TERRORISTS SEIZE HOSTAGES IN ARCADIA:
LACONIA COMMANDOS ON ALERT:
A SCENARIO FOR SIMULATION IN
NEGOTIATIONS WITH TERRORISTS HOLDING HOSTAGES

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May 1979
The Rand Paper Series

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BACKGROUND

Arcadia

Arcadia has not suffered the high levels of terrorism activity experienced in some of its neighboring countries, although there have been a few spectacular hostage incidents in which foreign terrorists, Palestinians and others, carried out operations on Arcadia's territory. These, however, were not directed against Arcadia's citizens. Foreign terrorists, principally from Laconia, also have carried on some activity in Arcadia: On two occasions they robbed banks, and on one occasion, they kidnapped a wealthy Arcadian industrialist for ransom to finance their operations in Laconia. The industrialist was freed upon payment of a multi-million dollar ransom. Finally, there have been reports that terrorists from Laconia have been moving through Arcadia and at times meeting clandestinely with terrorists from other parts of the world.

Nevertheless, Arcadia has adopted a relatively relaxed posture with regard to terrorism. In the two major hostage incidents where its nationals were among those seized, the government made largely symbolic concessions to the terrorists, in one case permitting them

*The following scenario was prepared for use in a planned exercise in negotiations with terrorists holding hostages. It was used in the preparation of a script for a simulation conducted at the second annual meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology in Washington, D.C., May 21-23, 1979. The game itself involves a control group plus four teams representing the governments of Arcadia and Laconia, the terrorists and the hostages. Separate instructions, not contained in this paper, are to be given to control.
to fly out of the country with their remaining hostages after they had released all local nationals in their hands. The police of Arcadia have generally been cooperative with the police of neighboring countries in combatting terrorism, but have been limited by local attitudes toward the government of Laconia.

Although the two countries had always been friendly, troops from Laconia occupied parts of Arcadia a generation ago. Older citizens still remember this occupation with some bitterness. The younger generation of Arcadia regarded some of the measures taken in Laconia to combat terrorism as repressive and indicative of what they saw as Laconia's inherent militarism. Although they did not regard Laconia's terrorists as heroes, they liked Laconia's government less and opposed too close cooperation between Arcadia's and Laconia's governments.

Similarly, the government of Arcadia, while friendly with the government of Laconia, had on occasion criticized some of Laconia's harsher anti-terrorist emergency measures. While applauding the daring rescue by Laconia's commandos of hostages held in another country, the government of Arcadia also criticized Laconia's high-handed violations of other countries' sovereignty in pursuing terrorists. On one occasion, Arcadia's police arrested four members of a Laconian paramilitary team who had crossed into Arcadian territory. Harsher Arcadian critics accused Laconia of sending hit teams abroad and demanded prosecution of the four Laconian personnel. The government chose instead to publicly charge the men with violation of Arcadia's weapons laws as a rebuke and warning to Laconia and then returned them to Laconia without a trial. The incident briefly strained relations between the two governments.

With this in mind, the government of Arcadia found itself in an awkward position when its own border police arrested three members of the principal Laconian terrorist group. One of the three, a woman, was connected to the earlier kidnapping of the Arcadian industrialist. Clearly, she would have to be charged and tried although the government of Arcadia did not relish the idea of holding any foreign terrorists in its prisons as it felt this might invite further terrorist attacks against its citizens. The other two apprehended were not yet
linked to any crime on Arcadia's soil—police were still checking. However, the Laconian government wanted them badly for their involvement in terrorist operations in that country. Laconia promptly demanded their extradition in accordance with an existing treaty. That, in turn, provoked some demonstrations in Arcadia against extradition of the two; local Arcadian critics of Laconia charged the two could not possibly receive a fair trial given the repressive emergency measures in effect.

Laconia

Laconia has suffered from growing terrorism. Several of its government officials and business executives have been assassinated or kidnapped, its airliners hijacked, and terrorist bombings are frequent. Its terrorists are part of an international network of terrorism. They have taken part in operations abroad on their own behalf and on behalf of terrorists in other countries. Foreign terrorists have participated in joint operations on Laconian territory.

Consequently the government of Laconia has assumed a leading international role in combatting terrorism. In the wake of some particularly shocking terrorist incidents, Laconia's legislature passed an emergency bill giving the police unprecedented powers for a limited period; the bill must be renewed every six months. After yielding to terrorist demands in the first major episodes, Laconia reversed its policy and adopted a no-concessions policy to which it has adhered rigorously. It created a special paramilitary commando force which has been used several times domestically, once after a group of terrorists had been located and surrounded by local police. In this particular episode, a shootout ensued in which all six terrorists were killed. This result brought some criticism from abroad and even caused some negative reaction at home on the part of those who suspected that the commandos had been instructed to take no prisoners. The commando group regained widespread popularity when its members successfully rescued a plane-load of passengers hijacked abroad.

To keep track of its extremely mobile terrorist adversaries, the Laconian government also created a vast intelligence network abroad.
On several occasions, Laconia was able to tip off police in other countries, leading to several arrests abroad of Laconian terrorists. On two occasions its own commandos had covertly entered other countries to apprehend and bring back wanted terrorists. It was not clear in those cases whether Laconia had local permission to make the arrests or if it had acted on its own initiative with the other governments merely giving ex post facto authorization to avoid embarrassment.

In the case of the three terrorists recently arrested by Arcadia's police, it was not clear what exactly had happened. According to one interpretation, Arcadia's police had acted on their own intelligence in arresting the three. According to another version, Laconia's intelligence operatives had tipped Arcadia's police off regarding the whereabouts of the three. A variation of the second version suggested that Laconia's intelligence operatives had operated in league with friends in Arcadia's police who opposed their own government's "soft line" on terrorism. Once the three were in Arcadia's custody, but before Arcadia could make a political decision at a higher level to send at least two of them out of the country, Laconia promptly and publicly demanded their extradition, thus putting the Arcadian government on the spot. How else could one explain how Laconia had known of the arrest and acted so fast before the three had even been processed by the Arcadian police and the word of the important arrest reached cabinet level in Arcadia?

The Terrorists

The arrest of the three put the Laconian terrorists in a difficult position. Their ability to operate in their own country had been greatly reduced by the emergency police measures. Their repeated attempts to obtain the release of their imprisoned comrades had failed. Although they still had a number of operating cells dispersed in other countries and supporters at home in Laconia, their capabilities had been eroded by recent successes of the Laconian police and they felt their credibility at home to be eroding, with consequent loss of support if they were not able to bring about some spectacular success of their own. Thus, the arrest of their three comrades in
Arcadia both demanded their response, especially as one of the three was an important leader, and provided them with an opportunity. Once any of the three had been extradited to Laconia they felt their chances would be slim of springing them by arranging an escape from prison or by seizing hostages and demanding their release. On the other hand, they saw the Arcadian government as vulnerable. They knew it did not particularly want to hold or extradite the three and would yield if provided a "reasonable" excuse such as the necessity to save the lives of hostages.

THE INCIDENT

An annual ball of the Arcadian-Laconian Friendship Society in Arcadia's capital provided such an opportunity. Its members included nationals from both countries. It was a non-political event and therefore not likely to be closely guarded. At the same time, diplomatic officials from Laconia, often the Laconian ambassador himself, were likely to attend.

The ambassador indeed did attend. Embassy security officials argued unsuccessfully against his going and again unsuccessfully for him to be accompanied by bodyguards. He rejected their advice on grounds that given the still strained relations resulting from the arrest of the four Laconian commandos, and the widespread criticism in Arcadia of Laconia's exaggerated fears of terrorists at home—an explanation given for its harsh police measures—it simply would not do for him to show up at the ball surrounded by armed bodyguards like some comic opera general. Besides, ever since the occupation, Laconia's diplomatic representatives had to be especially attentive to Arcadia's understandable sensitivities regarding anything like a militaristic presence. Finally, the ambassador was scheduled to award some medals to several distinguished citizens of Arcadia, a deliberate attempt to offset the heavy diplomatic pressure being exerted on Arcadia to extradite the terrorists. Anyway, the event was a merely routine social affair which the ambassador reasoned would not even be noticed by terrorists let alone attacked by them. His bodyguards could accompany him in a lead car to the ball but he would enter alone.
The ambassador's sense of diplomacy was excellent. His sense of what terrorists would or would not do was faulty. The gala affair provided the only easy opportunity the terrorists saw to obtain their objective. Their plan was hastily organized without the usual discussions, preparations, and rehearsals. In fact, it was carelessly executed, as if the terrorists had merely come together to play a game. But they were at least in part successful. Arriving at the ball in two limousines, dressed as the other guests, they quickly shot their way past the few guards at the entrance (not much security had been provided by Arcadia either), wounding two but killing none of them, and then managed to seize a fair number of hostages, prominent citizens of Arcadia and Laconia, including personal friends of high ranking officials in both governments, and by luck, Laconia's ambassador. There was no chance of the terrorists escaping—they had not intended to do so. Arcadia's police and Laconia's own bodyguards quickly responded. Reinforcements arrived and the upstairs rooms to which the terrorists had retreated with their hostages were surrounded.

THE DEMANDS

Without the usual accompanying political manifesto, the terrorists demanded the immediate release of their three comrades arrested by Arcadia. Finding themselves in possession of the ambassador of Laconia they added the demand that Laconia also release a number of specified prisoners. (That the second demand was appended was gathered from the fact that the demands for the release of the first three were conveyed in a typed message with the additional demands written in.) They demanded specifically that the three in Arcadia be delivered to them and then that they all be allowed to fly out of the country with their hostages on an airplane provided by Arcadia. Before that took place, however, Laconia was to release and arrange for the safe passage to another country of the terrorists it held. Once this was verified by the news media, the exchange in Arcadia would take place. The lack of specificity of the arrangements in the terrorists' demands, which was unlike them, was interpreted by intelligence analysts in both Arcadia and Laconia as further evidence that the operation had
been hastily assembled and that the terrorists launched it without certainty as to what or who they would catch. This in turn suggested to both governments that (1) to take such risks meant that the terrorists were desperate and (2) there would be some room for negotiation and maneuver as the terrorists were probably making their decisions as they went along. This view was reinforced by the fact that the terrorists holding hostages did not include any of the principal leaders of past operations.

The incident presented both governments with dilemmas. The Arcadian government could on the one hand interpret the incident as an opportunity to rid itself of the three terrorists it did not particularly want to prosecute or extradite. Consistent with the past handling of such incidents, it could now release them in the name of humanity. This was not merely a cynical maneuver. Lives were at stake. Laconia, whose ambassador and other prominent citizens would be saved by such a decision, could not easily criticize Arcadia. But would Laconia release any of the prisoners it held? This was unlikely. Would the terrorists, who were perceived as having added the demand for the release of prisoners held in Laconia as an afterthought, be persuaded to drop that demand and release all hostages in return for the release of the three Arcadia held? What if the terrorists agreed to release only Arcadia's nationals and keep Laconian nationals hostages? Or should Arcadia finally draw the line and make no concessions as the terrorists had now directly attacked the government of Arcadia? After all, Arcadia's police had risked their lives in apprehending the three. Policemen were now lying wounded outside the building where the terrorists held their hostages. Laconia would not go along with any concessions Arcadia might want to make anyway. And by releasing the three terrorists, would not Arcadia assume an indirect responsibility for their future crimes?

Had the incident occurred within its own territory, Laconia would have rejected any demands, although it might proceed with negotiations to gain time to prepare an assault. If it were a hijacked plane in some Third World country, Laconia might have dispatched its commandos buying permission to land with promises of future economic or military
aid. Laconia had little faith in Arcadia's police being able to execute a successful rescue operation. Should it offer to send its own commandos if Arcadia would permit them to land? Laconia knew that Arcadia was sensitive on this point. Should it lean heavily on the Arcadian government to reject the terrorists' demands? What if Arcadia chose to yield and Laconia did not, and the terrorists threatened to kill not Laconia's nationals but Arcadia's nationals? Would this exacerbate the already strained relations between the two countries?

The terrorists too had many decisions to make. Their ultimate objective was to free all of their imprisoned comrades, but the reason for launching this operation was to free the three held by Arcadia. How much leverage did they now hold over Laconia? Enough to hold to their demands for the release of both Arcadia's and Laconia's prisoners? What if Arcadia agreed to give them its three, but Laconia predictably rejected their demands? And what about the Laconian commandos who had ended their previous operation? Would Arcadia permit them to operate on its soil? Would the terrorists precipitate an assault by killing any of their hostages? Could they permit the hostages to participate in the negotiations in a way that would strengthen their demands?

The hostages had asked to do this. Men of intelligence and influence, the hostages, after they regained some composure following the attack, were individually unwilling to sit by idly, like so many sausages while terrorists and governments argued their worth and inevitably their fate. They thought this individually as their terrorist guards had not permitted them to speak. Finally, one of the hostages, at some personal peril, began to speak. He articulated the sentiments of the group when he told the terrorists that he was sure that he as well as the other hostages recognized the danger they—all of them—hostages and terrorists—were in, and that as a man of some experience in negotiations, he was sure he could help in seeking an outcome that would avoid tragedy. At the very least, he could facilitate communications with his government, and he was certain that his friends could facilitate communications with their government.
When he first started to speak, he was warned by the terrorists to shut up. When he continued in an even voice, a sub-machine gun was even cocked. But he continued to speak and amazingly was not shot. The terrorist guards glared, but they listened. Seeing this, several other hostages quickly seconded his suggestion. Finally, one of the guards said he would communicate their offer. Satisfied that he had made an important breakthrough to the terrorists, the man who spoke now wondered whether the other hostages would share his views. Or would they begin bickering among themselves, some supporting the predictable positions of their governments, others trying to save their own lives? Would they become a unit? Would the terrorists permit them to do so? Would their governments?

Communications were excellent. The terrorists could communicate with the police surrounding them although they refused to do so. Instead they utilized the telephones in the upstairs rooms where they had barricaded themselves with their hostages. They had two outside lines. One they used to open a direct line to the government of Arcadia? With the other, they could talk to the news media, or even by direct dial, the government of Laconia. With the commencement of the crisis, the government of Arcadia immediately opened a direct phone line to the government of Laconia.

The two cabinet level crisis teams in Arcadia and Laconia convened almost simultaneously. Upon notification from the capital, the commander of the Laconian commandos alerted his men; within minutes they were ready to move. Catching a brief glimpse of an individual--one of the terrorists--moving from the room where the hostages seemed to be held to another location in the building--police at the scene of the incident instinctively leaned into their sights. The leader of the terrorists listened as his guard told him of the hostages' offer. The play begins: