Got it already covered, boss. I made arrangements coordinating with the Air Force Combat Controller on K2 before we left Kandahar for extraction and air cover if needed.”

“Jack let’s see your pack again. I want to see your 9 mm, so I can switch out barrels for a silencer.”

“Right here, Captain,” as Jack cleared and handed him the weapon.

Jack watched the Captain disengage the slide on the weapon removing it, and then pulled the barrel out, handing it back to him. Then the Captain placed a barrel with threading on the front for a silencer, inserted it into the weapon, replacing the slide into the receiver, locking it in.

“Here is the silencer for your weapon.” Captain Miller said, handing the long black cylinder to Jack. “Screw it onto the barrel, finger tight only. You will find the weapon slightly heavy on the front end, causing you to fire before adjusting your aiming point up to hit your target. Just keep that in mind.”

“Got it. Fired weapons before with suppressors, and you're right; it takes a moment to adjust to the weight.” Jack replied.

Miller said, “Gather around men. Let’s do this check one more time. Jack and Chief Taylor will walk together into the village first. Staff Sergeant Tim Conyers, the team's heavy weapons NCO, and CWO Billy “Doc” Talbot will be the second team. I will be with the signals and communications specialist, Sergeant Bud Thomas, as team three. Chief Taylor, it is up to you and Jack to blaze a trail into the town without arousing anyone’s interest.”

“Describe the safe house again,” Conyers asked.

Taylor once again went through the description, “We are aware there aren’t any street addresses, and the house looks ordinary, with one

distinction. The house is gray with red-colored brick about 6 feet up from the foundation, just to the main entrance's right. Since it will be dark, the house color is not relevant. Your best clue to finding the house will be looking for the red colored brick to the right of the entrance. Also, according to our contacts, the door is unlocked.”

Captain Miller added, “Get inside as fast as possible, do not turn on interior lights. We’ll wait in the darkness until the sun comes up.” Miller looked around at each man asking, “Any other questions?” Scanning the men, “OK, saddle up, and let’s get to the chopper.” All the men grabbed their rucksacks and equipment moving in silence to the vehicle waiting outside. Jack placed his handgun in his ruck as it was now too long to fit any holster.

Within minutes they rolled onto the tarmac and were dropped near an MH-60 Blackhawk designated for the mission with reduced noise baffles to fly for purposes of this nature. Each man found a position on the floor, hooking into the cargo straps attached to the floor rings bolted of the Blackhawk for the 55-minute ride to the landing zone.

The crew chief moved next to Captain Miller yelling as the engine noise steadily increased, “We’re flying the nap of the earth; it is going to be a roller coaster ride.” Captain Miller gave a thumbs up.

Miller bent over and yelled something to Taylor, who, in turn, told Jack, “Hold onto your butt, we are riding the nap of the earth, a real roller coaster ride.” Jack thought, oh shit, we are hugging the curvature of the terrain as the rotors picked up speed, and the whine of the engines drowned out any further conversation.

The MH-60G Pave Hawk rolled down the tarmac for 300 yards then lifted, dropping its nose, as it picked up speed and altitude. Just outside of the lights of K2, Jack observed the pilots pull their NOD’s down, shutting off all lights in and outside the helicopter. Jack saw the shadow of some low mountains coming into view. The Blackhawk lifted and dropped over the hill. When he looked out the door, he barely made out what appeared to be trees screaming by, just under the belly of the

helicopter. Jack's first thought was, "*Hope there are no power lines out there.*"

After 45 minutes, the engines' tone changed to a muffled sound, and the noise was significantly reduced. Just like jump school, the Captain raised his hand, gave the signal, 5 minutes! All the Green Berets locked and loaded their weapons, putting them on safety. Jack pulled his from his ruck doing the same.

The Black Hawk made one final swooping up and over the hill, then a belly dropping dive into a shallow valley heading straight for another mountain. All the men unfastened their harnesses grabbing onto their rucksacks. Jack knew the routine as this action was all too familiar from his tours in Vietnam.

Just as the helicopter touched down, all the passengers immediately jumped out, headed in a straight line away from the aircraft's side. Within moments the helicopter lifted off and disappeared into the darkness. Silence descended on the small group.

"Rocker two-two, this is Rocker six, over." Captain Miller whispered into his comms.

"Rocker six, I have you directly east of my location and identify seven targets."

"Rocker two-two, there should only be six, over." Miller looked around immediately, adjusting his NOD's.

Sergeant Lee stated, "Roger, Rocker six. Target seven is about 100 yards east of your location. Target seven showed up about one hour ago. I have target seven in my crosshairs waiting on your go signal."

"Stand by," Miller ordered Conyers and Talbot. "100 yards," as he pointed east, "one unknown, find him, Lee has him in his crosshairs." Both men adjusted their NOD's and moved off.

Miller turned to the other men and gave an arm signal to lay down and hold the position.

A few moments later, the comms crackled, “Rocker six, we have the individual. He is wounded, need you here at once, Talbot is working on him.”

Miller instructed his men to hold a position and trotted to Conyers and Talbot. “What do we have?” Miller asked.

Talbot explained, “Gunshot to the chest. He has a sucking chest wound; I think I have him stable for the moment. He wants to tell us something.”

Miller crawled over to the wounded man and identified himself, “Who are you, and what do you want to tell me?”

Whispering and struggling to get his words out, “I am Fahad, Iran Resistance Group Three, your mission may be compromised. Iran's intelligence killed my team. I escaped.”

“Has the safe house location been compromised?”

“I do not think so; everyone is dead.” Fahad started coughing up blood and struggled to breathe. Then he stopped moving.

“He is gone, boss,” Talbot declared.

“Take his weapon and search him and remove any papers he has on him. Cover him with brush and get back to the LZ.”

“Roger that,” Talbot replied.

Miller headed back to the LZ, and several moments later, the team assembled in a circle around Captain Miller. Miller had already explained the problem to Jack, Taylor, and Lee. Everyone opined the mission was too important to stop. Miller mulled over his decision and ordered, “Taylor and Jack go to the safe house. We will follow in 30 minutes.”

“Rocker two-two, this is Rocker six. The mission is a go. Watch this area until tomorrow night and then leave for extraction point at grid 337255944.”

“Rocker six this is Rocker two-two, affirmative.”

* * *

Jack started across the valley with Taylor, their NOD’s on, and their weapons secured. Jack followed Taylor at a brisk walk. Aside from their NOD’s only the stars showed some light. In a matter of three hours, it will start to be light as the sun peaks up from the east.

The village eerily quiet as they approached the house. The streets were empty. Taylor pulled a small flashlight out to illuminate the door. The light exposed the red brick. Immediately Taylor turned off the light. The house looked like the one they needed to locate.

Taylor reached the door first, trying the handle. They quietly moved inside, shutting the door and conducting a room-by-room search, finding the house was empty.

Taylor spoke into his comms, “Rocker six this is Rocker one-one. We located the house and are inside. The front door is unlocked, and all appears to be secure.”

“Rocker one-one, this is Rocker six, Roger, see you in about two-zero mikes, out.”

* * *

While waiting for the team to arrive, Jack did a limited search of the cabinets noting food and water were available. The small refrigerator hummed and contained food and vodka. He viewed the ample furniture in the house to be reasonably comfortable.

Captain Miller arrived with the rest of the team and quickly set up security inside near the windows. There was silence as each man knew his job. There was no need for talk. It became a waiting game now, waiting for Ibn Abbas or Iranian intelligence to show.

Jack looked around and realized he needed to decide which room would work best for Ibn Abbas's interview efforts. Since the house was

dark, Jack sat and waited for the light to break over the horizon to shed some light on the interior.

The house was slowly lit up through the windows as the sun broke the horizon in the east. Looking around, Jack decided a small room off the kitchen would work best. The room contained a table and several chairs. It appeared someone had tried to create a small meeting room or office.

Outside, the town came to life. People walked along the streets; an occasional vehicle heard starting up and driving off as the driver shifted through the gears. Doors squeaked when opened. The sound of people's voices heard, and all seemed reasonable as life in the small town began another day. No one knew there were six men on a secret mission, sitting inside a house on their street who were about to determine if the free world, thousands of miles away, is to be attacked with a device of mass destruction.

The meeting between Ibn Abbas and the special operations team will be at 1500 hours. No one knew his description. Proving his identity first would be mandatory to make sure he was not an Iranian militia agent or intelligence agent.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: **The Interview of Abbas**

* * *

As the three o'clock hour approached, Jack remained deep in thought. *"How in the hell am I going to make this assessment of an enemy in this limited space of time? What keys am I looking for to confirm his information?"*

* * *

Taylor carefully watched Jack and could see the strain etched on his face. He did not pity him, but the task in front of him was daunting. Taylor, also an experienced interrogator had a clear understanding of the dynamics of what Jack needed to accomplish. Taylor, knowing the strain Jack was under, tried to quench the fires of doubt raging in Jack's thoughts and hoped his vote of confidence would give him the boost he needed; "Jack, relax, you will work it all out as best you can."

* * *

Everyone heard a knock at the front door. The team reflexively acted with raised weapons, adjusted their positions to take cover, and were ready to engage if necessary. Captain Miller nodded at Conyers, and he opened the door, stared at a man in traditional Afghanistan dress, sporting an orange-colored beard, of the Taliban. Conyers was surprised the man was short, a slight man, no more than five foot seven inches. Conyers quickly eyeballed the visitor and noted no weapons or vest visible. Conyers stepped back allowing the man to enter.

Bud stood alert in the far corner of the room, with the weapon held at the 10 o'clock position. Conyers motioned to the man to lift his arms, immediately patting him down. Conyers located a 9 mm handgun in his waistband and a small camera, removing both items. He took his small backpack away from him and looked inside to find only a Koran and a scarf. "Do you speak English?" Conyers asked.

“I am Ibn Abbas. Are you the Americans I am to speak with about Khan?” Abbas replied in perfectly accented British.

Captain Miller responded to Abbas, “I am Captain Miller of the United States Army, and we are here to assist you and to understand your message.”

“Excellent,” Abbas sighed and happily replied to Captain Miller, who displayed surprise on his face at how well Abbas spoke English. His level of confidence, walking into a room of his enemies, showed courage.

Captain Miller turned to Jack and Taylor, “These two men will discuss the communication you sent to our government.”

Jack walked over to Abbas and extended his hand, “My name is Jack, and this is Mr. Taylor. We will be discussing your messages, and if you follow me, we will start. How much time do you have?” This introduction was a departure from how Jack typically handled using his real name. He decided to be truthful with his identification.

Ibn Abbas estimated, “If I have planned this correctly, I have about five hours before I must leave.”

“That is great. I hope it will be enough time to discuss everything,” Jack disclosed.

“It has to be enough time. I am sure you will return my firearm to me at the appropriate time?” Abbas asked, not mentioning the camera.

“Yes, of course,” replied Captain Miller, turning to Conyers and telling him to keep the camera and weapon.

Jack looked at Taylor, “Mr. Taylor, will you kindly make some tea for us? We shall be in the side room.”

The men in the room all looked at each other and smiled at Taylor, who rendered a stealthy “ubiquitous middle finger” to them as he turned to warm the kettle up for the tea.

Captain Miller ordered his men to be especially alert for any movement in or near the house to prevent a surprise visit from Iranians.

Once Jack and Abbas went into the room, Captain Miller requested, “Conyers, look through that camera to see what is on it.”

“Yes, boss.”

Jack and Abbas entered the room. A small kitchen table, four chairs, and a desk were the only furniture pieces in the room.

Jack said, “Have a seat at the table. If you do not object, I will be recording our meeting to eliminate my notetaking, save time, and give me an opportunity afterward to analyze everything we discussed.”

“No objections. I had assumed this would be recorded as a precaution because I would do the same,” replied Ibn Abbas. “What are these items lying on the table, this tube, and those wires?”

Jack explained, “These are the components to a polygraph instrument. I am not sure if I will conduct a test on this matter or not. As you are aware, the nature of this information needs confirmation, analysis. In the end, accepted as truth for us to act on it?”

Abbas was quiet for a moment and then promised, “I understand your concerns. Once I reveal the information I have, your concerns and my concerns will be one. You and the Western world are my enemies. I am sure you view me as your enemy. We may fight for what we believe in, but to destroy the entire world where no one can live in it is not rational for me or anyone else.” Jack listened carefully to Abbas. His words rang real, rational, and dangerous in their meaning. His body language was alert, yet he sat in a relaxed, open posture. His facial expressions gave nothing away.

Taylor entered carrying a tray with tea and some food items setting it on the table and closed the door. Taking a seat at one end of the table, he arranged the cups and poured tea for all three of them. Jack observed Abbas watching Taylor and held his stare for a moment before dropping his gaze to the tray. Taylor picked up each cup, placing one

in front of Abbas first, Jack second, and then his, leaving the food items where they lay.

Abbas was the first to speak, “I can see you are warriors. Both of you have the look of war. I sense there is death associated with both of you. That is good. It will be easy for you to understand what I am about to tell you.”

Jack acknowledged, “We both have seen our share of war.” And then he changed the subject, “Your English is excellent, and your British accent suggests your education may have been in Great Britain? Do you have a family, and can you tell us something about yourself?”

Abbas seemed to relax more and offered, “I was born in London. I was raised in various places throughout England. I was educated at Oxford and obtained my doctorate in mathematics in 1992. I have no family to speak of; both my parents were killed in an unfortunate traffic accident shortly after completing my education. My younger brother ran off to join the Jihad. He died during fighting in Sudan. I am alone now.”

Jack was thinking, “*Good, he is confirming some information we know of him, but not all.*” Jack asked, “How much world travel have you been engaged in since you left England?”

“My brother died in 1999. I had been working for an investment firm analyzing their net worth and investments. His death left me hollow and angry at Islam for seducing him to fight. I took it upon myself to become more involved in being a Muslim, studied the Koran, and read everything I could about the Hadith and Sharia Law, our law. I soon realized it is the only way to live, at least until I met Khan. I’ve had a few trips between Pakistan and the UK.”

Abbas paused as if looking for a way to express his next thoughts. “I thought Khan was a genius. His fight for Islam was just. I was impressed with him and how he expressed the same concerns I had. We spent many long nights talking into the morning hours about why we are Muslim and what it means. We were both in Pakistan when New York and Washington DC attacks occurred. At first, there was great

rejoicing. We both wanted to be part of the changes we knew were going to happen. We both wanted the Jihad.”

Jack quired, “What steps did you take to join the Jihad?”

“I was not sure who to contact to join the Jihad. Khan knew, and within several days he had a meeting with members representing the Taliban. They urged him to contact members of Al-Qaeda in Peshawar, located on the road to the Khyber Pass, leading into Afghanistan. As you must know, this is a significant route I assumed we would take to get into Afghanistan.

“Since he is a nuclear physicist, he offered to help them make explosives. Due to Khan’s controlling personality, he took over every aspect of this new adventure. However, I soon fell into a position with Khan as a follower. We were directed to Karachi in Pakistan to meet with several different groups within the Al-Qaeda network.

“Khan showed everyone he could be useful by demonstrating how to make bombs out of the materials left on the battlefields and the materials needed to create the explosions they wanted. He became a star, a teacher. He showed them sophisticated ways of using telephones and delayed fuses. His methods caused them to embrace him and his ideas.” Abbas reported.

Jack was listening carefully to Abbas’s story. *“Why did he allow himself to be put into a secondary position by Khan when they were equal before? His phrasing suggests he is telling the truth. His facial expressions and his eyes are consistent with a man intent on wanting us to believe him. No holes in his story, and his posture is relaxed. Yet, he is leaving out information about his personal life,”* Jack thought.

Abbas continued with his story without much thought, other than to keep his information relevant to the questions posed by Jack, “They made Khan into a leader, and he conducted classes for bomb makers sent to Iraq and Afghanistan. He was a schoolteacher. I confirmed the mathematical equations on blast radius and how many explosives to accomplish a specific mission, like the one the Americans interrupted in Kabul recently.

“I became comfortable in my role. I found myself playing the role of a butler to Khan. I am not sure how this happened. I observed Khan’s ego set on fire as his talks turned to want to build a nuclear bomb. One day one of the students questioned him about such a device if it was a wise move. I guess the question directly confronted Khan’s motives, or maybe it just insulted him, I am not sure. Khan pulled out a gun and shot the student in the face showing no remorse. It was at that time I knew I was in bed with a mad man.”

Jack argued, “Abbas, why didn’t you just leave and dissolve your relationship with Khan?”

Abbas explained, “You do not understand. I know too many things. There is no escape from Khan. I will meet a horrible death if he discovers what I am about to do. Allah has cut me in half. I want to continue the fight, yet at the same time, my desire to stop Khan’s madness is almost too much. There is a conflict with Islam, and what I now believe is the truth.”

“A Muslim with a conscience of right and wrong, Jack thought, at least in my way of thinking. What is in it for him to get rid of Khan, or is that a motive? Why has he not mentioned his sister? Why is he hiding her?” Jack questioned, “What will happen to you if Khan is disposed of or stopped from his plan?”

“Khan is a complete psychopath, devoid of any real emotions, and lacking empathy for anyone. I have studied Khan during our time together and decided that narcissism is a hallmark of Khan’s personality. There are times his behavior does not regulate his impulses. I do not believe he recognizes the moral codes of life and decency.”

“That is a pretty in-depth analysis of him,” Jack said.

Abbas responded, “Khan is evil in his conception, sinister in his form, and malignant to his core. Khan is demanding, ruthless, and desires to be the spiritual leader of Islam.”

Aligning yourself with that type of man seems to have put you under an enormous strain pushing you into this decision of betrayal,” Jack said.

“I know his plans to attack Kabul this coming fall. I will gladly provide that information to you to help you believe me.”

“How do you answer my original question of your plans if we stop Khan?”

Abbas answered, “I have decided I will stop my Jihad returning to England. Jihad is a waste of something that will never be. The world will not be one belief; this is impossible. Those that think so are misled, convinced with lies. My faith is weak for being a traitor to Khan. I may have to answer for this at some time. I have enough blood on my hands. It has to stop.”

Jack confronted Abbas, “What about the statement you made, that you want to continue with the fight. That contradicts your other comment about having too much blood on your hands and going back to England?”

Jack watched Abbas studying Taylor. Jack sensed Abbas was mulling over his answer, knowing it was crucial. Jack verbally pushed Abbas, “What are you thinking?”

Abbas contemplated his answer, “I was thinking, Allah guide me with the truth, let my words stand by themselves, so I am believed by these infidels.” Abbas continued, “My faith demands I continue my Jihad. I am conflicted with the true purpose of the Jihad, and I question if my faith is real or imagined. I have taken this step to speak to you because my humanity needs to cleanse me of the blood. My wish is to return to England and find another way, a more peaceful way to honor my faith. I am at a crossroads. You will believe what I have to say, or you will not. Whatever happens, I have been true to myself in what I believe is right.”

Jack looked at Taylor and asked, “Do you have any questions at this time?”

Taylor replied, “Yes, just one. Where did the idea come from; how you contacted us?”

Abbas looked surprised. The question came from another direction intended to surprise him. A glance at Jack, then Abbas turned back to Taylor, “I am aware you listen to all telephone conversations through your satellites. I did not have a telephone number to call you and reasoned that if I made a call to another phone, I was controlling, hoping you would hear me.”

Taylor disclosed, “That was incredibly wise of you, and you have impressed several very high-ranking people in our government with your intelligence on how you accomplished this communication. Thank you.”

“You’re a handsome man with a high degree of intellect. I am sure you are attracted to women. You are well-spoken; who do you love?”

Abbas replied, “I am not sure that this has to do with anything. There was once a woman in Pakistan. I cared for a great deal.”

Taylor elaborated, “Do you wish to be reunited with Nour in Pakistan, and do you have plans of taking her to England?”

Abbas was shocked, stuttering, “I... I... I... how do you know her name?”

Jack nodded at Taylor, who produced a folder with Nour’s picture of her standing in front of a small house in Karachi. Taylor quired, “Abbas, you are a brilliant man. We are very impressed with you, and since you contacted us, we have been able to discover who you are, where you went to school, how long you lived in Pakistan, how you traveled to England and back to Pakistan. Many people have talked to us about you, especially in Pakistan. We suspected your life in Uzbekistan has not been pleasant. Why have you lied to us and not told us about your sister, Amal? Correct me if I am wrong, does her name mean Hope in Arabic?”

Abbas sat back, looking back and forth at both men. His whole posture changed, and the look of surprise on his face became one of concern. Abbas confessed, "You are very good at this, I see. I have not lied to you. My sister is a person I want to protect at all costs; no one I associate with knows of her because I do not want her used by these people. I will do anything necessary to protect her. Yes, Amal means Hope, and yes, I was in love with Nour, and I often think of her. It has been lonely." Abbas looked deflated as he sank into the chair. His posture changed from confidence to resignation, with his legs opened more and his shoulders slumped.

Jack declared, "We have your sister, or I should say, MI-5 has your sister, Amal, under constant surveillance. She is safe right now. Nour, on the other hand, is slightly exposed because she is not of concern to us. We have chosen to be completely honest with you about who and what we are and want the same respect shown to us concerning the information you have brought us today."

Abbas confirmed, "You have my respect. Your honesty and your information on my family and the woman I care about are commendable. I will tell you everything you want to know. No games, just the truth about Khan."

Both Jack and Taylor glance at each other as Jack pushed, "Does Khan have a nuclear device?"

Abbas nodded his head and growled, "Yes, he has the start of one. A week ago, he obtained a small amount of plutonium from the Islamic Republic of Iran, about the size of a small ball, and kept it in a steel box. He wants to travel to America and assemble a container to function and create a nuclear explosion. He explained the center of the United States works best because it is less guarded."

Taylor hissed, "What city is the target?"

Abbas gulped, "I am not sure. He named St Louis and a place called Kansas City."

Jack responded, “How and when is he traveling to the United States?”

Abbas verified, “He will travel by ship from Karachi to South America. The plan is to enter Mexico and then the United States. He already has departed for Karachi, but there is more.”

“What?” demanded Jack.

Abbas hastened to add, “Khan sent several teams ahead of him carrying some form of the chemical or biological agent for release in the United States. He selected, or he will designate a target once he is in the United States. Also, multiple teams have constructed car bombs for use on other targets, one of which is Los Angeles.”

“What are the identities of the teams?”

Abbas whimpered, “I do not know who they are. I do not know where they went. Look at my camera; I photographed all the documents that Khan compiled on his plan. You can keep the camera.”

Jack left the room and returned with the camera that Conyers scrolled through. The menu and digital pictures of maps and other documents were all in foreign writing. Conyers brought Jack’s attention to the written reports on the camera before he returned to the room. Looking at one record, Jack pointed it out to Abbas, “What does this say?”

“It is the agreement the Iranians and Khan came to about the delivery of the plutonium and the cost,” Abbas responded.

Jack accused, “Abbas, is your information truthful?”

Abbas whined, “Yes.”

Jack offered, “Will you take a polygraph examination right now to help us confirm your information?”

Abbas mumbled, “I have heard of this before; yes, I will take it.”

Jack rose from his chair, walked over to the door, and opened it. Stepping out, he called, "Captain Miller, we need to talk, so I would like to have your men stay with Abbas for a couple of minutes out here."

Captain Miller looked at Conyers and Bud, "Get Abbas out here and standby."

Once Abbas exited the room, Captain Miller, Taylor, and Jack huddled around the table. Jack explained what had transpired in the interview with Abbas, "My assessment is he appears to be truthful, there were no indications of him lying. I want to conduct a polygraph first before any messages are sent, to be sure. Taylor, what was your assessment of Abbas?"

Taylor echoed, "I concur, I watched his expressions very closely, and his words were solid without skipping important parts of his story. My only concerns were him hiding his sister and his girlfriend, but I understand after his explanations. I also want a polygraph examination. It will be one more piece of information in my evaluation of trusting him."

Captain Miller confirmed, "I agree, it is the best course of action. I will hold off sending any messages until completion of the polygraph." They both departed the room, and Jack prepared for the test.

Jack reviewed the information and constructed some test questions concentrating on the relevant issues. He decided to use: Have you lied about Khan having plutonium in his possession now? Have you lied about Khan planning other types of attacks in the United States? And: Have you lied about Khan planning car bomb attacks in Los Angeles? Other appropriate questions decided on were constructed.

Jack opened the door and directed Abbas and Taylor to return to the room. He told Taylor to take a seat leading him to one corner of the room, out of Abbas's vision. Jack explained the basics of the polygraph and the physiology to Abbas, making sure he understood the concepts. "Abbas, do you have an understanding of what I have just explained to you, or do you have questions?"

Abbas responded, “No questions. I understand the physiological concept of the fight, flight, or freeze theory about lying on a question.”

Jack, slightly surprised since he did not use the terms of fight, flight, or freeze in his descriptions, replied, “Excellent.”

“Have you ever taken a polygraph before?”

“No, but I have read about them and the reasons for use.”

“Do you have any questions about how it works?”

“No, as I understand it, it is nothing more than a recording of my physiology.”

“OK, let’s get started.”

Jack ran through the test questions and collected four charts of Abbas’s physiological responses. He analyzed the data deciding Abbas was inconclusive to “Have you lied about Khan having plutonium in his possession now?” but had a solid pass on the remaining two questions. He questioned Abbas about the one issue, “What are you thinking about when you hear the question concerning Khan having possession of the plutonium?”

“Abbas claimed, “I did not see him receive the plutonium, and I am assuming he has the material because that was the plan, and as far as I know, the plan worked.”

Jack decided his explanation was enough to explain the inconclusive results. Jack redesigned the entire test to read: Are you lying about Khan’s plan to receive the Iranians' plutonium? Are you lying about Khan planning any other attacks in the United States? Are you lying about Khan planning a car bomb attack in Los Angeles? Jack reviewed the questions with Abbas and initiated another collection of charts.

Jack collected three charts and numerically evaluated them. The score on the charts clearly showed Abbas passed the examination, “I

am satisfied with your answers. You may undergo more testing in the future.”

Jack explained the results of the test to Captain Miller, “Are you releasing Abbas so that he can continue on his journey to Uzbekistan?”

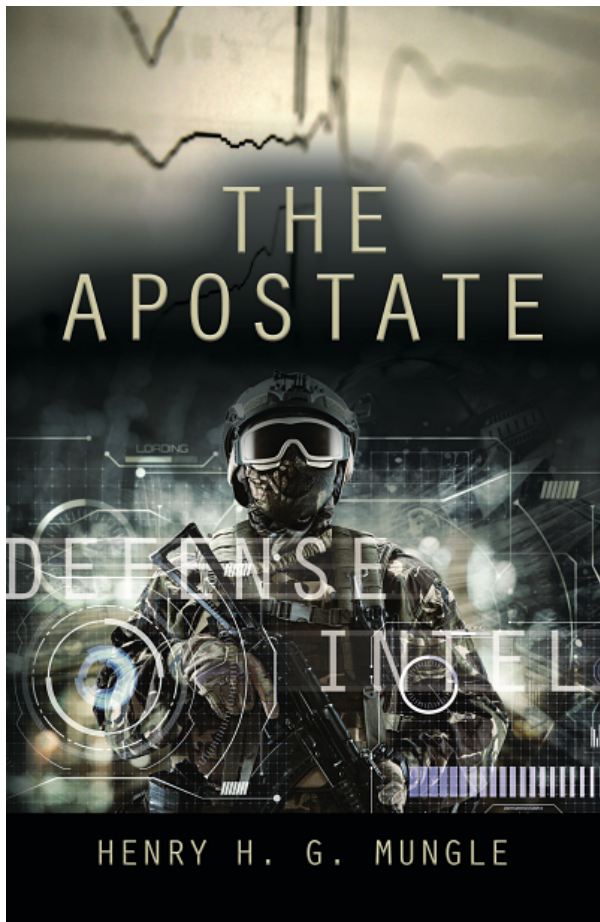
“Yes, my instructions are to allow him to leave. We placed a transmitter in the lining of his backpack so that we can track him.” Captain Miller replied.

Jack smiled, “Good plan to see where he goes from here.”

Jack reentered the room and told Abbas he is free to go, “Thank you for Khan's information. Go in peace. Before you go, do you know if Khan travels in disguise?”

Abbas grinned, “Not here in this part of the world. He will shave his beard off once he has departed Pakistan. I do not know his arrangements. He was very cautious about discussing his travel plans.”

Near the front door, Conyers handed Abbas his backpack and his unloaded weapon. The men in the room were looking out the window at the empty as night had fallen. Conyers gave the signal, all clear, as he opened the door. Abbas stepped through it, and as he entered the street, automatic weapons fire erupted, hitting Abbas. He went down immediately.



The United States is yet again in grave danger. An Islamic Jihadist, Abdullah-ibn-Khan, who is also a nuclear Physicist, is planning to detonate a dirty bomb on US soil. The team must travel the world to stop him, but first find him.

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