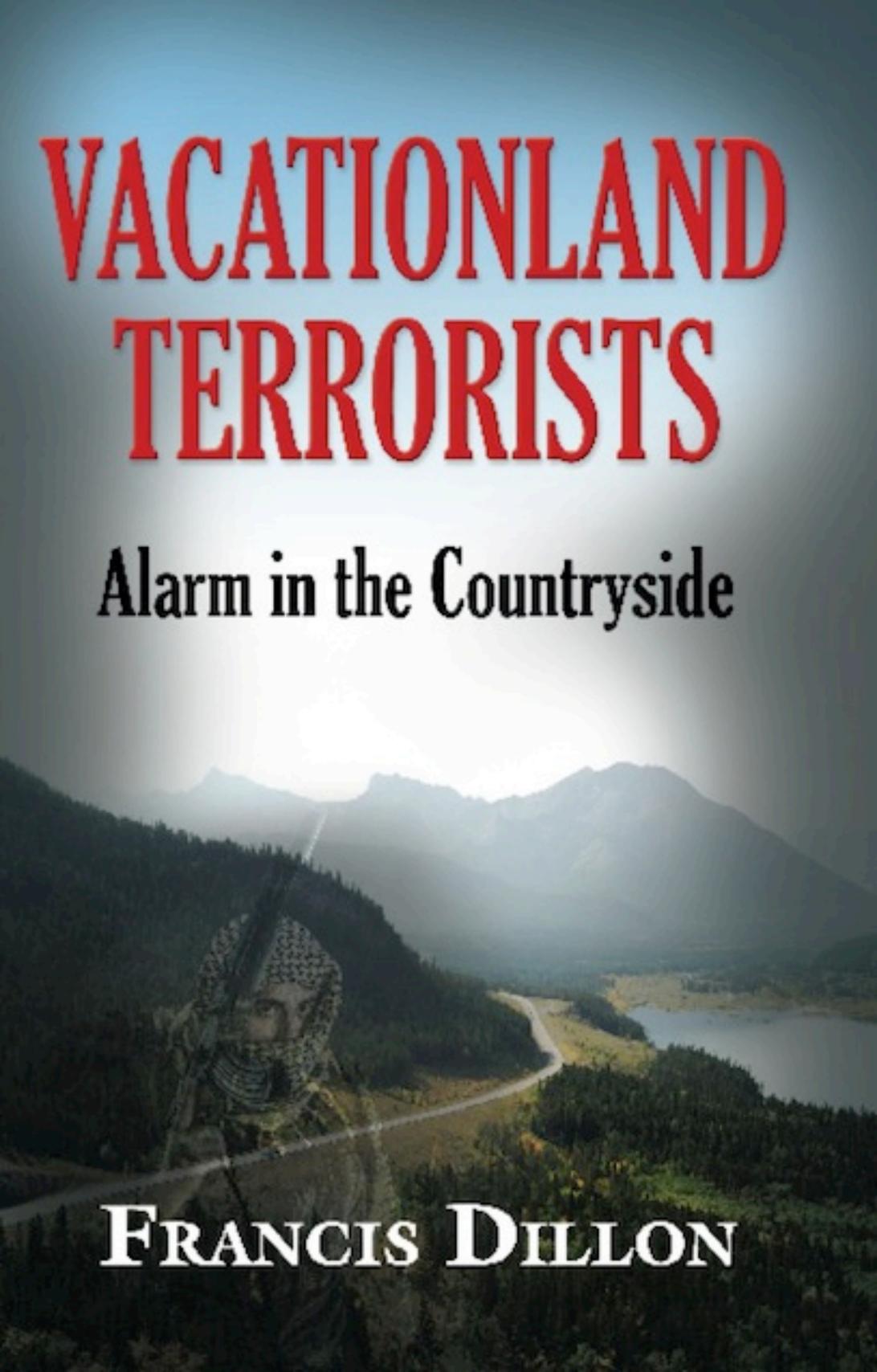
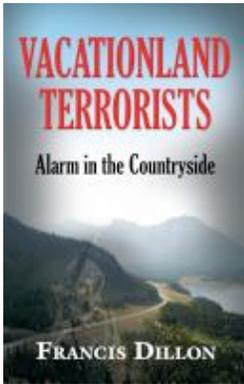


# VACATIONLAND TERRORISTS

Alarm in the Countryside



FRANCIS DILLON



*As Americans look forward to celebrating the 4th of July festivities, an ingenious plot is being hatched in the countryside of Maine. Have Islamic terrorists devised a perfect plan to cause death, destruction, and panic in East Coast cities? Can the Berwick Group identify and hopefully thwart this insidious plot? A realistic and gripping threat to our way of life is outlined in this fast paced novel of intrigue and adventure.*

## **Vacationland Terrorists**

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**VACATIONLAND  
TERRORISTS**

*Alarm in the Countryside*

**A Novel of Intrigue**

**FRANCIS DILLON**

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## PROLOGUE

The midnight shift change of security officers at the Grand City Mall in the southeast section of Cleveland, Ohio, went smoothly. The departing officers reported a quiet evening; closing had been routine, and a sweep of the entire facility had not detected anyone hiding in the public facilities. The warm spring weather had flushed the homeless vagrants out into the streets and parks of the city. Thus the mall regained the quiet but eerie posture when a security officer made a routine patrol through the darkened corridors, clocking in at the various check points in the building.

The overnight shift consisted of three security officers: one to monitor the vast array of cameras, both inside the mall and in the outer parking areas; one to walk the corridors on an hourly routine; and one to patrol the outer perimeter of the mall and the vast parking area. The mall was built in the shape of a cross, anchored by four large department stores at the end of each cross section. It was two stories high with over 150 specialty shops, restaurants, and vendor wagons. There was a large atrium where the four corridors of the mall intersected. This area was devoted for special events and holiday celebrations such as Santa-Land during the Christmas season.

This evening the youngest of the three security officers, Melanie, was given the cameras and communications position so she could study for an upcoming final exam at the community college she attended. That meant Gloria, a middle-aged divorcee, would take the patrol route inside the building. The women alternated these two positions because Charles, a retired police officer and shift supervisor, always patrolled the outside area in an enclosed golf cart. While the neighborhood surrounding the mall was normally quiet and

safe at night, Charles felt more comfortable with his female colleagues working the inside positions. The history of the mall was that most all the security troubles occurred when the mall was open. Except for finding an occasional vagrant hiding in one of the public bathrooms, the overnight shift was pretty boring- that's why Melanie could study while she occasionally scanned the security cameras.

So far, it had been a very quiet evening, and, as time passed to the early morning hours, Charles parked his golf cart and proceeded into the central security office for a coffee break. It was 3:10 AM, and Melanie was still hard at work reviewing her class notes. As Charles stirred milk into his coffee, he glanced up at the cameras for the outside area, which were set on a rotating cycle to cover specific zones around the building. As one camera rotated views of the north parking area, he noticed a car parked up on the sidewalk against the large entrance doors of the building. He reached over and froze the picture.

“Melanie, didn't you notice that car drive up to the doors?”

“What car?” she said, as she looked up and became startled at the frozen camera picture of a car flush against the entrance doors. “I was looking at the cameras just before you came in and didn't see anything.”

“Well, it didn't fly into the parking lot. Here, reverse that camera and let me see the sequence of that particular zone for the previous 10 minutes.”

Melanie did as Charles ordered. The time-lapse review showed a car coming into the camera's position at 3:07 AM. The camera sensors were programmed to focus on movement, and thus followed the car as it was pulled up onto the sidewalk and parked against the entrance doors. The

## *Vacationland Terrorists*

next sequence at 3:09 AM showed what appeared to be a male fleeing the car and running through the parking area out into the public street. He was dressed in jeans, wearing sneakers and a hooded sweatshirt, which blocked a good shot of his face. The camera at this point shifted back from following the male and began its rotating sweep of the north parking area.

Charles keyed his portable radio and said, "Gloria, where are you in the building?"

"I just left station 14 and have started into the north wing. Is there a problem?"

"Yes, but I'm not sure what it is. Someone parked a car up against the north entrance doors and just ran away."

"Why would anyone leave a car there?" said Gloria.

"Damned if I know." He turned and said, "Melanie, call the police dispatcher and tell them to send a patrol car to the north side of the mall. I'll meet them there."

"Should I call the mall manager too? Our procedures say we should call management if we have any unusual incidents."

"No, let's wait until the police get here and we figure out what is going on. Then we can make our calls. I am going around to meet Gloria." He keyed his radio again and told Gloria to walk up to the north entrance doors and unlock them and wait for him.

As Charles drove the golf cart around to the north side of the building, there was a blinding flash and explosion. Heat and debris rained around him and onto the metal roof of the

golf cart. He instinctively ducked, and the hard plastic windshield of the cart protected his face. Fortunately, his old police habit of wearing a vest had helped, too. He didn't notice, but several pieces of debris hit him, slicing through his uniform and causing surface cuts on his legs and arms. He stared in amazement. In all his years on the police force he never had encountered such an explosion. What had been an automobile had disintegrated into a fiery shower of plastic and metal covering the parking lot and blowing away the doors and display windows of the building. He finally regained his composure and yelled into his radio. "Melanie, call 911! We need fire and police and an ambulance here now."

"I've already called them. I also tried to contact Gloria, but she doesn't answer." Should I go down there?"

"No. You stay at your post because you are the central point of communications. I am going back to a side entrance between the atrium and the north building and work my way down to the north wing to find Gloria. I'll call you when I get there. I'll leave the side door open and you direct the medics there."

"Okay, Charles. God, I'm scared, and it's my entire fault. I should have seen that car. I never dreamed we would have a car explode in the mall."

"Don't go crazy on me, Melanie. Just stay there and direct everyone when they arrive. No one could have done anything after the car was parked there. It probably had a timer on it. I'm starting down the hallway now to find Gloria. You just keep calm."

## CHAPTER ONE

William Wolsey, the Deputy Director of the Department of Homeland Security and his Operations Chief, Scott Hartley, entered the classified conference room and took their appointed seats for the morning stand-up briefing. On his first day of duty six months ago, he wondered why the morning briefing was called stand-up, since they always sat for the briefing. His son, a major in the Air Force, told him stand-up was a military term and was created to bring together the key staff at the beginning of the duty day to share the important events affecting the unit. After a few weeks, he appreciated the concept behind the daily stand-up. Wolsey, a political appointee, had held several federal agency appointments in his career and most recently been police commissioner in New York City prior to coming to DHS.

Wolsey liked the morning stand-up. The briefing was a concise summary of key events affecting the security of the country during the past 24 hours, any new threat level intelligence, and major terrorist related events happening in the world. It also allowed him to pass on information or guidance to key staff members and respond to questions. The stand-up format eliminated the need for frequent formal meetings, which he avoided with a passion, and gave him time to pursue issues he thought were important to the agency. Wolsey signaled to the briefer to begin.

“Good morning, sir,” said the briefer. “The key item this morning is the car bomb explosion at approximately 3:10 AM at the Grand City Mall in Cleveland, Ohio.” Several photos of the crime scene were flashed onto the screen. “We have both FBI and ATF as well as local and state agencies on the scene. Other than the security cameras showing the car and

an unidentified man running from the scene before the explosion, we have little new information.”

“Any group taking credit for the explosion?” asked Hartley.

“No sir. All we know for sure is what I have briefed. It was agreed by the on scene responders that a joint federal-state task force be formed, with ATF assuming the lead at the crime scene. We hope to have more information by mid-morning.”

“Did you pass this information to Director Bollino?” asked Wolsey.

“Yes sir. We sent a secure email to the White House situation room addressed to her for the meeting with the President this morning.”

The briefer went on to discuss several continuing items of interest, as well as an update on the hotel bombings last month in Jakarta. As the briefer was concluding his presentation, the chief of current analysis, Richard Sandelman, asked a question about an ongoing intelligence report.

“Do we have any new information about that visiting professor in Vermont?”

“No sir, I don’t,” said the briefer, as he looked towards Doug Foreman, the chief of the preliminary inquiries branch.

“Dick, we sent a team of three people up there, but they haven’t come up with anything yet.” said Foreman. “They have only been there two weeks and have just established who the professor is and his daily routine.”

*Vacationland Terrorists*

Someone asked, "How long are they going to be there?"

"I don't know," said Foreman. "An allegation like this could take weeks or even months to resolve."

"What is this all about?" asked Wolsey.

Hartley pointed to Sandelman, who said, "A month ago we got a lead from the Egyptians that one of their citizens, a professor of Middle East history, was here on a two-year exchange program. The problem is he has a long relationship with a radical element of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Egyptians are convinced he also has a covert assignment for some possible operation against us or their Embassy here."

"How did he get admitted here, if he has terrorist ties?" asked Wolsey.

"He was sponsored through a program run by State, but this information didn't surface when our Embassy in Cairo ran checks on him."

"Great! So where is he now?" asked Wolsey.

"Dick's people gave us the intelligence report, and we found him at the University of Vermont in Burlington," said Foreman. "He teaches several classes a week and runs a seminar for graduate students in Middle East studies."

"Well, what is the game plan?" asked Wolsey.

"We're not sure yet," said Foreman. "We want to establish his routine to see what he does and whom he meets and then decide how to proceed from there."

“This could chew up a lot of time and people,” said a senior analyst in Sandelman’s branch.

“Sure, but we have to check it out,” said Foreman.

“These people you sent up there, are they experienced?” asked someone. “If this guy is really here operationally, he could be trained and spot our people. Then what would we do?”

“Look,” said Foreman, “we don’t have lots of experienced people just sitting around here waiting to run down all the preliminary allegations coming into DHS. The people I sent up to Vermont are new, but they have been through training at FLETC (Federal Law Enforcement Training Center). I told them to keep a low profile while running down the leads and, if they have any situation arise where they could be compromised, to call me before proceeding. We are doing the best we can, with the resources Congress gave us.” Foreman looked pissed.

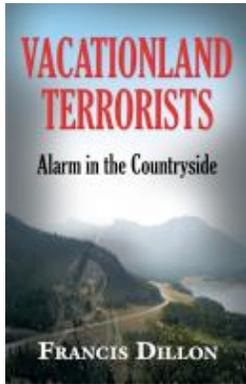
“Doug,” said Wolsey, “just calm down. No one is questioning your judgment. We have an experience problem in all the federal investigative agencies. The baby boomers are retiring and others are leaving for big money in private security. We just will work our way through this situation. The Director and I agreed to Scott Hartley’s plan to put our most experienced people in the areas most likely for a terrorist attack. We are not alone. I was at a meeting recently where this topic was addressed, and the Bureau and every other agency is doing the same thing. We need to stress to our new people that they have an opportunity to take on serious responsibilities to protect our country, and we need to mentor and push ahead those people who show great promise.”

## *Vacationland Terrorists*

Having given his unplanned pep talk, Wolsey looked around the room and said, “If there are no further comments, we stand adjourned; but give me any significant updates as they occur on the car bomb explosion at the Cleveland mall.” With that, he and Hartley stood and left the room.



While the morning stand-up was taking place, the Director of DHS, Margaret Bollino, was over at the White House for an early morning meeting and photo-op with the President. Bollino was a career politician, having served as Governor of North Dakota and in the US Congress. She worked hard in her home state to get the President elected and was rewarded with the DHS position. She knew very little about security and thus let Wolsey run the day-to-day operations while she focused on the Washington political scene. He provided her talking points for her press briefings and, as long as she stayed to the script she was relatively safe from the media’s probing questions.



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