

Chapter 23: Pathfinders Make Progress In Paradise: Day 4

Shortly before 0800 hours the last private moment that Jane is going to have for a while is interrupted by a knock on the door adjoining the two rooms' lounge space. It is followed a light wrapping on the on the adjoining door.

“Orange jah?” challenges Mark.

“Orange jah what?” counters Jane.

“Tried of smoked salmon slices ?” responds with a question Mark.

Unlocking the door, Jane lowers her pistol and asks, “Shall we saunter down for breakfast and a little promenade of the beaches until the rest of the team show?”

“Not taking any chances I see. Good trade-craft,” comments Mark.

“Let’s wait a few minutes on the balcony to confirm the arrival time and number of the locals’ car pool.”

Jane and Mark go to the balcony. They lean on the rail and wait patiently as the locals’ car pool arrives shortly.

“Our locals have arrived. Let’s go eat. That has a nice ring. Maybe I should put some bass to it and become a rapper. How about Snoopie Snoop Cat?”

“Forget it Mark. Breakfast awaits.”

A health breakfast of eggs to order, smoked salmon slices, yogurt with lots of fruit, breakfast breads, and coffee sends our intrepid mid-aged rappers on their appointed rounds with a slight twist. At each establishment they plan to request bed linen and bath service as soon as possible.

Beginning at the Eneida they wait patiently doing mundane tasks as the service staff works their room. Once the Eneida suite of rooms has been refreshed, Mark reconfirms that the room is rented through the next eighteen days for his use as Mark Watts. He also pays for an extra parking pass for the same period.

At the Zikic apartments Jane and Mark repeat what they did at the Eneida except that Mark reconfirms that the suite of rooms is rented for the next ten days for his use as Mark Wessley. He obtains a parking pass to be used on the property during that period.

Finally arriving at the Hotel & Beach Club Mediterraneo Liman Jane and Mark repeat the task insuring that the adjoining rooms are rented for the next fourteen days for his use as Mark Weldon. He secures two parking passes from the concierge and explains he may need a courtesy car or van to take him to the car rental office later in the day. He also asks about room availability. The concierge checks and tells him he has good number vacancies during this tourist lull.

As Jane and Mark await the servicing of their adjoining rooms, they both check their encrypted messages and emails.

The following messages were decrypted:

1> Darby Trawler Controller: Team's palletized equipment arrived forward staging area 0430 local time.

2> Darby Trawler Controller: Football team arriving Milan 2200 hour local today

3> Brian: Local ants on honey trail.

4> Brian: Three orders of fresh eggs scheduled for your kitchen to arrive my wholesale warehouse prior 1400 hour today. Schedule delivery inspection sign-off.

5> Brian: Talent scout to meet two casts of actors tomorrow AM for your Passion Play. Have your wardrobe room ready by Noon for first shaggy heads.

6> DorsalFin Facilitator: NSA decrypted confirmation on schedule from New York Steward International airport of Sunfish executive review team bound for Marco Polo International.

As the Hotel finishes the servicing of the adjoining rooms and leaves Mark provides a healthy tip to the staff.

Closing the door Mark exclaims, "We have a bunch of work to do over the next couple of days. Our team is basically one full day ahead of the Sunfish executive review team. What do you think, Jane?"

"I think we need to link up with Brian so we can put our hands on both vans. One I would put on the parking deck where the sedan is. That is the 'perfect' spot for a concrete penetrating listening post. That assumes the given that the meeting is going to occur in the large video room we suspect will support a high level conference. We need confirmation before we can rest easy.

"We should also check-out the palletized equipment once it is available here in the Ulcinj warehouse. If we can triage the equipment. The first priority goes to equipment with the highest probability of telling us that we have the 'root instigator' present for this review. Everything else we setup and calibrate that equipment as the need manifests itself..

"But let's talk to Brian. May be he has some ideas."

"Roger that. I will text him for a meeting."

Mark fires off the text message, "Urgent need to meet. The snowball is growing mass and speed."

Brian responds, "Busy as well. How about your place just East of the Hotel. I'll bring the wine and a local music CD you'll like. Say thirty minutes."

Mark sends the thumbs-up icon and the smiley icon.

Mark pockets his cell phone and says, "We need to meet Brian at our room in the Zikic in half an hour. He is bringing the wine. Let's stop at the Hotel's restaurant and buy a basket of heavy hors d oeuvres."

"I am ready, I will grab my bug-out bag and be ready in two minutes."

"Same here."

Jane and Mark re-assemble shortly, secure the adjoining rooms and head to the Hotel's restaurant maître d' to order a travel box of heavy hors d'oeuvres for five. The maître d' tells them the wait will be less than fifteen minutes. They can be seated if they like. But Jane and Mark decide to wander towards the Liman II beach.

They note nothing unusual at the Operations Building as they walk toward Liman II beach and begin their return to the Hotel. A bellboy sent by the concierge interrupts their walk to tell them the travel box of hors d'oeuvres is ready. So they speed-up their return walk to the Hotel. Mark pays for the travel box and they head Easterly along the shore road.

Arriving at the Zikic Apartments they enter and climb the staircase to their room. The door is open and Brian is sitting with Randy in the living room. Greetings are exchanged. Mark places the travel box of hors d'oeuvres on the kitchen serving bar. He extracts plates, napkins, and plasticware from the travel box. Brian has already opened a bottle of Pinot Noir. Mark asks Jane if she would like a glass. She responds in the affirmative. Pouring two glasses of wine Mark invites Brian, Randy, and Jane to dine on the hors d'oeuvres.

Brian begins the meeting with, "First, we have a squad of Embassy grunts standing by at Tivat to secure, off-load, and deliver the palletized equipment. Transportation has been arranged for the equipment and the grunts. They should arrive at the Ulcinj warehouse about two hours after touch-down at Tivat.

"Second, Randy and his two associates have made good progress regarding the locals in the car pool. There are three young women and one young man. The three ladies are named Sofia Vuković, Sarahs Radović, and Masha Nikolić. The young man is named Hamza Popović. All four locals seem to have some affiliation with the University of Montenegro at Ulcinj. This was gleaned this morning from the contents of the car pool vehicle.

"Yesterday evening the three women went to supper together after dropping the young man off at his apartment. The ladies were tracked after supper and brief outing. Shara was dropped at her apartment. The other two, Sofia and Marsha, room together in one apartment. We now have landlines numbers, utility billing, lease agreements, and landlord information on the four. They are all four locals of the region.

"This morning Randy superstitiously gained access to the Hamza's apartment. He is a video game programmer in his spare time as well as a cyclist and rock climber. He has a collection of American video gamer magazines and appears to be able to at least read English. Randy received a strong suggestion that he would welcome an opportunity to live in the USA. He is a huge fan of American basketball and hockey. He also has an affinity for American women. He has exchanged photographs with various women and coeds. Bottom-line, we have an opportunity to turn him easily if you gain approval.

"The women are harder to read. But we could setup a meet with them at the restaurant-club they visited yesterday.

"The fried octopus is great. Thanks for the hors d'oeuvres.

"Randy do you have anything to add?"

"I like the squid-calamari.

"But really, the Hamza wants to go to the States real bad. It would not take much to tip him towards a flip. But I do not know how valuable any information he has will be.

“Watching the car pool arrival and the interplay between the locals and the Indians- Pakistani engineers versus and the Eastern European security, one sees clear caste system.

“I would try flipping him and then attempt to validate the information he provides using the ladies and listening devices.

“After that I would concentrate on the three ladies. May be the Hamza could provide us with information about which one is most interested in a 90 Day Fiancé shot at fame and which one might control the agenda to the upcoming review meeting in which we are interested.”

“Randy, Brian, I like your thoughts,” injects Jane. “I am going to seek approval for funding just such a ‘quick flip’ effort for both of these individuals.

“I like the calamari. But I find the Adriatic style salmon thin slice sushi delightful.

“I will take the action to seek the approval,” volunteers Jane.

“Brian, how do we look for moving the remainder of the team from Tivat to or Ulcinj rooms and apartments?” asks Mark.

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“The team will land about 2200 hours this evening in Milan. They will be transported to Camp Darby, Vicenza, for an overnight stay. Their transfer to Marco Polo International for a charter flight to Tivat will begin at 0900 hours. They should arrive in Tivat as a visiting dance team by noon. They will be met on the tarmac by four vehicles that will be staggered leaving Tivat Municipality. They will arrive at the Ulcinj warehouse in forty to sixty minute intervals depending on road conditions. They are planning on being billeted in the warehouse until they can be fed surreptitiously into your area of operations. That will allow them time to setup and calibrate their equipment.

“Bottom-line, by night fall tomorrow you should be receiving members of your team with their equipment mostly ready for use.

“It sounds like we are moving forward rapidly,” notes Jane. “Our understanding is that the Sunfish executive review team leaves the States tomorrow arriving in Venice the next morning and continues to Tivat that day. They are scheduled to go directly to Ulcinj from there. Their project status review meeting is schedule to start in the afternoon of February fifth.”

“On the practical side, we need to move one of the vans to the Operations Building parking deck. If our interpretation of the ‘filed’ architectural plan is correct our sedan is directly above the conference room. I would like to have that vehicle in place since it represents the next best alternative for gaining the information we need. We just need to put the Eneida parking pass on the dash and set tamper-with indicators. The vehicle with the darkest windows is probably the best one.”

“Randy, can you or Joe Kowalski handle that right after this meeting?” queries Brian.

“I have until 1645 hours,” responds Randy. “After that Joe, Ron, and I want to be at Pirate Restaurant to meet the Operations Building’s ladies. Depending on what you tell us as you track there car we will shift to their location if they do something different this evening.”

“Jane good luck seeking the approval to flip the male Hamaz,” remarks Brian. “I would like to make contact and close the flip ASAP.”

Jane pushes forward with, “Already sent a text message alerting the DorsalFin facilitator that we may need approval and funds to flip at least one male and maybe two females.

“The Boss respond ‘be-cool’ but was positive. It just needs to be push to higher pay grades.”

“Brian or anyone else, do you have anything else that might be helpful over the next forty eight hours” asks Mark. “If not then let’s close this meeting.”

A moment when all that was heard were crickets passes.

“Well now,” begins Brain. “Once you have approval the Spook Tower will allow me to introduce a new dimension to our assets which may prove helpful in a number of related ways. I can not provide further details except to say you may have a new favorite flora.”

“Okay, so may be we will buy a bouquet of flowers later. But for now let’s go”” challenges Mark. Both Mark and Jane are professionals and are comfortable working under “need to know” conditions.

Brian gives Jane and Mark a lift to the general location of the Eneida while Randy fetches the van with the darkest windows. Once Brian lets Jane and Mark out along the local shore road in front of the Eneida, the mid-aged couple strolls towards the parking deck of the Operations Building. Along the way Mark calls Randy to announce that they are approaching the sedan. About ten minutes later Jane and Mark are on the parking deck beside their sedan. They play at working on the interior and switch items. Shortly, Randy arrives and backs into a parking space a couple of slots down the line. Mark enters the sedan, starts it, and moves it from the slot. Jane stands around ready to obstruct any other vehicle besides Randy’s van that might arrive at the parking deck during the ‘shell game vehicle parking slot swap’. But that proves to be unnecessary because Randy merely pulls from his parking slot and backs into the one Mark just vacated. The Mark backs into the slot Randy’s van had briefly occupied.

Exiting the sedan Mark insures the first Eneida parking pass is on the dash. Then he walks the second parking pass to Randy’s van. That pass is also placed on the dash. Randy helps Mark install tamper-with detection sensors and non-lethal anti-theft surprises in the van. Randy and Mark check the condition of the removable floor panels and the rack for storage batteries. Once done they exit, climb to the roof and begin installing solar panels along the top. Additional non-lethal anti-theft surprises are set on the exterior. The plan is to set 24/7 surveillance on the van with a small reaction team composed of Embassy Marines supplied by Brian.

While this technical work is underway, Jane is working the cell phone pushing and prodding for approval to conduct the multiple flips of Hamza, Sofie, and Marsha. She walks about the parking deck garnering a feel for the Adriatic Sea, pulse, and stunning view.

As Mark and Randy finish and join her she says, “I am definitely going to bring John-Boy here on vacation. Unless you guys screw things up and I become a ‘persona non grata’ as a result of this project.”

“Not to worry,” jokes Randy “We have it all out-of-control by now. And we are chasing chaos.

“I am done here. I will call Joe to have him meet me at the Zikic apartments so I can keep my date with destiny. For God and Country. Come watch us work the ladies at the Private Restaurant. If we are not there around supper time we have had to adapt to a change in the ladies dining location.

“Please give Brian a call on the flip approval and boundaries that we must follow,” closes Randy as he walks back to the apartment Zikic.

As the van – sedan parking slot shell game played, Brian was building his legend for presentation to Hamza. Courtesy of his friends across the pond, he now carries in his messenger bag and on his cell phone a number of artifacts that strongly suggest that Brian Tillingson represent a Cary North Carolina video games corporation called Geste-Werks. He has pictures of himself at various Gaming Convention events with pretty gamers Mila Kunis and Olivia Munn. He also has pictures of himself posing with famous video developers like Ed Boon, Toru Iwatani, Jason Rubin, Chis Sawyer, Masahiro Sakurai, and John Carmack. He also has a portfolio of Hamza work that represents contributions to Opensource game development projects across the globe. Along with the portfolio details he has a critical review of Hamza developer skill level and experience.

As the work day reaches mid-afternoon, Brian texts the following message to Jane, “Ready on my end to flip the coin. Waiting for you to tell me which coin to use. I like said before I like the two Euro coin best for flipping.”

Jane’s reply is as follows, “Waiting for the light switch to work. Still need the right electrician. Do you realize how expensive they are? Them and plumbers!”

About twenty minutes later Brian sends a message to Mark, “Your first two cartoons of eggs are now available for delivery. Let me know when you are home so we can deliver.”

Mark replies with, “I would rather wait until the family begins to show before baking with Mom’s recipe. Then we will be ready to bake the muffins. That puts us a good full day ahead of our promise date for our customer. Thanks.”

“Flip’em if you got’em,” messages the DorsalFin facilitator to Jane. “But first sign-off on the attached contract and return.”

Jane quickly reviews the attachment. The attachment is titled, ‘Rules of Engagement for Trawler Work’. The attachment provides the budget limits and ethical boundaries under which anyone associated with the Ulcinj Trawler is to be held. The document has four signature blocks. The first set of signatures are a set of three for team council member using pre-assigned project one-time use personal identifier code. The second set is for one associate within the project table of organization serving in a role as witness. That person shall use the pre-assigned project one-time use personal identifier code.

Jane immediately messages Brian, “Small glitch with pancake flipper. Need to meet quickly with full team on ground now! Where? Forget everything else.”

“Roger that,” Brian responds. “Moving towards wooded area South of your Z with my crew less knuckleheads. Be there in ten minutes.”

“Drop what you are doing, Mark,” interrupts Jane. “We need to meet with Brian and his team to go over rules of engagement and sign-off that we understand and will comply. The meeting place is the woods just South of the Zikic Apartments. We have less than ten minutes. Let’s hoof it and leave the sedan and van here.”

“Book-book,” replies Mark as they start a quick shuffle step around the Liman II Beach and South down the local shore road toward the Zikic Apartments. By the time they arrive Brian, Randy, Joe , and Ron are waiting in the shade.

“Heh guys, we have approval to attempt the double flip plus more if needed regarding our four locals from the Operations Building. But we have a budget limits and rules of engagement. Each of us is to read it. Then sign it using your pre-assigned project one-time use personal identifier code. We each have at least three codes so use one of them then discard it.

“Brian who has the tightest schedule?”

“Randy and Joe do. Then Ron and me.”

“Let’s go with Randy then Joe, then you, Mark, me and Ron as the witness. Ron are you okay with witnessing for Brian’s, Mark’s, and my sign-offs.”

“Sure, that’s why they pay me the big bucks.”

“Randy you are up. Just read the budget limits and then the rules of engagement,” says Jane as she extends her cell phone. She already has a copy of the budget limits and the rules of engagement using her Notepad App. That app will allow each person to review the information and then enter the pre-assigned project one-time use personal identifier code.

Randy grasp Jane’s cell phone and begins reading the document. He is not required to provide an identifier code. He merely hands it to Joe. Joe repeats the process and hands it to Mark. Joe and Randy depart for the Pirate Restaurant.

Mark reads and then enters his identifier code. He hands-off to Mark who follows the same process of reading and sign-off. He hands to Jane who has already read the document and signs-off. She hands the cell phone to Ron who completes the circle as witnessing the event and the three sign-offs prior to his. He then returns the cell phone to Jane who saves the document.

“Let’s flip’em,” declares Brian as he and Ron exit the woods and return to their individual missions. Ron will be tracking the locals’ car pool vehicle on its evening run. Brian will be placing himself at a location near Hamza so he can approach Hamza with an opportunity.

“Let’s go to the Hotel lounge and sit while I post this document,” suggests Jane. “If you will could you make reservations for about 1830 or later at the Eneida. I’d like that table we had last night if possible. I feel we need to stay close to Operations Building post-closing hours for a couple of hours tonight.”

“I agree,” chimes Mark. “That last light needs to be understood better.”

Returning to the Hotel and going to the remote corner of the balcony lounge, Mark orders two tumblers of Pinot Noir and fresh baked bread with a little garlic-olive oil. Jane attaches the signed budget limits and rules of engagement document and post with a request for delivery and read notification.

Shortly she receives a delivery receipt. She takes her first sip of Pinot Noir, sits back, and sighs, “Almost done for the day. Time to breathe.”

“The Eneida maître d' is holding our table for 1830 hours,” reports Mark. “Let’s just veg-out here for awhile and enjoy the Adriatic and Liman Beach. It’s almost paradise in a James Bond sort-of-way. Not much to do but wait for Brian and his crew to see if they can flip anyone. And then we need to wait for the rest of the Trawler team to arrive tomorrow.”

A few moments of relaxation pass while the mid-aged couple enjoys the late afternoon sun, the Adriatic, the red wine, and the garlic-olive oil dipped bread pieces.

They observe the close of business activity at the Operations Building. On its roof top parking lot the notice the locals’ car pool group emerging and entering their car. It pulls away just after 1700 hours.

“Our guys should all be in their assigned positions now,” reports Mark.