

Chapter 25: Setting the Fish Nets Day 5

Funneling the main body of the Trawler surveillance team from Camp Darby to Tivat to Ulcinj consumes all morning. The engineers, technicians, specialist, and linguists were cross-loaded into three separate sticks for the trip. The first stick of four people arrives at Brian's warehouse just before Noon. The other two sticks arrive roughly ninety minutes apart.

While the main body is being move Jane and Mark eat breakfast at the Eneida. They continue to discuss and war-game the preparations. The concrete penetrating listening team will be billeted in the Eneida room. That will give easy access and good cover to the van parked on top of the Operations Building. The laser sensor sections will be split with most of the assets going to the Zikic rooms. Ine section will be billeted at the Hotel Mediterraneo.

At the Hotel Mediterraneo Liman, Brian, Randy, and Joe occupy the adjoining rooms that Jane and Mark have used. They are on the balcony electronically tracking and awaiting the arrival of the ladies' car pool at Operations Building. Ron is doing an 'eyes-on' surveillance of the vehicle as Sofia and Marsha pickup Sarah and continue to work. He reports that the ladies seem to be carrying most of the Daisies to work with them. Everything looks normal from his view.

As the ladies park and begin their short walk down the Operations Buildings external staircase all seems well. Brian and crew hold their communal breath as they wait for the Daisies to begin to connect to the Operations Building WiFi server. First one, then two, then three and four. Finally, nine of the Daisies have surfaced. They are broadcasting their GPS coordinates. Our Daisy 4 has the same coordinates as that as the Trawler's van parked above it.

"Hot-damn," Brian exclaims. "Randy, Joe, Ron you guys sweet talked your way right into the middle of the lion's den. Nice work.

"Randy, your Albanian is best. You monitor the conference room on Daisy 4. Let me know as soon as you hear verbal inputs."

"Joe, you take the first listening watch. Scroll through the other eight until we have some idea which ones will be important enough to put ears on it rather than just monitoring audio recording. Ron, spells Joe in and hour. You guys just spell each other as needed.

"Randy, I will spell you in an hour."

Brian texts Jane and Mark, "One round locked and loaded. Awaiting target."

Mark looks at Jane and says, "Who would have thought our buds could pull that hat trick."

Jane prepares the following encrypted message to the DorsalFin facilitator, "Inside the aquarium with flowers from Claudia's Innovative Arrangements. Awaiting a smile from customer. Awaiting party balloons and favors for our special day. "

Brian and crew note that soon after each of the Daisies connects to the WiFi server the level of play interaction with each Daisy dissipates as the office returns to a level of normalcy.

When Brian checks with Joe he learns "There is a heighten level of concern among the security, developers and office support that they may need to have everyone COVID tested because of Hamza exposure and isolation. They have briefed the incoming Sunfish executive review team about the situation.

“Apparently the Sunfish executive review team arrived at the Marco Polo Airport in Venice about two hours ago our time. They will spend the day catching up on the time zone change. They will leave Venice early enough to arrive in Ulcinj by 1100 hours our time.

“They apparently plan to have a conference call this afternoon at 1400 hours local time to discuss modest accommodations and adjustments in COVID protocols.

Brian soon checks with Randy to see whether there has been any transmissions from the Main Conference Room. Randy confirms that the Daisy 4 has acquired weak verbal inputs. Randy is strongly convinced that the audio is ‘hall talk’ that is being picked up. But at this point he can not confirm active audio coming directly from the Conference Room.

As the Daisy 4 listening effort is underway, the concrete penetrating listening team is arriving at the Eneida apartment and moving into the suite of rooms from which Jane and Mark were running photographic surveillance on the Compound. Accompanying the listening team are six unarmed US Marines from Embassy. Their role is to provide eyes-on security or occupancy of the Trawler’s van. Once the equipment goes into the van they will be deployed in pairs. Each pair will have a two hour tour during the day and four hours between 1800 hours and 0600 hours the next day.

Mark and Jane walk over to the Eneida to check on the arrival of the van listening team and the Marines. When they arrive the Marines have already posted a guard roster for covering the van. The technicians, specialists, and linguist have setup house keeping giving the ladies the bedroom with the private bathroom. Other than that there are no accommodations being asked or given. Everyone will be eating off the same per diem.

Mark and Jane accompany the listening team’s section chief and ranking Marine noncom to the van. Once there Mark turns over the vehicle key and documentation to the section chief. Once the Marine sergeant has made visual contact with the van he returns to the room to set guard roster in motion. Mark shows the section chief the interior of the van the batteries and solar power charging system. Then they climb the ladder to the solar panels. It appears that the sea gulls have been practicing their modern art. Shortly there is a wrapping sound as two casually young men wander past and head to a spot near the beach. One of them is carrying a large six bladed drone. The other is carrying a camera, a control box, and binoculars. They rent a spot nearby and begin to work at play.

Mark reminds the section chief that the cameras in the ladies bedroom need to have the video swapped out each day and delivered to the Trawler’s rooms at the Hotel Mediterraneo Liman after breakfast. He asks the section chief how long it will be before the van’s concrete penetrating listening equipment will be operational. Mark and Jane want to confirm that the Daisy 4 reception from the in Conference Room correlates with the van’s listening equipment before the start of Sunfish’ status meeting. There is plenty of time, but one never knows. The section chief indicates that she thinks the gear can be a hundred percent operational in about two hours. That should relieve a good deal stress for the Trawler effort.

With the van listening post setup underway Jane and Mark saunter back to the Zikic apartments to see how if the subletting of their apartment to the laser section is going. Two separate laser microphones will be employed from the Zikic Apartment. A third laser will have its transmitter placed in one of the adjoining rooms at the Hotel with its receiver at the Zikic apartments. This array of lasers was designed using satellite mapping and GPS location for precise alignment. The laser are risky and subject to the vagaries of weather, smoke, airborne microscopic particles, and a host of alignment and vibrations concerns. But they are expensive and DorsalFin is receiving pressure to incorporate laser

sensors usage to gain field experience. The apartment has people and equipment every where. If push comes to shove, Mark and Jane will make a boots on the ground command decision to abort their usage. Jane and Mark agree that for any of the lasers to be used it must be operational by 1800 hours today. If not they will pack the laser sections to the warehouse to await return to the States.

Mark and Jane return to the Hotel to check the Daisies listening effort. They will split-up after lunch with Mark monitoring the van listening post and Jane staying with the Daisies' listening post.

Lunch is a little rushed since they started late. After a light Mediterranean meal they separate as planned.

Mark nods at the two Marines flying a partially controllable kite high above the Liman II Beach. They have found a way to control the pitch, yaw, and roll by moving the center of gravity and the aerodynamic center of force about the frame of the kite. As he walks-by he is thinking, "Yesterday I was thinking knuckleheads today they are innovators of new surveillance techniques."

With his cell phone he keys the cell number to announce his arrival at the van. As he approaches the van's side door slides open. He enters through a navy blue split curtain and notices directly that the van's sun panels have been opened as well as the floor panels. A number of quiet fans are ventilating the van creating a slight amplification of the Adriatic breeze that is already blowing.

The van's listening post section chief reports that communication seems to indicate that there is no live activity in the conference room at the moment. But there is a distant murmur like discussion outside the room in the hallway. The section's Albanian linguist will board the van before 1400 hours to provide real time monitoring of the anticipated meeting. Other than that the van is recording real time sound vibrations transmitted through the concrete to the array of sixteen piezoelectric sensors to the amplifiers and filters to the computer. The section chief reports that the location has been calibrated and is fully functional.

"Is there enough space in the van for me to be present as well as the linguist for the 1400 hour meeting," asks Mark.

The section chief responds, "It would be very tight. But we can double-up a bit."

"No that is okay. I will just wait this out in the Eneida. Please buzz me as soon as the linguist is on station, the linguist is headed back to the Eneida, and if something interesting needs our attention."

"Roger that," adds the section chief as Mark leaves the van.

Mark heads to Eneida Terrace Bar & Lounge to enjoy a low stress wait. From the Eastern most shaded corner he can watch the van and wait for time to pass. Things are out of his control at the moment. He and Jane must rely upon the 'troops and Marines' to do their thing. As he is seated he orders a light snack and 'aqua con gas'.

Donning a pair of Honeywell 31-80111 GPT XC Laser Glasses, Mark periodically sweeps the parking deck of the Operation Building, the Marines flying a kite, and the balcony activities at the Hotel and Zikic laser sites with his 8x52 Leica binoculars. He is watching for telltale laser beam scattering or visibility. When he is not actively scanning with the binoculars he is reading The Dark Hours by Michael Connelly.

His snack arrives shortly. He forgoes scanning while he eats. But shortly he finishes and continues scanning. He sees activity on the Hotel and Zikic balconies. But he has yet to detect scattered visible laser flashes. He calls Brian to insure that the three separate laser sections are setting-up and calibrating. He receives confirmation that all three sections are in the process of calibration now. He is told that they should complete in a couple of hours.

With that information he decides to relocate to the other side of Liman II Beach area. He closes the tab after purchasing another bottle of 'aqua con gas'. Then he walks back toward the Hotel and Zikic. He locates a good, comfortable looking lounge chair under awning that he rents from the Hotel's beach cub terrace. From here he begins to scan and read again as he did previously.

"Ah-ha, gotcha you little bugger," exclaims Mark about ninety minutes into his scan-read process. Immediately, he calls Jane and gives the "Milk maid is done" coded phrase to shut down all lasers immediately. Next he documents his exact location using his cell's GPS. He continues to scan for over the next half hour. But fails to see the same laser scattering phenomena. Finally he gathers his materials, close-up shop, and heads to the adjoining rooms of the Hotel. He arrives at the adjoining rooms in short order.

"Well you certainly put the frost on the laser effort," greets Jane as Mark comes through the door.

"Yea, I know," echoes Mark. "But at least we still have the van listening post and the Daisies."

"I have alerted Randy and Joe to let us know if they hear any reference to 'Pointers, Flashes, Strobes, or Laser Flashes as soon as you called," reports Jane. "Brian took off to the Zikic to insure that everyone shutdown when he told them to terminate.

"The elephants back home won't like hearing that we 'cut their toy' from the cast of this play.

"Brian is also going to extract the three laser crew but keep the two linguist to help with the van and Daisies. Randy and Joe have a good handle on Albanian. But they might miss something in the language nuances that the linguist might not miss."

"I see the Hotel laser section is already packing to leave," notes Mark "Do you want to join me in checking the draw-down at the Zikic? We can also coordinate with Brian on changes this may have."

"Let me grab my go-bag."

Jane and Mark rendezvous with Brian in the middle of chaos and bitching at the Zikic apartment.

"Well you squelched lasers just as the technicians were getting the range and angles," announces Brian. "We will begin extracting them from the Hotel and Zikic around 2000 hours. They will be moved to the warehouse and routed to the Embassy in the morning after we are certain we do not need additional bodies in Ulcinj.

"What did you see and from where? I will need that for the after-action report."

“I can provide the GPS position of the lounge chair in which I was sitting,” reports Mark. “I have it on my cell. I think what I saw was either a transmitted beam from the Hotel, a reflected bounce headed to the receiver at Zikic, or some kid playing laser tag, or someone with a ranger finder like that on my binoculars.

“Brian we have some thinking to do,” suggests Jane. With the Sunfish executive team arriving planned for around Noon tomorrow, we need to insure that Randy, Joe, and Ron know they should not meet with the ladies this evening. Please have Randy communicate with one of the Ladies after work about having to fly back to Italy on business for a couple of days or may be a little more. We wna to keep the potential flips ‘warm’.”

“Excuse me a minute, I have Joe calling,” interrupts Brian as he steps onto the balcony to talk to Joe.

“The COVID go-no-go issue has been resolved. The meeting is still a go as scheduled. All of the Sunfish executive team were tested prior to boarding and they are all vaccinated to at least the first two shots. The senior members of the team have had the booster as well. All local participants have either had COVID vaccination or have tested in the last four days. The operations director and security chief who will be sitting in with the Sunfish team the most have been boosted. So it is pretty much a non-issue.

“No one could recall Hamza vaccination status or test status. So they are going to have everyone tested tomorrow, just in case the Operations Building crew is becoming a hot-spot for COVID.

“Bottom-line the meeting is going ahead as scheduled plus everyone will be tested tomorrow as a precaution. The operations director and security chief did not see any problem the scheduled start of the meeting some time Monday. They expect the Sunfish executives to set a start time for early afternoon. There was some dragging of feet on the Operations’ locals about working on the weekends.”

“Thanks Joe for the update. Keep your ears on the rail. We are reassigning one of the linguist to help with the Daisy 4 listening post. In your triage of listening if you or Randy think you have found a Daisy that needs special attention, please assign Randy and the linguist to it. You and Ron should continue the triage listening pattern you guys established earlier.”

“Roger that,” acknowledges Joe as he returns to his listening post.

Brian lets Jane and Mark know that the COVID issue is deferred and the Sunfish status review will go as plan. That means that we need to have the Conference Room Daisy 4 and the van listening posts ready to go completely by mid-morning Thursday because they are not certain yet when the formal Friday Executive Project Status will begin.

He also confirms that he will speak to Randy to insure that Randy explains that business in Italy requires his group to return for a short trip.

Operations Building closes without any revaluations related to Friday’s’s Sunfish status review. It seems that all the local participants have already rehearsed for the meeting and prepared handouts. The only activity in the conference room that was detected by Daisy and van listening post involved check equipment and lighting issues. The closing of the day and the departures appear to be normal

and give no indication of being aware of the two surveillance listening post. All is quiet in the Operations Building shortly after 1700 except the lone last worker.

The only indication of this individual is a work light and Indian-Asian background music. The Daisy 3 near this individual acquires conversation in a language that the Trawler linguist does not recognize. It is being recorded just as a precaution. A copy will be forwarded to language analysis to determine if it has any bearing on the scheduled Sunfish meeting.

To keep up the appearance of a normal tourist routine Jane and Mark eventually return to the Eneida for supper again. They watch as the 'last working late light' is extinguished. Then they saunter back to the Hotel and sit in the Club lounge for a while before retiring to the adjoining rooms.

As they enter they see a calm, professional group relaxing after a busy day. The laser section personnel have packed baggage and equipment for exfiltration from the Hotel. Brian indicates that the Zikic laser sections are in a similar state of readiness to move to the warehouse. He plans to move the Zikic personnel first. They should begin the first load-stick to the warehouse in about ninety minutes.

Since all is in order and the only on-going activities are Daisy listening or just waiting for movement to the warehouse, Jane and Mark drift to the balcony with two glasses of Pinot Noir.

"I would really love to have Ted here to enjoy the Adriatic sunset," laments Jane as she and Mark enjoy the quiet beauty of the sunset.

"It is definitely a picture postcard kind of a place. Regardless of our mission. If things die-out with a whimper instead of a lot of smoke and noise, take a couple of weeks and have him meet you here. DorsalFin won't mind."

Sitting there on the balcony for the next half-hour or so, they discuss what it is that they hope to discover with the surveillance of the Sunfish status review.

First, in the best case they will learn that the 'master mind or money-sponsor' is physically in attendance. If not they hope to learn that person's identity or establish a usable profile to help locate the likely perpetrator.

Second, it is anticipated that actionable admissions will be uttered that can be confirmed regarding the death of three people and the voting irregularities in the Georgia election.

Third, the surveillance has the potential of detecting a conspiracy or plan to leverage the application and prior experience from Georgia in some way.

Jane and Mark kick these three expectations for the surveillance effort around for a few more moments before Brian interrupts to announce that the first of three sticks have started loading. All three sticks should be set up for their overnight bivouac at the warehouse by 2100 hours. The first stick from the Hotel should load for the warehouse in about an hour. We are moving he declares.

Jane and Mark return to their discussion as Brian leaves to check the Zikic load-out effort.

“Hold your card, we may have a winner,” announces Randy as he interrupts Jane and Mark during their balcony strategy discussion session. “It seems that the ‘late evening worker’ is speaking Urdu. Our friends at the Spook Tower are very intrigued. They are sending us Urdu and Hindi linguist who should be here early tomorrow. That asset is being drawn from our Consulate General Mumbai staff.

“I am spooling up every thing from Daisy 3 for transmission to the Spook Tower so they can delve into what may have been the range of subjects in which this individual engaged over the work day.

As Brian returns to the Hotel he greets Jane and Mark on the balcony.

“Interesting about our Urdu speaking friend,” observes Mark. “It is beginning to sound like another perturbation to the Sunfish status review.

“We should begin to build a picture of who our ‘last to leave’ person is. It could be a love-torn lonely heart or something a good deal more sinister. I am going to start stacking rendition assets just in case this soirée needs a snatch quickly.

“So if you will excuse me I will go play in the shadows a while instead of serve as the tour bus guide for the laser sections. Randy or Joe should be able to handle that shell game. It depends on which one is on a listening post now,” concludes Brian as he leaves the balcony.

As Brian leaves the balcony, Jane rises saying, “ I think I will send Ted an email to see if he can swing a visit in a few days.

“Catch you for breakfast around 0730 hours. Good night.”

Left on the balcony by himself, Mark extracts his binoculars and scans the Operations Building and the van listing post. The van’s occupants are practicing excellent light discipline. The ‘unarmed’ Marines are on-watch from somewhere near the van. But Mark is not able to acquire their location.

“May be I can get a couple of more pages in The Dark Hours before calling it a night,” thinks Mark to himself. Pushing forward in his novel for about ten-twelve pages, Mark calls it a night as well.