

officials had received an ultimatum that the terrorists were about to execute Somers. This appeared to be in response to a raid on November 25, when a team of US Navy SEALs looking for Somers killed Al Qaeda operatives holding a number of hostages in a cave near Yemen's border with Saudi Arabia. Unbeknown to US authorities, Somers had been moved days before the operation.

By Saturday, December 6, the US had tracked him to a walled compound in the village in southern Yemen. The SEAL Team 6 commandos, joined by a small number

of Yemeni counterterrorism troops, swept toward the village aboard V-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft under cover of darkness early Saturday local time. They landed several hundred yards from the compound in an effort to remain undetected.

Heavily armed and wearing night-vision goggles, the commandos breached the compound and knew in which building hostages Somers and Korkie were being held. But their advantage was already lost: The commandos saw one of the terrorists go into a small building long enough to shoot

the hostages and leave. The commandos continued the operation and recovered Somers and Korkie, who were both gravely wounded. One died on the Osprey ride to a waiting amphibious assault ship off the Yemeni coast. The other hostage died on the operating table after reaching the ship.

Despite their deaths, President Obama said his administration would not back down from using military power to free its captured citizens. Thus, this incident illustrates the different approaches to terrorist kidnappings. The US refuses to

accede to terrorist ransom demands, preferring instead to dispatch Special Operations Forces to remote locations to rescue citizens in harm's way. Other Westernized countries (under the cloak of intermediaries) are ready and willing to pay the ransoms.

Though guilt rests squarely on the terrorists conducting the kidnappings, the sad fact is that European and Westernized countries essentially guarantee that the threat will continue as long as they pour millions of dollars of ransom money into supporting Al Qaeda and their ilk. ■

- Aryeh Cohen

The Nightmare Before The End

In recent months the world witnessed with horror the gruesome beheadings of American and British hostages by ISIS, the self-proclaimed "Islamic State." ISIS is so brutal and without scruples that they make Al Qaeda look tame. Read a dramatic report of what occurred to the Western hostages before the beheadings.

The captives were taken out of their cells one at a time. In a closed room, their captors asked each of them questions about their lives—among those they asked was hostage James Foley, a 40-year-old American journalist.

After it was over, Foley was returned to his cell, which he shared with 20 or more Western hostages, and he nearly collapsed with joy. He told the others the types of questions he had been asked, personal questions, such as who his best friend was

in third grade. Foley knew that in hostage negotiations, the captors collect personal information to offer as proof to the hostages' families that they are still alive.

"They must be in contact with my family," he said optimistically.

It was December 2013. More than a year had passed since Foley had disappeared from a street in northern Syria. He was thrilled that, at the very least, his worried parents would finally have proof he was alive.

His optimism was premature, however. What looked to Foley like the beginning of the end of his incarceration was in reality the beginning of the end of his life. In August 2014 he was dragged off into the sandy hills of Syria, forced to kneel and then murdered in cold blood. A video of it was released by the terrorists and distributed around the world. For most people it was the first time they glimpsed Foley's face. It was a public end to a long, private nightmare.

Most people read about the atrocity, but not many knew how Foley (and others) got there and the physical and psychological suffering he (and they) had to endure in the underground prison-network the captors had set up. Only now, after the press and others have been able to piece together the picture, can we get a glimpse of what they went through and better understand the chilling reality of the ISIS threat.

Abduction

On November 22, 2012, James Foley was already on his way out of Syria, traveling toward the Turkish border. As he and British photojournalist John Cantlie passed through the city of Binesh, Foley decided to make one more stop—at a restaurant to work on a news story.

Foley was well aware of how dangerous his job was. Cantlie had been abducted on July 19, 2012, not far from where they were now. When Cantlie's rescue attempt failed, it nearly cost him his life. Fortunately for him, after a week in captivity, he and another hostage were rescued by members of the Free Syrian Army.



American journalist James Foley at work in Syria.



American journalist meets with Taliban figures in Afghanistan.

Despite his experience, Cantlie returned to Syria (reportedly to make a film about his abduction). Now, he and Foley sat together in the restaurant, hunched over their work while their Syrian translator, Mustafa Ali, sat at the side. Suddenly, a man with a bushy beard marched through the door. He looked much more Iraqi than Syrian. He did not utter a word. He just stared at the two Westerners with beady eyes. He went over to a table, sat down for a short while and left.

Foley and Cantlie continued their work, sending out emails to the news stations they worked for. After more than an hour they stepped outside and stopped a taxi. They asked the driver to take them to the Turkish border, 25 miles away.

The pair never reached the border.

The taxi was suddenly stopped by a van that pulled in front of them and blocked the road. Masked gunmen jumped and shouted wildly in an Arabic laced with an odd blend of accents. Their message was clear,

however. The men were to lie down on the pavement, face down.

The captives were bound and then tossed into the van. Mustafa Ali, left standing at the side of the road, received a terse warning: "If you try to follow us, we will kill you."

Over the next 14 months, at least 23 other foreigners fell into the same trap. Most were freelance journalists working for various news networks or aid workers representing welfare agencies. To locate them, the terrorists trailed local residents who earned their living by assisting these foreigners. These were men like Mustafa Ali and Yosef Abobaker, another Syrian translator who was driving American independent journalist Steven Sotloff.

Sotloff had entered Syria on August 4, 2013. Abobaker later recounted his experience: "We were 20 minutes over the border [from Turkey into Syria] when I noticed three cars standing at the side of the road. At least one border guard had been paid to inform on us when we crossed the border."

At gunpoint, Sotloff and Abobaker were taken to a textile factory in a village near Aleppo, Syria. There they were locked up in separate cells. Abobaker was released about two weeks later because in the past he had been a fighter in Syria with an Islamic group.

The abductions were carried out through various groups fighting for power in civil-war-torn Syria, where kidnappings had grown in alarming frequency. In June 2013, four French journalists were captured and in September the terrorists detained three journalists from Spain.

All across the rebel-controlled regions of Syria the fighters set up and manned checkpoints to identify foreigners. One of these was where a group of terrorists waited for Peter Kassig, a 25-year-old medical aid worker from Indianapolis, Indiana, who was in the middle of transporting his medical equipment when he was abducted in October 2013.

In December, Britain's Alan Henning was taken at another checkpoint. Henning was a medical aid worker who used his own

savings to purchase an ambulance in order to assist the Syrian war casualties. He was taken hostage just 30 minutes after crossing the border into Syria.

The last to disappear were five aid workers from a medical organization who were literally dragged from a field hospital in a small village in Syria while going about their humanitarian work.



Alan Henning, a British taxi driver who purchased an ambulance from his own savings to help victims of Syria's civil war, was abducted 30 minutes after crossing into Syria.



John Cantlie, the British photojournalist who was abducted together with Foley.



Peter Kassig, a young medical worker from Indianapolis who was in the middle of transporting medical equipment when he was kidnapped.