

BOOK 1 OF THE PAWNS SERIES

TERRORISTS AND GLOBAL MANIPULATION

BY DOC MIKE



Can't Put It Down Books

Book 1 of the Pawns Series
Terrorists and Global Manipulation
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*This novel is dedicated to my wife
who urged me to finish it.*

Chapter 1: Failure

April 11, 1999, 11:45 a.m.
Brooklyn, NY

ABU LADIN LEANED BACK to throw the stone just as he heard the loud bang of an explosion followed by the crash of glass. Suddenly, a man came flying through the front window. He recognized the clothing even though he could not see the face: Amu, his brother, the leader of the whole operation. Another noise, louder this time, came from the apartment as smoke billowed out of the broken window.

Abu looked up toward the roof in time to see another of his friends jump onto the fire escape on the side of the building and start up toward the roof. The sound of two shots, and the man on the fire escape fell, struck twice in the chest.

One minute earlier

As Abu Ladin rounded the corner to the apartment house where he and his comrades were staying, two green sedans screeched to a stop; four men got out of each car. All were tall, Abu noticed, taller than he was, and dressed in dark suits. Four of them headed to the back of the apartment house. He could tell from the way they walked purposefully, without looking to the right or left, that they knew exactly where they were going and what they were going to do.

The apartment house was a two-story building with four apartments on each floor. Abu's apartment was on the second floor, facing the street on the left. As he slowed to a stop in front of the building and continued to watch anxiously, the four men who had headed to the back of the building split into two groups, one pair heading up the back stairway, the other two up the fire escape to the roof where a rooftop exit made it possible to escape the building without using the main stairs, a fact Abu and his companions had been very aware of when they chose this particular apartment.

Two of the men from the second sedan pulled pistols from underneath their coats while the other two quietly spoke into radios—

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to speak with the men who had gone around the back of the building, Abu assumed. One of the men with a radio, the tallest of the group, signaled the pair with the pistols, raising his hand and showing five fingers three times. All four men headed into the building.

Abu looked anxiously up at the front window in his apartment hoping to see one of his three partners, but no one was there. He must warn them. He frantically looked for something to throw through the window; grabbing a stone he hid it behind his groceries and walked quickly closer to the apartment.

That's when he heard the explosion, watched his brother die, and knew that their plans had failed.

He was too late, and with all the self-control he could muster, Abu relaxed his arm with the stone in it, and walked at what he hoped was a normal pace past his building still carrying his groceries. As two police cars pulled up to the apartment he continued past his Chevy van, parked on the street in front of the building, and kept walking to the street corner. He crossed over to the other side of the street and slowly turned toward his apartment house. The two policemen were inspecting his van.

The noise had begun to bring out a crowd of curious spectators. People on the sidewalk began to push past Abu to gather around his apartment house. He turned away and walked to the nearest bus stop where he boarded a cross-town bus.



Meanwhile, the scene at his apartment had taken on an excitement of its own with spectators loudly shouting questions as they wondered what was going on. Jeff Horton wondered why the local cops weren't doing a better job of crowd control as he pulled up to the apartment in another of the ubiquitous green sedans. He jumped out of the front passenger seat, flashing a badge as he broke through the crowd, and started for the apartment building where the tall man with the radio met him at the front door.

"Hey Bob, what happened?" he asked Bob Hollis, the experienced field agent who had planned the details of the raid.

Hollis did not look happy at having to answer to his boss, who had spent the last three months carefully orchestrating this raid. "Amu Ladin's dead, and so are three more."

"You were supposed to take them alive," Horton growled. He was starting to get red in the face, a bad sign, Hollis knew. Horton's

anger was well-known in the office. “We can’t question dead people. What the hell went wrong?”

Hollis paused; he wanted to explain carefully. His job was on the line here, and while shit happens, the bottom line was that this failure was going to be laid on his doorstep. “They had a dog, he started barking when we were just about ready to break in. We were waiting for you to place the call as our signal. The dog was barking so loud we couldn’t tell whether the phone rang or not. We knew the time had passed for you to make the call, so we knocked on the door. We were ready to move in when the door flew open and the dog jumped Jack. Bit him...he’s not hurt bad, but it slowed him down.”

Hollis paused and took a breath as he continued to carefully consider each word of explanation. “All hell broke loose. Amu Ladin had a package on the table; must’ve contained a bomb.” He shook his head in disgust.

“One of our bullets hit it. Amu Ladin goes through the window, and another guy who was sitting at the table flew against the wall—dead on impact. The third man, who we believe is Abu Ladin, got his head blown off because he was leaning over the package. The fourth man jumped out onto the fire escape, pants on fire, and as he started heading up the fire escape, he was going to toss a grenade into the room. That’s when Henderson shot him twice in the chest before he was able to pull the pin on the grenade.”

Horton slumped against the wall, defeated. “What a mess. We had this thing all planned out. We called them fifteen minutes before the hit and used the right passwords. We told them to stand by for new instructions, which would be delivered by a knock on the door just after the phone rang. Where did the dog come from?”

“I don’t know, I just don’t know. We had no intelligence about a dog.”

Horton gathered himself, headed up to the apartment to take a look around, and directed everybody to finish up and get ready for a debriefing at headquarters.

As he headed back to his vehicle he noticed a silver Mercedes Benz S 600 parked across the street with a clear view of the apartment house. A man in the back seat was watching the activity with keen interest. He wore a tailored suit, and a green hat with a peacock feather. He tapped the driver on the shoulder, and the car pulled away

from the curb and left the area.

Brooklyn, NY

The bookstore

On the other side of Brooklyn, Abu Ladin, alive and unaware that the FBI assumed he was dead, was getting off the bus. Still carrying his groceries, he walked to a second-hand bookstore. He gave a short stare and quick nod to the tall, thin, dark-skinned man at the counter, walked to the back of the store and through the curtains into the back room.

“They’re all dead,” he said to the thin man who followed him. Abu began to shake uncontrollably. “They are all dead. The bomb went off.”

The thin man looked down at the grocery bag still in Abu’s arms, then at his face. With a puzzled expression on his own face, he grabbed Abu and shook him. Abu’s glazed eyes wandered even more. He was obviously in shock, and the thin man quickly decided he would not get any more information out of him. The thin man, an elder who had been in America for twenty years, quickly decided he didn’t want to know the details of what had happened. He was just an exit man. His job was to get people out of the country when they needed to leave. He had grown complacent here in America. While he was perfectly willing to help with “transportation,” as he euphemistically termed it, he did not want his comfortable life disturbed by a man causing a scene in his store.

He peeked through the curtain and called for someone. A young, attractive woman in her middle twenties came into the back room; her mixed Egyptian and French heritage were evident in her dark hair and light blue eyes. She was dressed conservatively for New York City, in neat, dark jeans and a long-sleeved shirt, buttoned almost to her throat. Her name was Shelly Nasser. He whispered something into her ear and pointed to Abu. She took Abu, still visibly shaken, and led him outside to a white panel truck in the back parking lot. As she stuffed him into the passenger seat, she noticed a small, unusually shaped scar on his left arm.

As the truck drove off, Abu, still glassy-eyed, held his bag of groceries as if they were the most precious thing in the world. After a few more minutes, he shook his head and began to come out of his stupor.

“Where are you taking me?”

“To a man with a boat; he’ll know what to do with you.”

Abu leaned back in the seat and closed his eyes. “I have failed, I have failed. I am not worthy to be saved,” he mumbled.

Shelly pulled onto the freeway and headed into traffic. She looked over at Abu and placed her hand on his face. “There will be another day. Just sit back and relax, we will be at the docks in a few minutes. You need to relax. The man at the docks will want to know what has happened.”

Moments later, the white panel truck pulled in front of a fish market, then around the market onto an alley, which took them to a weather-beaten parking lot. A man walked toward the car.

“Is that the man?” Abu asked.

Shelly said nothing until the man reached them. “Go,” she said.

The passenger door opened, and a strong hand grabbed Abu by the arm and pulled him firmly out of the truck and led him into the back of the building.

Still carrying his groceries, but beginning to recover his bearings, Abu glanced around the room, noticing it was bare except for a large table and chairs in the center, set for a meal, and a television set.

At the head of the table sat a heavysset man with dark eyes, a wrinkled face, and a piece of pita bread in his left hand. He motioned for Abu to sit down and, without speaking, pointed to the newscast on the television.

“Channel 6 had an exclusive on an FBI raid of a terrorist cell in Brooklyn. Our sources tell us that the four-man cell was building a series of bombs, which they planned to place on public transportation buses around Brooklyn. The FBI, through extensive research and surveillance, has been monitoring the cell for three months. When the group moved into their new apartment just two days ago, the FBI knew they finally had gotten the four-man cell all together in one place. Unfortunately, one of the terrorists exploded a bomb during the raid, injuring one of the FBI men and killing the members of the terrorist cell and a large dog.”

As Abu watched, the TV camera panned to the apartment complex; the crowd was still there, the police had sectioned off more of the grounds, most of the smoke had cleared, and four bodies lay on the ground in black body bags.

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The heavysset man, Kachen Mihad, a close friend of Abu's father, was the primary figure among the terrorist cells in the New York region. He had links to the Ali Ki, a loosely bound group that pulled all the Arab terrorists together and gave them financial backing. Kachen was not a fanatic, although he was a true believer; his mission, as he saw it, was to get Westerners out of the lives and culture of the Middle East.

Mihad clicked off the TV and looked over at Abu. "It was fortunate that they did not know who you were and that you are still alive. Your father could not suffer the loss of two sons. How did you get out, and who was the fourth man who was killed?"

Abu Ladin collected himself, grabbed a piece of the pita bread, and dipped it into the tabouli bowl. He chewed on the welcome food and looked across the table at the heavysset man.

"A man in the apartment behind us came over this morning. He had this dog, a Rottweiler, with him. The man's leg was in a cast. He asked if one of us could pick up his medication at the pharmacy down the street. We were always told to blend in. To not call attention to ourselves. I decided it would look less suspicious to just get him the medication; we needed groceries anyway. Hamid was playing with the dog and started to tease him. I told him to be careful, don't get the dog excited so he doesn't start jumping on everything and everybody."

"When I left, Hamid was playing with the dog. I told the neighbor I would be right back. I went to the pharmacy and got the medication, then stopped at the grocery store and got food. As I walked back to the apartment, I saw two green sedans with four men in each car pull up in front of the apartment. I knew something was wrong so I walked as fast as I could to the apartment. I found a stone and was just about to throw it through the front window when I saw my brother come flying out the window. I left and went to the bookstore where a young woman drove me here.

"I have lost a brother, I have failed my mission and now I am growing angry. How did they know about us? Who is the devil that betrayed us?"

Kachen came over to Abu. He grabbed him by the shoulders. "They are tracking him down now. You, my friend, must prepare yourself to leave and rebuild."

Chapter 2: Who Is to Blame?

April 11, 1999

NYC FBI Headquarters

HORTON WAS NOT A HAPPY MAN. “The news media is having a field day. They are handing out kudos. Well, I don’t have any kudos to hand out. Our objective was to get Amu Ladin and his brother Abu alive. Now they’re both dead. I believe we could have lost all links to the Ali Ki. Bob, how is our undercover contact?”

“Secure, still posted at the bookstore. We should be getting a report within the hour.”

“All right.” Horton acknowledged the answer, then asked angrily, “and why didn’t we fire the tear gas?”

“Jack was going to do that as we were ready to break down the door. But it flew open, the dog attacked Jack and he fell to the floor before he could discharge the canister.” Hollis began his explanation.

“One of the cell members started firing, and we fired back as John, Cory and I charged through the doorway. We knocked down the fourth guy as we came through the doorway, but one of their shots must have hit the package on the table. The explosion stunned us for a few seconds. Jack was bitten by the dog—I told you about that—he’d recovered by that time and was disabling the dog when the fourth terrorist fired at him but hit the dog instead. The terrorist jumped out the window to the fire escape and pulled a grenade. That’s when Frank shot him twice in the chest.”

Hollis’s cell phone rang. He answered the call, then turned back to the group and said, “That was a call from Pointer, our mole; Abu Ladin is alive and being transported back to Egypt.”

“Well, that changes the picture. Can we get him before he gets out of the States?” Horton said.

“If we do, we’ll expose our agent’s cover. We’ll need to hand this back over to the Massod. Let them track him in Egypt.”

“But we’re not sure what he looks like. All we have are blurry photos when he stood by the window at the apartment house.”

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Another call came in, this time on Horton's phone.

"They just found out who the fourth man was. He lived in the back apartment," Horton said when he hung up. "He had a Rottweiler. Now we have another loose end. Was he connected to the cell? We need to stand back and survey the big picture. Bob, get back with your CIA contact and let's compare notes. Also, we need to re-evaluate our crash tactics. We were lucky that nobody on our side was seriously injured. We also need to step up our surveillance measures—especially electronic. In addition, we need to reassess our undercover work. Bob, what about the infiltration lead we had from NYPD? Is he still active?"

"That was a false lead. One of the employees at the bookstore was thought to be an NYPD undercover, but instead they found that he was just a small-time thief the NYPD roused but let go."

"Well, pay him a visit and see if we can use a little torque. He could be a good source for collateral information."

"I'll call our contact at NYPD."

"All right, we all know what we need to do." Horton paused for a moment, looking at each of his team in turn before continuing. "Guys, I am not happy about what went down, but I want you to know I'm not blaming any of you. I'm just frustrated and realize we need more resources and better training for ourselves. See you in the morning."

Brooklyn, NY

The bookstore

The thin man stared from behind the back room curtain as Abdul Moatta rang up a sale. The total came to \$76.45, but he noticed that Abdul only rung up \$66.45. He pulled away from the curtain and picked up the phone and called Kachen at the fish market.

"I think our little friend needs to be watched a little closer."

"I'll see to that."

Later that night as Abdul Moatta walked out of the bookstore. A man got out of a gray sedan and followed him. When he turned the corner the man said, "Sergeant Miller has a message for you."

Abdul turned and recognized the police detective who had roused him. "He didn't pay me, so I don't give him nothing."

The detective walked closer. "Is that any way to talk about a good man who kept you out of jail? Besides, you had nothing worth saying then, but things are changing. We think you might—just

might—be able to get some information that we would be interested in having.”

“You need to pay for it.”



Across the street someone else was observing the conversation. He had been sent by Kachen. Quietly, he moved closer, remaining in the shadows, until he could hear the conversation and see the man who got out of the sedan. He recognized the detective. Why would he want to talk with Abdul?

The observer stayed in the shadows and checked his revolver. “...some information that we would be interested in having,” he heard, along with Abdul’s reply. Now the observer understood. Abdul was a police informant.

As the detective turned away and headed back to his car, the man in the shadows took aim and fired. Abdul fell, blood blooming from the shot to the head. The man in the shadows ran across the street, jumped into a Ford pickup and sped away.

As he heard the shot, the detective instinctively curled into a low stoop, pulled his revolver from his shoulder holster and spun around. He saw Abdul on the ground and heard a vehicle speed away. He ran across the street to try to get a better look at the speeding vehicle, but he was too late. He returned to Abdul Moatta. Too late, again. He called into his precinct, then he stood over the body to keep the spectators, who even at that time of night had begun to gather, away.

Shortly, a police car pulled up, and two officers approached the detective. “Move the crowd back from the crime scene. Has the coroner been notified?”

“The coroner is en route.”

“Okay, keep the crowd back and say nothing.” The detective took out his cell phone, dialed and spoke.

“The link has been severed, no idea who made the disconnect. Most likely it was the fisherman who called for the hit.”



About five miles from the scene, a Ford pickup pulled into a 7-Eleven. The driver headed to a public phone and made a quick call to Kachen, then left the phone booth, got into his pickup and drove away.

Back at the fish market, Kachen Mihad and Abu Ladin were still

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talking to each other when the phone call came in.

“Abu, you must return to Egypt and regroup. We have eliminated the devil dog who betrayed us. We must rebuild our forces and train ourselves well. You are still young. Your brother’s son is at an Ivy League college. He is very smart and is learning the American ways. You must learn more about American ways,also. You are our future. Let Allah be with you. Learn patience, my dear friend. Our day will come.”

April 11, 1999, 5:30 p.m.

Franklin Lakes, NJ

The silver Mercedes Benz pulled off Route 17 and headed into Franklin Lakes, one of the finer residential areas in Northern New Jersey. Although the man in the green hat was anxious to get back to his estate, the driver was casually driving the roads, looking neither obvious nor rushed. Finally, the Mercedes turned off the main road, crossed over a creek and proceeded up the hill to a modern-day mansion, a beautiful twenty-acre estate and equestrian farm just a short drive from Manhattan.

The Mercedes pulled into the circular drive and up to the front door where a manservant opened it. “Good evening, sir, your guests have already arrived; they are waiting for you in your library.”

“Thank you, Johnson,” the man in the green hat passed by Johnson and stepped into a vestibule that opened up to a high ceiling with dual circular stairways that led up to a balcony. He didn’t waste any time, and headed directly into the library.

As Johnson put the hat and coat in the closet, a woman appeared on the balcony and called out, “Has he returned?”

“Yes, Mum, and he doesn’t look very happy. He has joined his guests in the library.”

“Guests in the library!” The voice sounded amused. “One would think we were a convention center.”

“I understand, Madam. The master seems very intent on something, and I believe he is not happy with the way things are going. I need to see that they are situated properly, Mum.”

“I understand, Johnson.”

Johnson tapped on the door and entered the library. The large room was equipped with five computer terminals, a large projection screen and several work areas. Four men, who he recognized from

previous meetings, were seated around a table. The man by the screen was small, with thin, graying hair. He had a high-pitched voice and looked fragile, but that was deceiving. He would cut your throat without a second thought if he believed that you tried to scam him. The name he was known by here was Harold Connery, but even that was an alias. He, like the rest of the group, did not want his true identity known. He was a wily one, the cynic of the group. His name here was Cyn.

At the foot of the table stood a wide-bodied, tall man, about six-foot four-inches tall and a muscle-bound 290 pounds. He owned hundreds of millions in stock. His size belied his mild manner. His alias here was Max.

At the middle terminal was a redhead: average size, average weight, but not average intelligence. A computer wiz, he'd made a fortune in four different software start-ups. The group called him Red.

The fourth man was the most stereotypical of them all. He looked like a banker, talked like a banker, and was a banker. He wore steel rim glasses and looked like a misplaced Yuppie. He was not misplaced in the financial world and had more insider information than the rest of the group put together. His alias in the group was Numbers, since he always was talking about them.

Johnson paused and waited for the master of the house, referred to in this group as Cap because he wore his green hat everywhere. "It looks like we are all taken care of tonight, Johnson. We will be here for about an hour. We do not want to be disturbed."

"Yes sir." Johnson departed.

Cap motioned for the group to settle in around the table in the middle of the room. "Well, the idiots are still idiots. I don't know if we will ever get anything good out of them. They are so inept, they have no organization at all."

"We knew that, and we also know what we need to do," stated Max. "We have to help them get organized and we have to find a way to funnel them some money and get them to be more self-sufficient. Drug traffic is still the best way for them to get a stream of revenue."

"Yes," said Cyn, "but we also need to get them some legitimate businesses. If we are going to use them as pawns we have to build an infrastructure for them—and we need to make sure that they do not know it is us backing them."

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This was all the introduction that the redhead needed.

“As you are all aware, the training of our eleven top mercenary candidates has been completed at our Munich site. Everything is in place for them to start training your so-called idiots how to organize a mission, gather intelligence about the target and handle the logistics to obtain and build a bomb. We are going to work with them through Munich; we can do a lot of the intelligence training in the Munich area. I have already set up the computer simulations needed to visually show your idiots how to do all of this.” Sarcasm dripped from his voice each time he used the phrase “your idiots.”

Max walked over to the projector and flipped up the slide. “We have ten different companies set up. Four in Europe, two in Japan, one in Indonesia, two in India, and one in Egypt. Each one has legitimate credentials. We need to start bringing ‘the idiots,’” again his scorn for the people he was planning to use was evident, “into the operations and set up a stream of drug handling conduits.”

Cyn moved to the large screen and Max flipped up the next slide. “This is the trading organization that will link all ten businesses together. We have already established seven contacts with the drug suppliers. Currently, we are combing through the drug distributors. We need to be very selective about whom we make arrangements with. This end of the line can get out of hand very quickly, especially with our overanxious pawns.”

Cap rubbed his hands together and said, “It sounds like it is time for a good drink. You all know what you need to do. If you don’t mind, I need to take care of a few items on the home front. Please enjoy yourselves; things are looking like it is our time to start turning up the flame. We’ll meet again in one month.”

April 11, 1999

The Bronx

The Hollis Home

Hollis finally pulled into his driveway. His four-year-old daughter Michele ran out of the house to greet him. He got out of the car, grabbed her and gave her a big hug.

“Tommy says I’m a spoiled brat. What’s a spoiled brat, Daddy?”

“It’s what older brothers call their little sisters because they can’t think of something better to say. By the way, where is your brother? I see he left his bike out on the lawn again.”

“He’s in his room working on the computer. He found a new Dungeons and Dragons game. Mommy is in the kitchen. Dinner was ready an hour ago. Are you hungry, Daddy?”

“Yes, I am, so let’s go eat.”

As they walked into the house, Louane was at the kitchen table, setting it. A graduate of Ecole Normale Supérieure, one of the top liberal arts schools of France, she was a slender, beautiful woman who had often been told she looked like Jackie Kennedy. She could never see it herself. Her mixed Middle Eastern and European heritage gave her a darker complexion than Jackie had had.

“I rewarmed everything. We’re all starving,” she told Hollis as he walked into the kitchen with the kids. “You look a little tired. Sit down and enjoy yourself.”

After dinner, the two kids went to their rooms. Michele was already asleep when Hollis went in to tuck her into bed. Tommy was finishing some homework and was ready to catch his favorite TV show and then go to bed.

After saying goodnight to the kids, Hollis walked into the family room, sat down next to Louane on the couch and gave her a hug. She returned the attention with soft, smooth kisses, then slowly ran her hand across his forehead, soothing the headache that had hung for hours, ever since his meeting with Horton, several hours before.

“Hmm, honey, that feels good. You always know what I need,” he said, beginning to smile as she continued her attentions.

Louane kissed him again, melting softly into his arms. Hollis pulled her closer and felt the tension slip away as he wrapped his arms around her. She laid her head across his chest. She always enjoyed being held by him, and knew he felt the same.

“How did your day go?” she asked.

“It wasn’t what we wanted to happen. It always seems we are behind the power curve. We’re novices in this terrorist world. We weren’t very lucky in a raid that we had today.”

“Yes, I saw it on the news.”

“Yes, something else that we didn’t want to happen,” he said, disgust in his voice as he thought of the problems the media had caused. “The news media seems to have more active people in the field than we do. The story was on the television before we got back to headquarters. We have to get more resources, and all I hear is ‘stay

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within budget.’ But, enough of this. You know I don’t like to talk about business when I’m home. How was your day? Did you get to talk with your sister?”

“No, she had to run an errand so she didn’t get a chance to come by the house. We’re planning to take the children into Manhattan on Saturday. We’re going to the United Nations Building. Tommy says he wants to see the Secretary. He wonders how big his computer is. I told him that the Secretary is not that type of secretary. He still wants to see his computer.”

Hollis’s cell phone rang and he answered it. “When did it happen? Any leads? No, I haven’t heard anything from my contact. Hold on, let me check my email.” Hollis went into his study and pulled up his email. “I have an email from Pointer.” He opened it. “Pointer says the hit on the thief in the bookstore was set up by the Fisherman because he believed the thief was the leak.” He sighed into the phone. “Our bird is safe and they think they eliminated their leak. I’ll see you in the morning.”

He returned to the family room, looked at his wife and said, “Some days nothing seems to go right, so let’s just forget that call and relax as we watch TV.”

April 12, 1999
NYC FBI Headquarters
Antiterrorist conference

Hollis was in his office when Horton arrived. “Bob, the CIA has set up some briefings for your group. We will be getting eight more people as well as training with a Special Ops group out of Fort Bragg in North Carolina.”

“They finally have started to listen to you.”

“It seems so. Get ready and go wipe out the bad guys. The top brass are starting to understand that this is bigger than they are, and we need to reach out to some key resources. Bob, you’ve been tagged as the lead FBI man for this operation, which is designated Operation Fetch. It’s a joint effort between the FBI, CIA and military Special Ops. Your counterparts are waiting for you in my office. Let’s go talk to them now.”

As they walked into Horton’s office, Hollis recognized an old friend, Ron Ciccio, who he had known when they were both in Special Forces together. He shook Ron’s hand and the door closed

behind him as Horton entered and started talking to the other man in the room.

“What are you doing here?” Hollis asked Ron, now a colonel in the Army.

“You may not know it but you just tipped over a bee hive when you did that raid on Amu Ladin. Part of why I am here is because the CIA has been tracking Amu and keeping us informed just in case we needed to intercept him and his team. We didn’t even know who was in this team because they kept themselves separate. The only link was that Amu had his brother, Abu, with him.

“Somehow your FBI buddies got onto them when they decided to form up together. The CIA believed they were planning something at the Brooklyn Shipyards, but they were only guessing. Then you and your boys come along and wham, fireworks.

“Now, please understand, no one is blaming the FBI. However, it shook us up, and we realized we need some interagency cooperation. So, the CIA started the ball rolling, and your boys in DC were pleasantly surprised. They jumped at the idea. When I heard that you were going to be the contact here in the New York area, I just had to throw my hat into the circle.”

“Wow! By the way, who’s the other guy talking to my boss?”

“That’s Frank Fitzpatrick, the lead for the CIA on this operation. Frank and I go back a long way. He’s a good man. If the logic is there, so is Frank. No bullshit, no turf, just rolls up his sleeves and gets to work.”

“Glad to hear it. I hope this can work.”

“Well let’s see what we can do. Frank is ready to bring us all up to date.”

Frank walked over to Hollis and introduced himself. “I see you have been rekindling old friendships. I’ve heard some good things about you, and I believe we can help each other,” he said to Hollis as they all sat down at the conference table.

“Hopefully, we all know why we are having this meeting,” Horton said, then looked over at Hollis. “I see that your old buddy has started to brief you already, so I’ll turn this meeting over to Frank.”

“We have just seen what happens when more than one group is doing their job and suddenly we cross unexpectedly. If nothing else, we need to communicate somehow. There is a missing party here and

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it's the NYPD. We cannot talk directly to the NYPD and so that is the first thing we need from you, the FBI, to be the link to them.”

Both Horton and Hollis nodded their heads in concurrence.

“Good. Now I need to talk some specifics. We have gotten some information through our sources that there was a strong possibility that a terrorist group was going to hit the Brooklyn Shipyards. The information was sketchy, but the sources are well respected. About three months ago we were told that the suspected leader of the terrorist cell was Amu Ladin. We tracked him down and had him under surveillance. Meanwhile, we contacted Ron so he could start to prepare a unit to intercept Amu and his cell.

“We didn't know the FBI was also doing the same thing.” He looked over at Horton and Hollis and nodded, acknowledging their work.

“I don't need to go into how you found out, or how you tracked them. We can discuss that later. What we need to do is to set up direct channels amongst ourselves. This is somewhat of an interagency experiment to see if we can pull our forces to focus on a common threat.

“Needless to say, Ron and I already have a secure communication link between us. We need a secure link between myself and Bob. We can also communicate over our cell phones, but we need to set up a protocol.

“This brings me to the roles and responsibility for each party. We are proposing that the CIA act as the international collector and distributor of captured information on terrorist activities. We propose that Ron and his forces lead any interception that leads to an encounter of a hostile, fully armed enemy force. That leaves information gathering and local policing to the FBI and the NYPD with you, Bob, acting as the focal point to tie Ron and myself into the NYPD without the NYPD knowing who we are.”

“Who knows who or what we are going after?” Horton said, then looked over at Hollis. “You take it from here, Bob. I need to get to another meeting.”

Horton left and Bob looked at Frank, “Who and what?”

“It works both ways. You need to tell us what you see, and we need to tell you what we see. It may turn out we are looking at different threats. If so, at least we will know that is the case.”

Bob sat back in his chair. “For now, it looks like we are just

discussing how we are going to talk to each other on a policy level.”

“As the first step. Now Ron and I want to start the second step. Amu Ladin was not our only lead on terrorist activity in New York. I know you remember the truck bombing on the North Twin Tower on February 26, 1993. Although six people were killed, as far as the terrorists were concerned, it was a failure because they planned that the North Tower would collapse onto the South Tower. For the last six months, we have been collecting information that a new plan is being made to take out the Twin Towers. The information is very sketchy, but it is clear that the Towers are the target. Even though the security has been increased there, we believe the buildings are in great jeopardy. Our people, with the help of Ron’s people, have been running different scenarios that could take out both towers. There are a lot of wild schemes, but there is some commonality to the majority of them. First, diversions before the main attack. Second, multiple attacks from different sources simultaneously. Third, each attack is scripted and requires training and practice. It is not a lone shot by one individual driving a truck.”

“What do you expect from us?” Ron had been waiting for this opening to speak.

“We want you and your squad to run the exercises at the Towers. We can’t do that, but the FBI and the NYPD can as part of preparation for future attacks. We’ve been running these exercises at our base. Our thoughts are to have some of our key people work with your squad, then run the exercises with our people monitoring your operation on site. We are looking to you to get NYPD involved and get permission to do the exercises.”

Hollis stared at Ron in disbelief. “Are you also going to film all this, then sell it to the TV stations? Maybe they can make a TV series of it.”

“Okay, Bob,” put in Frank. “I know this is a lot to take in at one time. However, we are serious! We will help you get permission but nobody will know it is us. It needs to look like the NYPD with help from the FBI.”

Hollis smiled, “So we are front men and you all are pulling the strings from behind the scenes.”

“Something like that, but not quite that easy. Remember, I said this is an experiment. There are those who like it and those who are

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dead set against it, both in your shop and mine. We need to start with Ron's people and see if your people take to it."

Hollis grinned. "Oh, I think they will love it. That won't be the issue. By the way, how much of this does my boss know?"

"He doesn't, but his bosses' boss does."

Just then there was a knock on the door, and Horton returned to the conference. "Hope I didn't miss much."

Hollis laughed. "You better sit down. We have a lot to tell you. We are going to bomb the Twin Towers before the terrorists can get to it."

Horton didn't know whether to laugh or bang a fist on the table.

Frank chimed in quickly, "Just exercises."

"We have been running scenarios as to possible ways the terrorists could bomb the Twin Towers. We've come up with a set of exercises we want to run to see if the security at the Towers can stop any insurgency," added Ron.

Horton sat back in his chair, let out a breath of air, and said, "Well I guess you three have been doing a lot of talking while I was gone." Looking at Hollis, he asked, "What do you think about all of this? I can just see your squad licking their chops."

"I do agree with their licking their chops, but I'm concerned about attacking the Twin Towers, and I believe they won't know we are coming."

"That has to be the way it comes off. Frank says that Ron is absolute about that little detail."

"Little! Are you kidding? You can get my people killed. This has disaster written all over it," said Horton.

"This is not some roll the dice operation. We have worked through each exercise in mock runs with many different people and we have seen many ways that something can go wrong," Ron told him. "We have come up with a set of rules for the exercises to keep things from getting out of hand. Top rule is safety first for all personnel."

Hollis looked at Ron, "Old buddy, I hope you are right. We are going to need to study your exercises and all the oopses that have occurred, along with your set of rules."

"Absolutely! That is what we were going to propose next, but you beat me to it. Which is one of the things I like about you, buddy."

"I believe we have covered enough for today," said Frank. "The

next step is for Ron and Bob to start the ball rolling. Meanwhile, I'll get the permission request started and keep Bob in the loop."

"I'll brief my squad and establish a more direct link with the NYPD," added Hollis.

The meeting broke up as they all shook hands. Hollis and Ron walked out together while Horton stayed back and talked to Frank.

"This is scary, Frank, but I believe it is a major step forward. It's as if someone is taking off the boxing gloves and letting us go on the offensive."

"I think we have a good shot at it, Jeff."

"Well Frank, you'll get all the cooperation from me that I can give you. What's your next step?"

"I have to let Ron and Bob put their heads together and plan this operation. It's going to take a lot of work on both of their parts. Meanwhile, I have to catch a plane. Talk to you soon, Jeff."

Once alone, Horton sat back in his chair and pondered. *Somebody way upstairs knows something. I wonder who it is?*

At the same time, Hollis was calling his contact at NYPD. "Walter, I need to talk with you. Can we meet for lunch tomorrow, 1:00 p.m., same place...good, I'll see you then."

April 15, 1999

A deli in Downtown Manhattan

"Walter, something big has come up. This is why I didn't want to meet in either one of our offices until we are on the same page," Hollis told his friend when they had found a table at their favorite deli.

"Yes, I know, Bob."

"You know?"

"Well I do and I don't. All I know is that it came from way up at the top that you were going to give me a call and talk about some big interagency operation. Other than that, and that I am supposed to give you my full cooperation, I know nothing else."

"Well then, let's enjoy our lunch while I begin the briefing."

Walter was starting to squirm and get edgy, fiddling with his tie as Hollis walked him through the outline of Operation Fetch. Finally, he sat back in his chair, took a deep breath and said, "You really mean this, don't you? At first I thought you were going to tell me it was

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some kind of TV show, and they wanted cooperation from the NYPD. But you are really serious. I'm going to need some help to talk to the upper brass so I can have the authority to cooperate with you. This is serious stuff, and I probably will need some pull to garner the resources when I need them."

"Walter, somehow I believe it will be taken care of. By whom, I don't know, but when I report that you and I are establishing a more formal connection and that you will be the lead on Operation Fetch for the NYPD, things will happen as if someone waved a magic wand."

"Wow! This thing is really big. I get the sense it is only the beginning. Am I right?"

"I believe you are, Walter."

"Well Bob, make your call. I'll be heading back. Enjoyed the lunch."

Walter left as Hollis sat back in his chair and grinned to himself. *Somebody upstairs really knows something big.*

April 19, 1999

NYC FBI Headquarters

"Bob, I want you to meet Carl Morris and Jake Maddock." Ron Ciccio walked into Hollis's office with two of his key people. "These are two of my squad leaders who have been working on the exercises. We need to lay out some plans and schedules for ourselves. Have you chosen the people you want to run the exercises?"

"Yes, I have, Ron, but I haven't briefed them yet."

"Good. We need to work out our plans before we meet your people."

A week later Hollis called Corey Carlson and John Thompson into his office to brief them on Operation Fetch. He didn't mention the CIA or special forces other than to say that the FBI had been getting information about some possible terrorist targets, with the Twin Towers a primary one.

Carlson beamed with excitement. "Wow! We get to be the spies for a change."

Thompson, Hollis could tell, was already starting to conjure up questions.

"Bob, are we going to do this by ourselves, or do we need to bring in more people?"

“There are more people, John. We will be using two people from the NYPD as members of the mock terrorist team. There are two people from the military who have been working with some of the think tanks on the exercises and running the scenarios in mockups. We’ll meet with them later. Right now, the three of us need to build stronger ties to the NYPD. I have a contact there who is onboard.”

“Well let’s get started.”

“Take it easy, Corey, I’ll be getting with you and John when some things are put into play at the NYPD. For now, I want both of you to start reading through the exercise material. Next week we meet with the NYPD and start talking about who will have what responsibilities and roles.”



A week later, Captain Walter Johnson, Joe Brewer and Gino Bonomo of the NYPD met with Hollis’s team. They spent about an hour to establish a training schedule for the first exercise. Two days later Hollis got a call from Fitzpatrick for Hollis to meet with Ted Murphy, security head of the Twin Towers. The path had been cleared to set up the exercises at the Towers. He, Captain Johnson and Ted Murphy planned to meet on April 30.

Two days later they sat in Murphy’s office in the Towers.

“I don’t know who you know, but somebody has a lot of pull,” Murphy told them. “I’ve been given some sketchy information that you are going to run mock terrorist exercises on my Towers and none of my people will know anything about the exercises or who any of the mock terrorists are.”

“That’s about right,” said Hollis. “There will be four people, two from the FBI and two from the NYPD. They are just starting to work as a team as we speak. You and you alone, Ted, can be privy to their exercise training and execution.”

“Well then, as the head of security, I need to give you boys a tour of the facilities.

“It will probably be a couple of tours. We have the plans for the first scenario with us. The sooner you become familiar with this first exercise, the sooner we can have our people meet with you. It will be as if they are casing the towers.”

“I see the two of you have been already doing some planning. I’ll start to study the first exercise and let’s plan that I meet with your

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people on Tuesday, May 4.”

“Ted, I appreciate your cooperation. Let’s hope this proves to be worth the effort of everybody involved.”

May 4, 1999

Manhattan, NY

Twin Towers

The four members of the exercise team met in Ted Murphy’s office. He had already set up his computer and was using it to show the pictures and layout of the Towers. It was a neat setup that Ted had to project the images onto a large screen. He started with the typical numbers: number of floors and elevators and the location of mechanical/electrical rooms.

“I’m impressed by the magnitude of it all,” interrupted Carlson, “however, we want to know about the numbers of accesses and locations of those accesses in the Towers.”

“And, we’re very interested in the parking garages,” added Gino. “But the biggest thing we need to know is where the security sensors are, especially the cameras: their location, field of view, and where the control rooms for all the sensors are located.”

It turned out to be a long day for all five. The mock teams had taken in a great amount of information and now needed to work out their detailed plans for the first exercise.

May 17, 1999

Manhattan, NY

Twin Towers

“The first exercise will use four vans, two for each Tower,” said Thompson, as he and the other three members of the exercise team briefed Hollis, Captain Johnson and Murphy on the first exercise. “The idea is that no van will have a full bomb. The bomb will be partly in two vans. I will drive one of the vans and Brewer will drive the other into the North Tower parking garage. Joe and I will deliver our items to our recipients, then seek out the appropriate mechanical/electrical room and plant smoke bombs that are activated remotely. These smoke bombs are the diversion. Cory and Gino will execute the same operation in the South Tower. The vans will not arrive at the same time.”

Brewer displayed one of the smoke bombs on the video screen.

“I’ll put one of these in a location that can receive a signal from outside the towers.”

“I will have the master clock,” said Gino. “I’ll call out the time sequences to go from one task to the next. Once I’ve established that all smoke bombs have been planted properly, I’ll make the call for the two vans in each tower to meet in their predesignated garage area. Once all four vans are in place, one of the team members will remotely activate the smoke bombs.”

“Won’t two vans meeting in the garage area look suspicious?” asked Captain Johnson.

“Not really, Captain, there are hundreds of vans in the garages at any moment,” Murphy replied.

“Returning to where we left off,” Thompson continued. “I will radio our fifth man to activate the smoke bombs. He will be outside of the towers.”

“Our supposition is that the people in the smoke bomb area will start to evacuate by using the stairs,” added Brewer, showing them on the slide.

“The security people will then start their procedures for a fire in the building. This will prompt more alarms. In the chaos, the vans exchange the necessary components to build a bomb in each van.” He showed the next chart.

“The vans will then go to their target areas. The team will evacuate the buildings and a second team member will remotely activate the alarm bombs in the vans all at once.”

“The plan seems simple. Even so, there are problem areas,” Gino said, pulling up the next chart. “The first problem is getting the vans into the garage area past the guards.”

Carlson brought out a miniature bomb and started taking it apart. “The think tank has already worked that problem and has divided the components and camouflaged them to get past the guards.”

Brewer showed a drawing of the towers and the location that a transceiver outside of them would need to be located to communicate to the smoke bombs. “The next problem is to get access to the necessary mechanical/electrical rooms and be able to plant the smoke bombs while insuring that a remote signal can communicate with each.”

“How do you get access to these mechanical/electrical rooms?”

asked Hollis.

“We got the access from Murphy, and we are using a small receiver to pick up a small transmitter that we have set up outside the Towers.

“A third problem we have is to know the viewing areas of the garage where we can have the two vans for each tower meet and not be seen,” Carlson said, showing how they would get the locations from the time they spent in the control rooms. “If all goes well, the team will leave their vans and exit the building, each team member going to a different location. One member of the team will remotely activate the bombs in each of the vans simultaneously.” Carlson indicated the most likely place on an area map of the Twin Towers where one would activate the bombs.

“Pardon the interruption, but I think we missed something here,” Hollis said, scratching his head. “How do you know where to place the smoke bombs in the mechanical/electrical rooms such that a transmitter from the outside can activate the smoke bombs, especially all at the same time?”

“The outside transmitters are regularly sending a signal that will not activate the smoke bombs but can be received by a handheld sensor with a strength of signal readout. Each one of us will have one of these...” Brewer picked up a small sensor from the conference table.

“Even so, Joe, having you walking around the room with this sensor looks a little odd to me.”

“Not really, Bob, my people see the maintenance crew with similar gadgets all the time,” Murphy offered.

“I can understand that, but what bothers me is having explosives in these vans.” Captain Johnson nervously moved in his chair. “How much of an explosion are you going to have?”

“Since this is a mock terrorist exercise, even though the vans are loaded with real explosives, the receivers in the vans do not activate the explosives. Instead, they sound an alarm,” Thompson reassured them. “In addition, the three of you will be observers. Murphy in the North Tower Control room, Hollis in the North Building garage area, and Captain Johnson in the South Tower.”

“Guys, looks like you’ve done your homework. See you tomorrow,” Hollis congratulated them as he got up from the conference table.