

## Chapter 20: Pathfinders Arrive In Paradise: Ulcinj Montenegro Day 1

A middle-age, American couple flew into Tivat Airport from Milan. They taxi from the airport to the Regent Porto Montenegro where they have reservations. They ask the the concierge for dining recommendations and for an English speaking driver to Ulcinj one-way. After breakfast they their driver arrives. Before leaving the husband makes a call. Then they start the 50 mile trip to Ulcinj.

Assistant Chief of Commerce, Brian Norman <CIA Station Chief> meets a mid-aged couple, Mark and Jane Weldon, at the Konoba Hasanaga Restaurant in Ulcinj Montenegro for an early lunch.

“You guys definitely picked the wrong time of the year to visit here,” reports Brian Norman. “It has some of the best Adriatic beaches. But that does not start to draw the tourist and beach goers until mid-May. This time of year we just watch the trucks go by from café row. We like to start at morning at ‘Buongiorno’, move to ‘Piccolo Caffè’ and lunch at ‘Kino café’. We wander down to ‘Sunset beach bar’ where we can watch the Adriatic for activity and beautiful sunsets.

“The compound in which you are interested is across the bay from ‘Sunset beach bar’. With a good pair of Leica binoculars you can gaze northwesterly to see the compound shore side at about 580 yards. You can also watch the best road access approach to the the compound from there.

“Reservations have been made for two adjoining rooms each with a kitchen and lounge suite at the Hotel & Beach Club Mediterraneo Liman which is which is about 110 yards East over the Lima Beach to the hotel. The reservations are for two rooms with balconies with sunset view.

“The owners of the two buildings in which you have an interest are actually owners of the Apartments Eneida. They have those two building under long term lease with a small Italian property management corporation. For the purposes of our discussion lets call the first building the Compound and the second the Operation Building.

“Anyway we paid a premium to obtain an Easterly view from the Apartments Eneida. That apartment building property abuts the Compound at less than 20 yards. The only apartment that view that could be obtained without raising questions is on the third floor. It has a large suite and a kitchen. But we were able to obtain an additional parking slot which may prove helpful to your efforts.

“Call me when you need warehousing or transportation. We have three vehicles available without drivers. But we can provide ‘secure-clean’ drivers within four hour notice here in Ulcinj. The vehicles are two Toyota vans and a non-discript Nissan sedan.

“We also have ‘clean and sanitized’ interpreters on a two hour notice when you need language assistance. From the Embassy I can bring down interpreters. We also have a number of health Marines if quick non-leathal reaction is needed.

“As far as operating in Montenegro, I always assume that everyone within ear-shout is English speaking and armed. So unless you are in a room with lots of white noise background, I would speak only Navajo or Comanche when people are around. Otherwise in will get reported to somebody, good or evil.

“Here is the package with your passports, drivers license, credit cards, and a few of US dollars and EU Euros. Euros is the de-facto currency of Montenegro. The package also includes architecture for the ‘safe compound’ that were filed with the local authorities. The floor plans used by real estate property management to market the structure are also included. Other information such as public utility usage are also included.

“Short of becoming enmeshed in your operation I am here for the duration of your stay and ready to help.”

“When you are ready I will take you to the driver whom the embassy provided. He is familiar with Ulcinj and a member of the US staff who is fluent in Albanian. He will be over-nighting with me. So he is available tomorrow as needed.

“Neither he or I need to know any names or details. He is unaware that there is a ‘safe house’ entity. That needs to remain so.

“Be careful. In this jurisdiction carrying a gun is bad news if you are caught. You do not have diplomatic status. So please do not get into trouble.

“So if you are ready let’s go do the intros with Randy.”

Brian Norman makes the introductions and helps load the sedan. He hands Randy a list of cafés restaurants, hotels, and apartments to which the Weldons are to be shown. He then sends Randy and the Weldons on their way.

“Thanks for getting me out of the Embassy,” begins Randy. “That place can be very boring in the off-season. This is my third year here.”

“I understand you represent a major hotel restaurant chain looking to develop opportunities in the region. Should I be ready to invest? Just joking.”

“That’s right. It is public knowledge as announced in our prospectus and in a recent public announcement in the Wall Street Journal that US tourist industry is moving in this direction.”

The Weldons fire a bunch of question at Randy

“Do you go to Ulcinj much?”

“How are the beaches?”

“How well do the tourist do with Euros being the de-facto currency?”

“What do you not like about the Ulcinj and Montenegro?”

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For a little more than four hours the questioning goes on and on. The only relief that Randy has is when the Weldons stop at one of the cafés restaurants, hotels, and apartments on the list. When they do stop, it is pretty much the same dance at each establishment. Walk-around, pictures, note taking, discussions off to the side. From Randy’s perspective the endless search or tour or whatever with the questions seems to be coming to an end.

“Randy, we would like to return to the Hotel & Beach Club Mediterraneo Liman. We have reservations for a few days. Once we check-in and off-load our baggage we would like to supper at the Fisherman’s Restaurant. You are welcome to join us for supper on our expense account if you like.”

“No, Mr. Weldon. I think I shall notify Brian that I am finished and ready to return o Tvita unless he needs me in Ulcinj for tomorrow,” responds Randy as he makes the final drive back to the hotel.

At the hotel as the bellhops unload and move the baggage to the front desk, the following goodbye sequence takes place.

“Randy, you have been very informative and helpful in our search. When we establish the enterprises here we will have to comp you for all you have done to help overcome the first big hurdle of introduction to a charming seaside locale. Here take one of my personal business card.”

“Thank you, Mr. Weldon. I will look forward to being your guest in the future,” says Randy while thinking to himself, “NOT!”

“Enjoy the ride back to Tivat,” echo the Mr. Weldon while thinking to himself, “I think we wore him out today. Oh well he’s young.”

At the front desk the Weldons register for the two rooms overlooking the Lima beach. The bell captain has the bellboys truck the baggage to the fifth floor rooms. Mr. Weldon indicates to the bellboys to just place the baggage on the dressers and the bed. The bellboy shows the entry portal to the adjoining room, opens the balcony breeze way, and checks the honor bar. The bellboy is nicely tipped by Mr. Weldon.

Mr. Weldon calls the concierge to make arrangements for a courtesy car and reservations for two at the Restaurant Fisherman Hari for supper.

“We need the sedan tomorrow for transportation,” texts Mark Weldon to Brian Norman . “Let us know where to meet you so we can swap the vehicle.”

Shortly a text message is received, “Roger that. Try Buongiorno 0945 to 1015 hours. Okay?”

“Good to go. See you in the AM,” texts Mark Weldon. He then returns to supper. A little over an hour later he request the courtesy vehicle to provide a return ride to the hotel.

Upon returning to their hotel. Jane and Mark stop briefly at the hotels balcony lounge overlooking the Lima II beach and the darkened, inactive Operations Build. It does not take long for the two of them to decide they have had enough ‘work’ for the day. They then retreat to Jane’s room. Mark then suggest starting the day at 0730 hour with a knock on the adjoining rooms common door. He the proceed through the common door. Before finishing the day he grabs his binoculars, Pinto Noir, and a tumbler heading for a last balcony reconnaissance. The beach and the Operations Building both look abandoned for the night. The evening chill drives him back inside quicker than he anticipated.