

GERARD J. CARISIO

Resolved

“So: our intent is to kill this guy, and here’s how we’re going to do it.”

While he talks I cycle my pen. The lower half of the barrel rotates, presenting the 0.5 mm mechanical pencil. It is out of lead. I cycle the pen again and the black ink tip comes into view. I consider this for two seconds, and then select the red ink tip.

“Okay, let’s make sure that everyone who’s supposed to be here is in here.”

I have passed through three locked doors to sit in this room. Each one had a cipher lock, a keypad that requires a numerical code to unlock the door. The final door was sealed with a code that I did not know, and a young man shielded the keypad from my view while he pressed the buttons. He opened the door for me with a small, apologetic smile.

Now that same young man takes roll, calling out each person in the room by job title instead of name. There are not enough seats, and some men must stand on the white tiles, leaning against the wall with arms crossed, watching the changing images on the high definition screen. The most important gather in their places around a small table. My chair is in the corner.

“The goal is, send the K₁’s in the mouth of the cave first, kill people, and then send in the K₃’s, collapse the cave, kill more people.” He lets those words hang in the air for a minute, looking around the room to see if any of the elders have raised an eyebrow. He has been working on that mustache for a month now, and seems more confident than he was without it.

A thought soars in from the back of my mind. I raise the hand with the pen in it: “If you want to do it that way, we can’t kill him on Wednesday. We’ll have to do

it Friday.” I have used this tone before to say things like, “I won’t be able to get that in the mail today” and “I need to make sure I pick up some milk on the way home.”

My explanation reveals that dozens of young men and women must begin building the specialized bombs that this mission requires. Americans in their late teens will work twelve-hour shifts to attach tailfins and nosecones to 2000 lb bomb bodies filled with high explosive. Many of these bomb bodies have been dutifully shipped around the world for decades, positioned in proximity to global hot spots, and then returned unused to one of three arsenal ships that the United States keeps afloat at all times.

We compromise. We will kill him on Thursday. The meeting adjourns with serious eyes, hands shaking, hands patting backs, hands pressing the keypads on the doors to release us.

A General disagrees two days later. We do not ask why. We do not kill at all.



GERARD J. CARISIO is an Air Force officer and a veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom.