

Chapter 21: Pathfinders' Awaken In Paradise: Ulcinj Montenegro Day 2

Early the next morning before breakfast Mark Weldon asks the concierge for a ride in the courtesy vehicle to Buongiorno arriving around 0945 hr today. The concierges suggest that the vehicle will be ready to depart in about an hour and a half to make the 0945 hr meeting.

After breakfast the Weldons approach the concierge desk a couple of minutes before 0945 hr. The concierge informs them that the vehicle is running just a bit late. But they should be leaving momentarily. Shortly the Weldons board the vehicle, a sedan. They arrive at Buongiorno about fifteen minutes later.

"Brian, sorry we are running just a bit late this morning. The courtesy vehicle put us just a fraction behind schedule," greets Jane Weldon.

"I am here to help anyway short of participating in your activities. I have the sedan parked outside if you guys are ready to drive off. Or is there more?"

"It appears we may need an additional operational spot," announces Jane. "We reviewed the architectural plans you provided yesterday. We feel certain that we can 'acoustically trap' conversations from the Operations building. That building has large window surfaces. That presents us with a number of opportunities to employ external, passive techniques. That will not require a breaching of the Operations building. The Compound can not be handled in the same manner. If the decision is made we will need to use active techniques.

"So for the immediate future we would like to obtain another a little further down the street which has a line-of-site view of the Operations building site that fronts the bay water. The Villa Zikic just a little ways South along bb Ćazima Resulbegovića would be ideal. The higher the room the better. A balcony would also be helpful.

"If this can not be done we might need a Bavaria 35 SportHT yacht in size and class. These appear to be rather common here.

"Question for you, Brian. Do people fly drones around here over the beach areas?"

"They fly drones and kites of various sizes and shapes all over most of coastal Montenegro," answers Brian.

"The Zikic is not as nice as the Hotel Mediterraneo Liman so I did not have it on my radar. But yes I can check. In fact let me hitch a ride over to the Hotel Mediterraneo Liman. The I walk to the Zikic and check. You need a top floor room with a balcony that faces across the inlet toward the Apartments Eneida. With it being off-season and slow, we should not have a problem."

"Let's dally a while longer so it looks a more like a social meeting than business."

"Sounds like a plan," says Mark. "If you find a rental for us, let it for the same duration plus a few days."

"Roger that," responds Brian. "What do you think of the politics back home?....."

After about a ten-twelve minute elocution of various opinions, talking point reviews, reports of latest opinion polls, and a comparison of today's humor with Will Rogers style humor all three are shaking the heads with good natured laughter. By that time the coffee has been consumed and

everyone is ready to drive towards the Hotel Mediterraneo Liman. Mark stops the sedan and lets Brian exit in front of the Villa GranSasso. Mark then continues up the street to the Hotel. As Mark parks the sedan, Jane receives a cell call.

“Walk down the stairs in front of your Hotel. Watchful is Groucho’s word for today,” sounds Brian.

As Mark and Jane walk down stairs in front of the Hotel, they see Brian rise from the pebble beach, walk to the stairs, halt on the third step, bend to tie his shoe, and leave an envelope on the step under a small piece of tile. Brian continues to the top of the stairs not noticing the Weldons as they pass. Reaching the third step from the bottom Jane sits down and Mark continues to the bottom, turns, and begins talking the Jane. He helps her rise after the talk concludes. They continue down the beach for a little ways with the envelope in Jane’s hip pocket.

Returning to their Hotel room they they examine the envelope’s contents. In it they find a Villa Rikic room key and a business card for a Cory Worth form Dallas. The note on the card reads, “Mark you have my room for the next hour. You owe me you lucky guy. Signed Cory.”

“Well big boy shall we amble over that a way for a quickie,” suggests Jane. “Relax I mean for quick look from the balcony. It might be helpful in our planning.”

Just before leaving Mark approaches the concierge. He requests that the bags in their room which have the green ribbon tied through the handles be loaded in the sedan. Mark hands a second set of keys and a tip to the concierge, explaining that they will need to deliver these bags to friends who are arriving shortly and another facility.

Leaving the Hotel’s concierge they begin their walk-about. As the what looks like an amorous mid-aged couple sauntering down the local shore line road ‘bb Cazim Resulbegovic” boots on the ground surveillance begins. Jane begins to note, “The Zikic will give us a more distant view but it will be more “straight-on’ flatter with less distortion.”

At the end of their brief walk to the Zikic they enter and go up the steps to the third floor. Their room is 2A. It has a good view across Liman Bay. It would be superb for a sunset photo-opt. As they enter they realize that Brian left a pair of Leica 8x56 GeoVid binoculars.

Using the laser range finder of the Leica binoculars Jane announces, “The distance from the corner of this balcony to the corner of the Operations building where the conference room is is 179 meters or about 196 yards.

“On a nice day like today the laser range finder worked well.”

“Bring the your binoculars girl friend,” quips Mark. “Let’s walk around a bit more to see if we find anything else that might be helpful before have to report.”

Jane <Wellington> and Mark <Wells> Weldon exit the Zikic to the local shoreline road and begin to walk towards their Hotel. Shortly they abandon the local road preferring to walk down the steps leading to the beach walk. Periodically they halt and use the binoculars and their cell phones to record the leisurely promenade on a nice Adriatic afternoon.

Taking a short break from their stroll along the Liman beach they return briefly to the Hotel. Quickly, Jane returns to their room for the key and reservation confirmation for the project's room at the Apartments Eneida and their Jane and Mark Mathis legend artifacts. While Jane is upstairs, Mark asks the concierge for the telephone number of Apartments Eneida Restaurant. Mark moves outside to where he previously parked the sedan. Opening the car he slides in and calls the Apartments Eneida Restaurant as Mark Mathis to book supper reservations for 1800 hr. After confirming that they are guesses who will be arriving shortly.

By that time Jane has returned and joins Mark Mathis for a short ride to Old Town Ulcinj, then back towards the Hotel and along the shoreline road, bb Cazim Resulbegovic, to the the main entrance of the Apartments Eneida.

Arriving at the Reception Desk in the main lobby of Building 3 Mark Mathis registers. As previously booked the bellboy carts their baggage to the third floor 2B. The bellboy places the bags as on the neo-modern dresser and checks the honor bar.

“Where should I park?” asks Mark. “Can I park on the flat top Building 1. I love the view of Old Town Ulcinj. I would love to setup my cameras right there for the week.”

“Sir, I do not know about setting-up cameras for a week,” answers the bellboy. “Even we have gypsies and thieves. Just put the Eneida Parking Pass on your dash . Then you can park in any of the three parking lots that surround our five buildings. Building 1 and Building 2 have semi-permanent renters. They are with an Italian software company from Naples. Just display the Parking Pass.”

Mark thanks the bellboy and presents him with a healthy tip.

“Building 2 or as we call it the Compound obstructs the view of the Operations Building, Building 1. So it will be useless, except to acquire photographic profiles of the attendees as they go up and down the external staircase.

“We probably need to search on the ground floors of the Compound just to check the level of security they are running using the public bathroom as Eneida guests.

“Okay, okay, I will dress slinky and tight,” agrees Jane. “It works every time. Now go down stairs and give me some privacy.”

“I will move the car to the flat roof. Please text me to let me know you are coming. Then I will begin watching for you along the local road side of the Compound.

“Take your time. I am out of here.”

During the interlude waiting for Jane, Mark moves the sedan from Building 3 to the top of Building 1, the Operations Building. He backs the sedan into one of the five available slots along the side that overlooks the Liman II Beach. While he waits he pulls out the Nikon DSRL D70S 18-200mm for a few panoramic shots of Liman II and Old Town. Mark breaks off shooting when Jane calls.

“Its too windy for me to launch a drone to watch your movement. Keep your cell active so I can track that signal. Use the walkway along the West side of the building. If you can gain any access from that side give the ‘potty search’ a try. I will look for you to emerge along the side that fronts the road. Out.”

“On the way.”

Mark posts himself where he can see Jane as she should be rounding the Compound on the local road side. Jane appears coming around the corner too quickly to have stopped long.

“The side entrance has two orderlies manning a reception desk. No public potty for anyone.”

“So that ploy did not work,” notes Mark. “What we have learned so far is that the employees consider the residents at both buildings to be semi-permanent. That tells us they have not altered the architectural plans that the current owners filed for construction approval.

“So let's ‘go a walk-about’ the Apartments Eneida and Liman II beach. Before supper.”

“How about hanging around the top of the Operation Building for a while,” suggests Jane. “Then we can use the staircase and cross in front of Building 1 on our way to Liman II Beach and the mooring wharf.”

Mark and Jane start the picture taking promenade on the Operation Building parking deck, then the wind down the stairs toward the rough boulder and trash strewn worn path to the water's edge. Then they traipse along the rough beach towards the Liman II ‘improved’ beach. They pay their Euros to walk out on the mooring wharf. The photo-shoot continues at a leisurely pace.

Then they turn around and start back towards the Apartments Eneida snapping images as they good like good tourist. They retrace their prior path and walk in front of the Operations Building again. Then they proceed until it begins to become rather difficult walking. They cut their losses and return to the staircase leading up the side of the Operation Building to the parking deck roof. From here they proceed to Building 2 or the Compound. They find that they have to retrace the prior path that Jane took past the front of Building 2 since the other approach has a privacy wall for the benefit of the first floor occupants. Before going towards Building 3 and the restaurant for supper they decide to play the ‘ipazzo americano’ scheme at the external staircase of Building 2. They start up the steps with Mark trying to sing the Grateful Dead ‘High on cocaine’ by Garcia and Hunter, but royally slewing the lyrics to an almost unintelligent cohesion.

They do not get much above the second platform on the stairs before they are challenged by a gatekeeper and sent tracking back towards to Building 3.

As they reach the ground floor Mark teasingly states, “On to supper my dear heart.” So they proceed to the Eneida restaurant. Since it is just now 1800 hr the Maître D’ is able to adjust their reservation so they can sit nearer the olive tree grove which provides a good Easterly view towards Liman II Beach and the Operations Building.

After supper they retreat to their Eneida balcony for a little Pinot Noir and hold an after action debrief. They are preparing for a virtual meeting tomorrow to discuss how to proceed. Before calling it a night they setup motion activated surveillance cameras from their Eneida room aiming towards the external staircase of the Compound and its main entrance. They also setup tapper monitors within their Eneida room as well as pre-recorded scripted dialogue typical of middle aged couples. They also put the television and lights on timers to simulate occupancy. Then they depart for the Hotel to obtain a feel for vicinity at dark. They do not challenge their earlier route, but walk along the local road to the Hotel & Beach Club Mediterraneo Liman. They also take note of the lighting on the Operations Building Parking deck, of the light emitted from that structure's external staircase, and of light shining from one room on the ground floor. Using his Nikon and firm surfaces Mark takes a number

of long exposure photos of the lighting around and above the Operations Building. The Compound appears to be very active. The balconies seem to be occupied.

Enjoying the early evening their walk to the Hotel is uneventful. They note that the Operation Building is relatively dark and appears absent of any activity except for the one bottom floor room.

“I want to put a video camera on the Parking Deck to see what level of activity we can expect from that area,” notes Mark. “I have not notice any since we left the Eneida.

“It will be good to set the Nikon and Leica binoculars down for the night.”

Finally returning in the their rooms at the Hotel they take a moment to unwind. They are careful to enter the two adjoining rooms via the same door. Now that the work day has almost ended it is time to have the pathfinder team discussion. First they turn-on some background TV broadcast for whitenoise.

“Well how are we going to deal with this puppy,” asks Mark. “We have two structures: the Compound and the Operations Building. Based on the filed architectural plans for the two buildings the only room with enough room for a twelve person meeting is the Operations Building. It has conference room on the third floor that over looks the Liman II bay and beach.”

“To me it seems we need a conservative, reliable technique,” responds Jane. “If it were in a dry climate we might be able to employ laser microphones or laser vibrometer. The MIT potato chip bag sounds good if we can insert a bag and station a high speed frame video camera where it can see the bag. We need to either insert recording equipment or use piezoelectric sound pickups on the outside of the conference room.”

“There is plenty of nearby building construction underway,” observes Mark. “So we will have good cover if we need to insert devices into the wall of the structure.

“We have another week to derive an approach, set it up, test it, and zero it before we will see their visitors arrive.”

“Bottom-line,” antes-up Jane “I think it is time to bring the full surveillance team into Ulcinj.”

“That is my thought exactly.”

After confirming the meeting times for tomorrow’s status meeting, Mark and Jane go to the balcony of Mark’s room. It is now almost 2300 hours as Ulcinj begins the quietness of an off-season night. They observe that the one bottom room light has been extinguished.

“May be our cameras will tell us whether “Elvis has left the building,” jokes Jane. “Our friends at the Compound seem to be taking a lackadaisical approach to Operations Building security. It would appear to me that that bottom room light was extinguished about the same time that East Coast office shutter for the evening. They are a good union shop.”

“I think it is time for ‘Taps’ here myself,” announces Mark.

“Breakfast about 0730? I will knock about then. Good-night.”

The two pathfinders retire for the evening to their separate suites of rooms following the same entrance and elusive common door exit by Mark.