

Five U.S. cities are destroyed by Islamic terrorists using nuclear devices. MG George Alexander, Secretary of Homeland Security, becomes president, forms an interim government, pulls the nation together, and then confronts the Islamic whirlwind sweeping across the globe.

Behold, an Ashen Horse

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Behold, an Ashen Horse

A Novel

Lee Boyland

With

Vista Boyland

This book is a work of fiction that contains historical persons, places and events. The Soviet Union's atomic bomb program existed. The author created a fictional Little Boy team, and all characters, incidents, places and events resulting from the Little Boy team are products of the author's imagination. A list of main fictional characters is presented at the beginning of the book. Any resemblance between fictional characters in this book and real persons is purely coincidental.

Behold an Ashen Horse

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Chapter 1

Friday

Washington, DC – Friday afternoon, May 26th

Hilda Rodman, the 44th President of the United States, concluded her “Peace In The Middle East” speech to a Joint Session of Congress. Smiling and basking in the glow of a prolonged standing ovation, she remained at the rostrum for several minutes. *The Joint Chiefs and most Republicans are still in their seats. To hell with them, I won*, she gloated and began making her way through the crowded main chamber, autographing programs and kibitzing with supporters. Finally reaching the east exit, she stepped out into the warm, sunny day, and paused to savor her triumph and Washington’s beautiful afternoon. Little did she know this would be the last afternoon she would ever experience.

National Security Advisor Sara Blumberg interrupted Rodman’s reverie. The time was 3:50 p.m.

“George Alexander is causing a problem,” Bloomberg whined. “He’s all hot and bothered about some terrorist’s tape. Called just before you entered the chamber to give your speech. Wanted to speak to you—raise the threat level. He knew you were going to say there was no terrorist danger. The man’s an idiot,” Bloomberg sneered, shaking her head, “I intercepted his call and told him to get a grip.”

President Rodman chuckled, “Well, he’s served his purpose as Secretary of Homeland Security—time for him to go. He’s the only Cabinet member who’s not here. Look around, all of the Supreme Court Justices, the Joint Chiefs, every senator, and all but two house members are here. His absence will be noted.”

As if on cue, a member of Rodman’s security detail approached and said, “Madam President, Secretary Alexander has been trying to reach you.”



The entire eastern seaboard was experiencing good weather. Winds were light and the sky clear. Conditions were forecast to change around midnight, when a severe weather front would arrive from the west.

In the REM warehouse, approximately a quarter of a mile from the

Capitol building, the computer in the hidden nuclear device determined five minutes remained before the programmed detonation time stored in its memory. Heating elements in the sealed neutron generator tubes were switched on.



Outside the Capitol building, three senators waited for the President.

“A brilliant speech,” one gushed.

“Yes, your plan to increase AIDS funding is right on the target,” another added.

“President Rodman, I’d like to sponsor your initiative for Iraqi women’s schools. I’ll be pleased to introduce a bill in the Senate,” the third added.

“Thank you, Tim. My staff will contact you to work out the details,” Rodman said, and continued toward her limousine.

General Donald O’Neil, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, caught up to the president. “Madam President,” he said softly, “I’ve received a very troubling report concerning an al-Qaeda video that was broadcast at 2 p.m. My staff considers the threat valid. Secretary Alexander is at Kirkland Air Force Base. We think a nuclear attack is imminent.”

Before the president could reply, Bloomberg snapped, “We’ve been all through that before. Secretary of Energy O’Riley has determined it is impossible to smuggle a working nuclear warhead into the U.S.”

Rodman smiled knowingly at Bloomberg, and the two turned and walked away with no further comment. The general watched the two women’s backs, shaking his head in disgust.



The hidden nuclear device’s computer continued comparing real time to detonation time. When the times matched, the detonation sequence began by closing a relay, introducing a twelve-volt current into the firing circuit. Glowing red-hot bridge wires ignited the propellant charge, creating hot gases. Pressure increased in the brass cartridge case. The cannon’s breech and barrel prevented the cartridge case from expanding or rupturing. Only the U-235 projectile could move, and it began accelerating down the barrel toward the U-235 target rings.

Approximately six-hundredths of a second later, the projectile exited the barrel, and entered the hole in the target assembly containing the target rings. Less than one-hundredth of a second later—the projectile completely entered the target rings, forming a solid cylinder of U-235. The neutron generator tubes fired, introducing millions of neutrons from three directions. The result was a supercritical nuclear reaction—an atomic explosion, equal to fifty

thousand tons of TNT.



Walking toward the presidential limousine, Blumberg continued carping about Alexander, “That fool has the military taking the terrorists seriously.”

President Rodman laughed, and was about to reply when a brilliant white light, many times brighter than the sun, appeared directly in front of her.

The fireball vaporized everything within a thousand feet from the center of the detonation. Energy released as gamma, X-ray, and particle radiation caused flammable materials to spontaneously ignite, flesh to char, and metal to melt or soften. The resulting super heated air created a blast wave that decimated the center of the city.

Radiating outward from the fireball, the blast wave created overpressure on surfaces, turning shattered glass into lethal fragments, collapsing walls, and flattening houses and buildings. Solidly constructed government buildings remained standing, but were left gutted and contaminated. As the fireball cooled, it created a vacuum, causing a reverse pressure wave, as air rushed back to fill the vacuum.

By the time the blast wave reached the Capitol building, all exposed living things were dead. All that remained of President Rodman, Professor Blumberg, and others outside of the Capitol building were shadows on the concrete.

Alerted by Alexander’s and Young’s warnings, key personnel at the Pentagon, Ft. Meade, and Andrews and Bolling AFBs had gone to shelters. Some survived. Not so at the CIA complex, where many were killed or injured by flying glass. The blast destroyed aircraft on the ground at Andrews AFB, Bolling AFB, and Regan National Airport. In-flight aircraft faced a worse fate. The flash blinded many pilots and copilots, and the blast wave destroyed aircraft in the immediate area. Radiation and the EMP pulse disrupted ground to air communications. Aircraft crashes compounded already impossible rescue operations. Surviving aircraft landed at Dulles and other airports.

Similar devastation occurred in New York City, Boston, and to a lesser degree in Atlanta.

The huge storm pounding Chicago spared many lives. When the bomb detonated, airports were closed and most people were indoors. The storm’s heavy rain removed radioactive particles from the air.

The large storm front continued eastward, pushing the radioactive fallout from Boston, New York, and Washington out to sea. Fallout from Atlanta followed the path of Sherman’s march to Savanna.

Televisions tuned to ABC, CBS, CNN, NBC, FOX C-Span, and BBC

lost their pictures. After a few minutes, local stations displayed notices of “Network Problems” and switched to prerecorded programming. No one could determine what interrupted the satellite links. Those trying to call New York or Atlanta received a pulsing busy signal.

Kirkland, AFB, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Secretary of Homeland Security George Alexander, a retired USAF major general, his wife Jane, Colonel Charles Young, and several officers were seated in a conference room watching President Rodman and Goldberg walking toward a limousine. After viewing a video broadcast on Al-Jazeera at noon, all were very worried. Without warning, the television picture turned to static. All eyes turned to look at the clock on the wall. The time was 1400 hours—4 p.m. in Washington—precisely two hours after the start of the al-Jazeera tape.

“Oh my God,” one of the officers exclaimed.

“Try another channel,” Young ordered.

LTC Cobb reached for the remote and quickly switched through the major network channels. Only one station broadcasting local news had a picture.

Colonel Young’s face reflected everyone’s anxiety. Picking up the phone he punched the code for the direct line to NORAD.

“North American Aerospace Defense Command, Lieutenant Colonel Osborne speaking.”

“This is Colonel Young at Kirkland. Does NORAD have any indication of a nuclear detonation in the U.S.?”

“Hold for Lieutenant General Fox,” Osborne replied.

General Bruce Fox came on the line, “Hello Charlie, we’re kind of busy right now ... Uh, why are you asking about a nuclear detonation?”

“Sir, did you see the al-Jazeera tape that aired two hours ago?”

“No, and I don’t have time for that right now ... Did the tape have something to do with a nuclear detonation?”

“Yes, sir. General Alexander, I mean Secretary Alexander, is with me. I’m putting you on speaker,” Young said, punching the speakerphone button. “The Arab on the tape said he’d planted five atomic bombs in five of our cities, and that they would soon be detonated.”

“Bruce, this is George Alexander. I considered the video to be a valid threat, and tried to warn the president. Couldn’t get past Bloomberg, who thought it was a hoax. We were watching live feed of Rodman on C-Span, when the picture turned to static.”

“Damn! Satellites show nuclear detonations occurred in Chicago, Boston, New York, Washington, and Atlanta. That’s five, just like the Arab

said,” General Fox replied, his voice strained. “There is a major storm in Chicago, the city is blanketed by heavy clouds. We are zooming in on Washington. It’s my understanding the entire government was there—Cabinet, Joint Chiefs, and both houses of Congress. Is that correct Mr. Secretary?”

“Yes, Bruce, that’s correct. I’d have been there too, if my son had not been injured in a climbing accident yesterday,” Alexander confirmed.

“Mr. Secretary,” General Fox continued, his manner becoming formal, “According to the Presidential Succession Act of 1947, as amended in 2003, you are eighth in line to assume the presidency. At this time I must assume the President, Vice President, Speaker of the House, President Pro Tem of the Senate, Secretary of State, Secretary of the Treasury, Secretary of Defense, and the Attorney General all died in the explosion. Do you have any information that any of these persons were not in Washington?”

A stunned Alexander answered, “No. As far as I know they were all there. Probably outside of the Capitol, waiting for the president to leave.”

“In that case, I recognize you as National Command Authority. We’ll have teams on the way to DC. We expect severe weather to blanket the entire east coast by midnight.”

General Fox paused, then asked, “Sir, what are your orders?”

Oh my God, Alexander thought as he surveyed the expressions of the officers sitting around the table. All were looking at him for guidance. *The last thing in the world I wanted was to become president. Assuming General Fox is correct, I’m going to have to start thinking like the Commander-in-Chief.* The multitude of problems facing the nation flashed before his eyes. Thirty years of military training and command, coupled with his dauntless personality focused his thinking. Without a moment’s hesitation, he assumed command.

“General Fox, send a message to all military commands advising them of what has happened. Request them to inform all U.S. personnel worldwide. Inform the Air Force and Navy to start evacuation planning for our personnel in Middle Eastern countries. We must consider the possibility of hostile actions by our enemies—especially Iran, North Korea, and other Middle Eastern countries.

“Issue orders grounding all commercial and civilian aircraft and sealing our borders. Until we sort this out, no one is to leave or enter the country. Only inbound aircraft with insufficient fuel to return to their point of origin will be allowed to land. Instruct the FBI to detain and question all passengers on these flights.

“Issue bulletins stating I have assumed leadership as acting president. My command post will be here, on Kirkland. Include in the bulletins that a state of war exists with unidentified enemies. Our first priority is to establish

communications and a chain of command. Next priority will be to obtain precise information on conditions surrounding the blast sites—the levels of radioactivity, extent of destruction, and fallout projections. Only then will we be able to develop plans to care for the wounded and determine who survived in Washington. Fallout projections will be sent to affected states and all federal emergency agencies.

“I must make a statement to the nation in the next few hours. Otherwise we will have full-scale panic.” Alexander paused and reached for a nearby glass of water.

“Sir,” General Fox said, “I suggest we raise the worldwide alert status to DEFCON-TWO.”

“Approved,” Alexander replied. *I have the full force of America’s military at my command, and by God I’m going to use everything we’ve got to protect our country from another attack.*

“Pass the following orders to CINC STRATCOM. Tell Bob Vazquez I’m ordering release of tactical nuclear weapons to area commanders—get some ready for use. I want the Navy armed with Tomahawk TLAM-Ns ASAP. Also, order the Navy to arm the carriers with B-61 bombs. The Air Force is to arm B-1s and B-52Hs with AGM-129s. B-2s will be loaded with B-61 nuclear and B-83 thermonuclear bombs. As soon as the TACAMO birds are in the air, he is to establish communications with me here at Kirkland. We want to make sure none of the hot heads will think this is a good time to hit us.”

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The Strategic Air Command (SAC) was disestablished in 1992. The command, control, and communications mission of all elements of the nuclear triad were placed under the U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) located at Offutt AFB, Nebraska. Commanded by a four star Navy admiral or Air Force general, USSTRATCOM’s mission is to: “Establish and provide full-spectrum global strike, coordinated space and information operations capabilities to meet both deterrent and decisive national security objectives. Provide operational space support, integrated missile defense, global C4ISR and specialized planning expertise to the joint warfighter.”

“Looking Glass” missions are consolidated aboard Navy E-6B “Take Charge and Move Out” (TACAMO) aircraft located at Tinker AFB, Oklahoma. The E-6B, a Boeing 707 airframe loaded with high-tech communication equipment, has the ability to communicate directly with the nation’s ballistic submarine fleet. Its battle staff, when airborne, is under the command of a flag officer—an Air Force general officer or a Navy admiral.

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Alexander continued, “Have your staff contact the Air Force, Army, Navy and Marines. Tell them to sort out who’s their senior officer and have him or her establish contact with me ASAP.

“Charlie, I need your PR people. Tell them what we know, and have them start drafting a short speech for me. Also, have them contact the local TV stations. Alert them that I will be making a statement to the nation shortly. I will also need a method to communicate with our embassies and foreign governments. Designate one of your officers to set up a conference call with the governors of Illinois, Indiana, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Maryland, Virginia, and Georgia.” Alexander paused to think, sipping water from his glass, then continued.

“Charlie, have someone contact the local FBI Special Agent in Charge. Give him the following instructions: one, set up communications with other field offices; two, alert all FBI offices and the CIA that we are now at Threat Condition 5, Severe, color RED; and three, instruct all FBI field offices to round-up suspected terrorists and place a watch on mosques—we must assume that there will be more attacks. When he has completed his tasks, he is to report to me in person.

“We need to contact the Director of Los Alamos Laboratory and have him get the Department of Energy in the loop. Have the director establish a chain of command and then report to me. We need response teams at each of the detonation sites.

“The military is to coordinate rescue and medical treatment of survivors. Make all assets available.

“Captain Thomas, call Colonels Combs and Ryder right now and fill them in. Have them contact their counterparts in our embassies in the Middle East. All hell may break loose in their area. We need to get our people out of there.”

Alexander slowly looked around the table, then said, “Let’s get moving people.”

Jane Alexander, sitting next to her husband, watched in fascination as he assumed the awesome responsibility of the presidency. Then she quietly rose and left the command center to be with their children.

Chapter 11

Detroit, Michigan

Tramic, Michigan – Saturday, 6 a.m. May 27th

Word of Muraaqibu al-Khawaatim's second video spread through the Muslim community. The *muadhdhin's* (muezzin's) *adhan*, (call for *Subh* or dawn prayer, the first of five obligatory daily prayers), blared from loud speakers on the mosque's minaret, echoing through the quiet neighborhood. Worshipers packed the mosque, and overflowed into the street. Dr. Kabbani, a respected physician of fifty-nine years, and one of the few voices of reason in the Islamic community, approached the mosque. He intended to ask the *mullah*, the leader of prayers, to pray for the people killed in the explosions and to disavow those terrorists who'd done this terrible deed. *We can no longer make excuses for these barbarians in our religion. If we excuse, or say nothing, the country will turn on us and our religion.* Walking toward the mosque, Dr. Kabbani was shocked to hear the comments coming from the faithful filling the street in front of the building. "Now is the time to force the *kafirs* to accept Allah," one said, referring to infidels.

"Yes, the Great Jihad begins, and we'll convert this vile country to Islam," another said.

"Soon," yet another called out.

"No, no." Dr. Kabbani cried, "A great wrong has been done by radical fools in the name of Allah. We must denounce them. Beg Allah to help the injured and to forgive us for allowing these radicals to use His name—"

In an instant, a group of young students in the crowd turned on Dr. Kabbani, shoving him and spitting in his face. Undaunted by their insults, the doctor attempted in vain to reason with his detractors, whose attack on him only became more violent with each passing moment. Finally with an expression of pure hatred on his face, a young man the doctor had mentored as a boy lunged forward from the group, viciously punched the doctor in the stomach, and screamed in his face, "Go home, old man. You're not fit to join the jihad. Go home you stupid old fool. Pray to Allah for a backbone—for the courage to do His work."

Stunned by the blow, the doctor fell to his knees, while the young man urged on by the crowd, continued to pummel him. Just as the doctor was about to lose consciousness, the voice of the mullah came over the loud

speaker, and the young man and his cohorts were swept away by the malevolent crowd, which was rapidly becoming a mob. “*Allahhh-u Akbarr, Allahhh-u Akbarr,*” Allah is the Greatest, they shouted.

A local mobile TV crew had set up across the street from the mosque. The cameraman, standing on top of the van, was slowly panning from left to right. Inside the van, the rest of the crew felt the tension in the air and the mob’s growing hostility toward them. Descending to street level, the cameraman continued filming, while cautioning the young, blonde, female reporter, “I think we should move to a safer location.”

Intent on covering a story that might get her national exposure, Abby Ladd had no intention of leaving. Tom, the producer, was transmitting live feed to the studio. Worried, Tom called the station manager to advise him of their situation, “Bill, I don’t like this. A man on the mosque PA system is working the mob up to a fever pitch. We’re dealing with mob mentality. Things can quickly get out-of-hand. Better call the police.”

“Yes, I’m watching your feed. I’m going to interrupt the normal program and put you on. Tell Abby we’re going live in sixty seconds,” Bill Thornton replied. Next, Thornton advised his network—or what was then passing for a network—he had live feed from a mosque where the mob was getting out-of-control. The network picked up his feed, and Abby got her national exposure—fleeting though it was.

A block away, two plain-clothes police officers in an unmarked car were also getting nervous. Officer Butterworth returned to the car after walking around the perimeter of the growing mob. “They’re all talking in Arabic,” he told his partner, Sergeant Downs. “I don’t know what they’re saying, but the mood is ugly and getting worse. We’d better call it in.” Downs nodded, and Butterworth picked up the mike to call dispatch, “Dispatch, Rover 26.”

“Go ahead Rover 26.”

“We’re two blocks from the mosque. There’s a large mob gathering. Their mood is ugly. The preacher is giving some type of sermon over the loud speakers. The mob is responding by shouting something in Arabic. Something that sounds like ‘Allah Ackaback.’ It looks like things are getting out-of-hand. Send reinforcements, and I recommend you begin preparing for a riot. There’s a TV crew across the street. If a riot develops, they’re going to be in trouble.”

“Can you assist the TV crew?”

“Negative. No way to get to them. The street’s packed: hundreds of the rag-heads, all of them lathered up. It looks like they’re celebrating the nuke attacks.”

“Rover 26, watch the ‘rag-head’ stuff. Stand by, I’ll notify the chief.”

Disheveled and winded Dr. Kabbani freed himself from the clutches of

the mob and stumbled back to his car. Shocked by his experience, the doctor was unaware of the blood streaming from a cut over his right eye as he drove to his nearby home. Entering his house through the back door leading to the kitchen, he was greeted by his wife, Fatima who was terrified when she saw his condition. “What has happened to you? You’re bleeding. Your clothes are torn. Were you attacked by robbers?” she cried out, grabbing a dishtowel from the sink and running to his aid.

“No, Fatima, by fellow Muslims at our mosque, and by my most respected protégé, young Riyadh al-Fulani. He punched me and further dishonored his family by verbally insulting me. ‘Go home you old fool,’ he shouted after hitting me and shoving me into the crowd. They all jeered when I tried to reason with them. ‘Grow a backbone,’ Riyadh told me.

“Oh, Fatima, our brothers have gone mad—driven mad by the teachings of radical Muslims who are determined to destroy all infidels in a Great Jihad. A jihad that knows no bounds. It’s directed at any and all who oppose its intent—to convert all people to Islam—by force if necessary.” The good doctor stopped and looked at the bloody towel, then said, “Fatima, get my medical bag, and a mirror.”

Using the mirror to examine his cut, the doctor determined he did not require stitches. After giving his wife instructions on how to treat and bandage the cut, he continued his story.

“I tried reasoning with them, but they were inflamed by the mullah, and by al-Khawaatim’s claim to have destroyed five of America’s cities with atomic bombs. ‘This is now our adopted land,’ I told them. ‘We must live in peace among people of other cultures and religions. That’s what freedom means. That’s what America stands for. Don’t you see?’ I asked them, but they would hear nothing I said. Instead they pushed me, spat on me, and shoved me again. Something struck a terrible blow to my head. I stumbled, but didn’t fall. All the time I kept trying to explain we must fit into American society, where government is separate from religion. My words only enraged them, and they pushed me, and kicked me, and called me a Zionist lover. Then someone from the mosque screamed over the loud speakers, ‘KILL THE SATURDAY PEOPLE,’ our neighbors the Jews. The crowd picked up the command as a chant, and before I knew it I was in the midst of a frenzied mob. Somehow I was able to find an opening in the mob and fled. When I looked back I could see a throng of angry people moving toward the local synagogue.” The doctor leaned forward, and placed his head in his hands. A soft moan escaped his lips as he looked up at his frightened wife, who was shocked by the despair evident on his face.

“You would have been horrified at the feral look in their eyes and the things they were saying. They’re determined to destroy any and all who oppose them. Their fanaticism and hatred have blinded them to the power and

determination of the American people. If Islamic radicals committed this horrendous act of mass murder—destroyed five American cities—all Muslims and Arabic-speaking peoples are at risk. Those of us living in America will all be suspect—simply by virtue of our clothing, the color of our skin, and our dialect. Instead of causing problems, we should be doing everything possible to show support for victims of the attack. But no, those fools are starting a jihad that will focus the anger of all Americans directly on us. If they continue this jihad, I fear our days of peace and freedom under the American flag will end. Worse, this may be the beginning of the end for all of Islam. We must pray to Allah for help.”

“There, there, calm yourself and lie down on our bed,” Fatima said as she helped the doctor remove his shoes. “I cannot believe that well mannered young man you thought so much of did this to you.”

“Neither can I, Fatima. I thought he was one of our best and brightest. A man destined to make a better world for all peaceful, freedom loving Muslims.”

“How can our Muslim children who grew up in this free country have developed so much a hatred for it?” Fatima asked.

The doctor sighed and propped himself up against the headboard. “I think the answer lies in part with the lessons being taught in the madrasas. The impact of some of the radical Islamic teaching on our youth has been the focus of a few, but all too infrequent, discussions at the mosque. Some, like myself, believe we must put an end to such hate mongering, but very few, myself included—I’m ashamed to say—have been willing to join together to force a change. Always the naysayers give the same response, ‘Our funding and teaching materials come from Saudi Arabia. We must use the text books they provide.’ All too few of our brothers are willing to disturb the status quo, or to speak ill of another Muslim. Even if that Muslim is determined to take a course leading to our destruction—eventually causing Muslims to slaughter fellow Muslims.” Holding Fatima’s hand he swung his legs over the side of the mattress and sat up. Though still woozy, he felt compelled to pray for his adopted country, his fellow Muslims, and their religion. Continuing to hold his wife’s hand, he bent to retrieve prayer rugs from beneath their bed.

“Help me arrange our prayer rugs and join me in prayer,” he said. Once the rugs were spread, they knelt together, and the doctor began to pray.

“Allah, forgive our wayward people, for they have committed a grievous sin against you and against all humanity.

“Allah, forgive me for not being more vocal sooner in defense of what is right and our American freedoms.

“Allah, we beg you to use Your omniscient wisdom and almighty power to grant calm and reason to our people.

“Oh, Allah, we beg you to send us a leader who will, with

your guidance, show your wayward children the error of their ways.

“Send us a leader who will restore honor to the great religion given by you to the holy Prophet Muhammad.

“A leader who will save us from falling into the great abyss, bringing about the worldwide total destruction of Islam.”

Sadly, for this peace loving, gentle couple, the reason and calm they sought, and the leader they so fervently prayed for, was not to be forthcoming. Instead the violent mob of fanatics would continue perpetrating barbarous acts too horrible for Americans to imagine.

Several miles away from where the mob attacked the doctor, Gordon Williams, “Gordi” to his friends, reported to work at Rex Demolition. Gordi, a stocky, five-foot-eleven, barrel-chested man, was a heavy equipment operator for Rex. He was dressed in blue jeans, heavy work boots, and a khaki work shirt with a heavy gold chain around his neck. As was his custom, he entered the company’s main office complex to flirt with the office cuties, grab a cup of coffee, and pick up his work orders for the day. Entering the Rex office, he was surprised to find everyone gathered around the TV watching the morning news. The picture on the screen showed a large crowd of agitated people. Chanting some unintelligible words, the crowd was pushing and shoving a frightened looking well dressed older man who seemed out of place in their midst. “What’s going on?” Gordi asked, “Who are those people?”

“A bunch of Muslims in front of a mosque,” his boss replied.

“Boy, they sure are some kinda worked up. What’s that they’re shoutin’? Can’t quite make it out. Sure sounds funny. ... Must be their ‘rag-head’ gibberish,” Gordi said with a smirk.

Several people in the office briefly turned to give Gordi a disgusted look, then shrugged and turned back to watch the TV. Gordi was being Gordi. By now the fervor of the crowd was reaching fever pitch. The chanting was growing louder and more strident. Suddenly, for no obvious reason, the mob turned and surged away from the mosque.

In the unmarked patrol car both officers felt the hair rise on the back of their necks. The unruly mob abruptly moved away from the mosque and turned toward their unmarked car. “Uh oh,” Sergeant Downs said, and felt the words stick in his throat as he announced, “Here they come! Damn, they look mean. Looks like they’re out for blood.”

“Dispatch, Rover 26. We’ve got a riot,” Butterworth not so calmly reported.

“Damn it! What the hell are they doing to the TV crew?” Gordi shouted, as the group watched, to everyone’s horror, the violent scene playing out on the screen in front of them. First a man in the mob grabbed the pretty blonde reporter by the hair, punched her repeatedly in the face, and knocked the screaming woman to the ground. Then in a show of unabashed brutality, others joined the man in kicking and stomping her, until her screams were silenced, and her body lay lifeless on the street. Those on the fringe of the mob turned on the cameraman, punching him, until he fell to the ground, dropping his live camera beside him. Screaming and shaking their fists, the mob turned on the TV van, and once again took up their menacing chant, *Allahhh-u Akbarr, Allahhh-u Akbarr*. Still live, the fallen camera continued to transmit, showing in horrifying real time the mob’s legs and feet as they kicked and stomped the defenseless cameraman. Inside the van, Tom attempted to put up a fight. When the remote transmission died, someone in the Rex office cried out, “They’ve killed them! Those savage bastards killed them!”

“Great God Almighty! Boss, did you see that?” Gordi asked. “Damn ... we gotta do somethin’! We gotta help put a stop to this madness. Boss, I gotta go. I gotta get my people on this thing ‘fore it gets out of hand. Looks like the rag-heads are gonna attack us, and we gotta fight back.”

In his other life, Gordon “Gordi” Williams was Colonel Williams of the Michigan Freeman’s Militia, and now Colonel Gordi had a war to fight. *Hot damn, I gotta call the militia to active duty*, he thought, starting to place calls on his cellphone as he walked purposefully toward his red “hemi” truck. Gordi was a decorated former infantry sergeant with combat experience gained in the First Gulf War.

At city hall, Detroit’s mayor and police chief were also watching the live TV broadcast. In stunned disbelief, they watched as the mob knocked the blonde reporter to the ground, and viciously stomped her to death. The cameraman continued filming the mob, until he too was knocked to the ground.

“My God. This is out of control. Do something,” the mayor shouted at his chief of police.

Feeling his ulcer acting up, and realizing he was in over his head, the chief hesitantly replied, “I-I can handle it, if this is the only mob ... but if this is happening at other locations around the city, it’s beyond the capability of the police department to control. Better call the governor and ask for help.”

Butterworth and Downs had seen the attack on the TV crew from their unmarked car. “Dispatch, Rover 26,” Butterworth reported “we’re following the mob. The TV crew is toast. They’ve stomped the female reporter to a pulp and beaten the cameraman and driver to death. Looks like the mob is heading

for the synagogue.” Officer Butterworth did not understand the last Arabic instructions shouted over the PA system by Abdul, the Hamas cell leader in control of the mosque—“*Kill the Saturday people.*”

The first police units arrived at the synagogue ahead of the mob. Quickly donning protective riot gear from their patrol car trunks, officers armed themselves with batons, and teargas guns before forming a defensive line in front of the synagogue. A firefight was not a consideration. The onsite commander, Sergeant McDuff, lifted his bullhorn and ordered the rapidly approaching crowd, “*Halt! ... Stop! ... Come no further! ... Disperse! ... Return to your homes immediately!*”

The mob’s chants of *Allahhh-u Akbarr, Allahhh-u Akbarr*, drowned out McDuff’s commands.

Riyadh, the young student, who’d attacked Dr. Kabbain, shouted in Arabic, urging the mob forward. His fellow mujahedeen, armed with concealed weapons, were strategically dispersed throughout the mob. Realizing the mob wasn’t going to stop, Sgt. McDuff ordered teargas to be fired. Teargas canisters skittered around on the ground, some going into the first rank of the oncoming mob. Undaunted by the noxious fumes the mob surged forward, shouting “*Allahhh-u Akbarr, Allahhh-u Akbarr.*”

Greatly outnumbered, the officers realized their peril and drew pistols. “Fire a volley into the air,” McDuff ordered.

The sound of pistol fire momentarily slowed the mob’s advance by stopping the first rank, but pushed forward by the momentum of bodies behind them, they surged onward. *Now is the time to act*, Riyadh thought, and signaled his mujahedeen brothers to uncover their AK-47’s, and open fire on the line of police officers.

Officer Grant, who’d been reporting to headquarters from a patrol car, freaked out and screamed into the mike, “Automatic weapons fire! Our men are down. The mob has assault rifles. Officer down! Officer down! They’re killing us—”

A burst from Riyadh’s assault rifle silenced Grant’s report.

After sitting in stunned disbelief for several seconds, listening to the silent radio band, the chief realized he had to act. Grabbing the mike, he began issuing orders, “Lethal force is authorized. SWAT is to go in with weapons released. All units in the area are to proceed to the scene and render support.”

Lieutenant Swathmore, the SWAT team’s commander and a combat veteran, relayed the order to his men as their armored vehicle approached what was now a combat zone. Riyadh remembered his Afghanistan training camp lessons. Anticipating the police tactics, he’d properly positioned his fighters. The moment the armored SWAT vehicle stopped, two Hamas fighters stood, aimed their RPG launchers, and fired at a range of thirty yards.

As soon as the first fighter depressed his trigger, an electrical squib ignited the propellant in the grenade's small rocket motor, propelling the fin-stabilized grenade out of the launcher and toward the target. When the pointed nose of the grenade struck the vehicle, it generated an electrical signal, causing the detonator in the back of the grenade to explode. The explosive shock wave began traveling down the explosive charge in the body of the grenade, spraying fragments in all directions. When the wave reached the apex of the copper cone (the shaped charge liner), the cone folded, forming a plasma jet of super heated gases and molten copper that burned a small hole through armor, injecting hot gases and high velocity copper fragments into the vehicle. Death was instantaneous for those inside.

The destruction of the SWAT team's truck, and the line of dead police officers inflamed the mob. Assaulting the synagogue doors, the frenzied rabble battered them down. Inside the temple, those terrorists armed with AK-47's spread out, killing anyone they found and emptying their weapon's magazines into the altar and sacred religious trappings. Finally, bent on total destruction, Riyadh and his followers produced fire bombs from their backpacks and set the building ablaze, before fleeing to maraud through homes in the neighboring community.

Urged on by Riyadh, the mob joined in the blood lust, as door after door was kicked in and terror stricken residents ordered to answer two questions, "Are you a Muslim? If not, do you accept Allah as your only god?" Anyone failing to answer yes to the first question had only seconds to say yes to the second. Terrified citizens, too confused and bewildered to understand the question—much less its implication—were slaughtered on the spot.

Police units arrived in piecemeal fashion and engaged the anarchists, but it soon became apparent the out-gunned police could not stop the carnage. Calls for help flooded the governor's lines—only to find the governor frozen by indecision. The very idea of ordering his National Guard to engage citizens with live ammunition and fixed bayonets was too repugnant.

Other acts of insurrection were occurring at mosques and Islamic centers around the city and throughout the U.S.

Colonel Gordi Williams of the Michigan Freeman's Militia was on his way to the militia's assembly point in a barn north of the city. But first, he must visit Rex Demolition's explosives magazine. It was time to meet the enemy on the field of battle, and his men were ready. Opening his cellphone, he dialed the number for Bob Murt's, Murt in the Morning, local radio talk show, identified himself, and told the call screener that the Michigan Freeman's militia was getting ready to engage the rag-heads.

"Our next caller is Colonel Gordi Williams, commander of the Michigan Freeman's Militia," Bob announced in an amused voice. "I understand you're

prepared to engage the Muslim jihadists.”

“Yeah, Bob, we’re gonna waste them SOBs what’s killin’ our women and children. My men are assemblin’ now. Then we’re headin’ for the Tramic area where the worst killin’s goin’ on.”

“Colonel Williams, don’t you think that’s a job for the police and the National Guard?” Murt asked in a condescending tone.

“Yeah, it is, but they ain’t gettin’ the job done. We ain’t gonna mess around with tear gas and rubber bullets. We’re gonna use the real thing. When we finish there ain’t gonna be no more rag-heads in Detroit.”

“Aren’t you taking the law into your own hands?” Murt replied—an insolent smirk evident in his voice.

“Listen, us real Americans don’t have no more time for you *girly-men*. You liberals’ve been fuckin’ up our country long enough. We’ve had enough of your political correctness bullshit. It’s time for you to get with the program or shut up. If you keep spoutin’ this liberal bullshit we’re gonna come after you next.”

Quickly disconnecting Gordi, Bob Murt sarcastically continued, “Well, now we’ve heard from the red necks. It’s a good thing people like Colonel Gordi aren’t in the majority,” he laughed, before deftly cuing in a commercial.

The station’s call-in lines were immediately flooded with calls from men and women praising Colonel Gordi and the militia. The mood of the country was shifting, and the liberal media hadn’t gotten the message.

Gordi met John Tankelman at Rex Demolition’s explosives magazine. Tankelman was Rex’s chief blaster and had access to the explosives. Cases of sixty percent dynamite, along with boxes of electrical and non-electrical blasting caps, spools of electrical wire, time fuze igniters, and detonating cord were loaded onto Gordi’s pickup.

After completing their task, the two men continued on to the militia assembly point. When they arrived, Gordi found all of his men were present, plus additional volunteers. Most were dressed in BDU’s, purchased at surplus stores. Some volunteers wore hunting clothes and carried an assortment of weapons—everything from pistols and shotguns to high-powered, scoped rifles. The militia men were armed with M-16’s, AR-15s, M-1s, M-14s and a couple of old M-1 carbines. Their pistols of choice were .45 caliber and 9-mm semiautomatics. One man had a Smith and Wesson .50 caliber revolver—a real hand cannon.

The Michigan Freeman’s Militia consisted of a captain, three lieutenants, a master sergeant, and three platoons: each with three squads of nine men. The captain called the men to attention. Colonel Gordi Williams saluted the captain, then ordered the men to stand at ease. Next, he welcomed the volunteers and assigned them to the platoons. Those with high-powered, scoped rifles were assigned sniper duty in support of the platoons.

Assignments made, Colonel Gordi addressed his men.

“We’ve trained for the day when our country would need us to defend it. Well, today is that day. Them rag-heads have attacked us. They’ve blowed up five of our cities. Now, this very minute, their attackin’ our city. We can’t do nothin’ ‘bout the nuclear bomb attacks, but we sure as hell can do somethin’ about the rag-heads attackin’ our city.

“The rag-heads killed our police officers, burnt down the Jew’s church, and are goin’ through the neighborhoods killin’ our friends, neighbors, women, and children. Are we gonna let them get away with this?”

“HELL NO,” the men shouted.

“That’s right. No way in hell we’re gonna let them rag-heads get away with this.

“We’re gonna start with their church. They call it a mosque. We’re gonna blow it up. Then we’re gonna find ‘em and kill em. All of em!”

“YEAH, KILL EM ALL,” the men shouted.

“Okay, let’s go. Follow me to the mosque,” Colonel Gordi ordered, then turned and started toward his pickup truck. The assembled troops broke formation and ran to their vehicles. The militia had acquired several Army surplus deuce-and-a-half trucks, with bench seats running down both sides of the cargo area.

Paula Scott, a reporter for WKRI-TV, saw the convoy of Army trucks, pickups and automobiles heading into the city with their lights on, blowing their horns. The sight of the all those men holding rifles in the trucks shocked her so much that she decided to turn around and follow the convoy. Using her cellphone she called her boss, who directed her to stay with the convoy, and report back once she’d determined their destination. Finally managing to catch up, Paula pulled up along side the convoy’s last pickup truck. “Who are you, and where are you going?” she yelled to the man in the passenger’s seat.

“We’re the Michigan Freeman’s Militia, and we’re goin’ to Tramic to waste the rag-heads,” the man yelled back.

Dropping back, Paula called in the information. Her boss then directed his mobile TV van to head for the mosque in Tramic to cover the fight. Next, he broke into scheduled programming to announce the militia’s destination and purpose. Listeners quickly spread the word to friends and relatives. Soon hundreds of men and women began arming themselves with hunting rifles, shotguns, and pistols. Dressed in hunting gear, work clothes, and in some cases suits and ties, local citizens converged on Tramic to join the fight.

Similar situations would soon occur across the nation.

Chapter 28

Thursday

The President's Office – 0700 Thursday, 1 June

Martha Wellington entered the reception area of the president's office at 0700. Captain Taylor, seated at his desk, greeted her, "Good morning, Director."

"Good morning, Julian," Wellington replied with a smile. "Thanks for helping me get settled in last night."

"You're welcome, ma'am. I'll let the boss know you're here. He's asked me to place a call to President Karpov." Taylor walked into the president's office without knocking and announced Wellington. Alexander motioned for her to come in.

Entering the large corner office with a spectacular view of a mountain, Wellington walked to the side of the large desk and Alexander stood to greet her. "Good morning, Martha. Have a seat. Would you care for coffee?"

"Good morning, Mr. President. Yes, I would." Seeing the president nod to Captain Taylor, she added with a smile, "Light cream and half a spoon of sugar."

"Julian is about to place a call to President Karpov. You can listen by putting on the headphones." Pointing to four headphones lying on the conference table near his desk, he continued, "Keese and Simpson will also be listening."

Wellington smiled in reply, got up, and moved to the conference table. Sitting quietly, she studied the room and realized most of the pictures and awards belonged to the previous occupant. She was especially interested in a photo of a large Boeing 747 with a turret under its nose. Finally, she recognized it. *That's the Airborne Laser aircraft. Kirkland is one of our high technology centers. Now I understand why Alexander decided to stay here.* Her thoughts were interrupted, when an airman entered to deliver her cup of coffee.

For several minutes more, Alexander and Wellington sat in silence. She knew Alexander was mentally preparing for a very difficult conversation. *I'm really glad he understands all the technical issues ... gives him great credibility, and no one will dare try to bullshit him. It'll be interesting to see how he handles Karpov.* A minute later, the president's phone buzzed.

Alexander picked up the receiver, listened for a few seconds, and then motioned for Wellington to put on the headphones.

“Good afternoon, President Karpov.”

“Good morning, President Alexander. I must tell you, we were surprised by your seizing the bank accounts. Thank you for the advanced notice. You’ve made quite a few people *very* unhappy,” Karpov said with a chuckle. “Is there anything we can do to help?”

“Again, thank you for your offer. Perhaps we will call upon you in the next few days. The oil situation in the Middle East is becoming a problem for all of us. I’m preparing a plan to deal with it. I’ll discuss it with you and President Wu when plans are finalized. Acquiring Middle Eastern oil is a worldwide problem requiring a worldwide solution.”

“Yes, a serious problem, especially for America and China. I am interested in hearing about your plan. Before we continue, I need to pass on some intelligence I just received. We have unconfirmed reports from a reliable source indicating Iran is installing nuclear warheads on two Granat cruise missiles and on one Shahab-3D missile. The report says one of the Granat cruise missiles is no longer at its storage site and may be enroute to Syria.”

“Thank you. I’ll alert our commanders.” Alexander paused and looked at Wellington who acknowledged the information with a quick wave of her hand. “Mr. President, I am calling you directly to discuss a very sensitive issue. Before I begin, please understand I do not consider you or the current Russian government to be responsible.” Alexander, Wellington, and others, listening elsewhere to the conversation, heard Karpov’s sharp intake of breath.

“Our Los Alamos National Laboratory has identified the source of the fissile material, the fissionable isotope used in the nuclear weapons that destroyed our cities. All of the bombs were constructed from highly enriched uranium-235. We’re certain they were all gun-type nuclear weapons, similar to the Little Boy bomb we dropped on Hiroshima.”

“What does this have to do with us?” Karpov’s voice was tense.

“Let me review some history and you will understand. Joseph Stalin began the Soviet Union’s nuclear weapons program in the 1940s. His purpose was to catch up with the U.S. and become the world’s second superpower. Massive resources were channeled into the Soviet program, starting the Cold War.

“Two elements—metals—can be used to create an atomic or nuclear explosion. They are uranium-235 and plutonium-239. Both are very difficult to produce.

“There are two basic types of atomic weapons—gun-type and implosion. Gun-type weapons use a cannon to shoot a piece of uranium-235 into another

piece of uranium-235, creating a supercritical mass—a nuclear explosion. Implosion weapons surround a subcritical ball of plutonium-239 with explosives and compress the ball to a smaller size, creating a supercritical mass—a nuclear explosion.

“We tested a plutonium implosion device named ‘Gadget’ on July 16, 1945. We didn’t test our gun-type uranium bomb, the ‘Little Boy,’ before dropping it on Hiroshima. The second bomb dropped on Japan was a bomb version of our Gadget. We named it the ‘Fat Man.’

“The first Soviet atomic weapon named ‘First Lightning,’ was detonated on August 29, 1949, at the Semipalatinsk Test Site, Kazakhstan. It was a plutonium implosion bomb. So were the next two Soviet tests.

“In the early 1950s the U.S. began developing the hydrogen or thermonuclear weapon. We were conducting a series of tests under the name ‘Greenhouse.’ The Soviet Union tested its first attempt to build a hydrogen bomb on August 12, 1953. We code named the first seven Soviet nuclear tests the ‘Joe series,’ for Joseph Stalin. The test I’m referring to was the fourth Soviet detonation, Joe-4. You refer to it as RDS-6

“Joe-4 is important because it used a new design called *sloika*. It was the first Soviet atomic weapon to use uranium-235 as the fissionable material.”

Karpov was listening intently. He’d been briefed on nuclear weapons, but never really understood how they worked. Listening to Alexander, some of what he’d been told made sense. *It must be nice to understand the complexities of these bombs. Not to have to pretend to understand and trust the information you are being told is correct. Perhaps someday I can ask him for a more complete explanation.* It was time to say something. “Is the *sloika* design what is important?”

“No, not the design, the use of uranium-235. Uranium is used to build gun-type nuclear weapons. The type of weapons we’re sure were used to destroy our cities. Modern analytical instruments can precisely measure the atomic structure of a metal, the elements, and isotopes of the elements making up the metal. A mass spectrometer is used to produce a graph, which is like a fingerprint. After a nuclear detonation, some of the fissionable material, called ‘fissile material,’ is left, not consumed. We collected samples from all nuclear detonation tests, including the Soviet’s.

“Samples have been collected from our five cities and analyzed. The analysis resulted in two surprises. First, all of the uranium-235 used in the bombs came from the same source ... the same fingerprint from each city. If terrorists constructed the bombs, we expected they would have obtained the uranium from many sources. The analysis from each city would be different ... different fingerprints.

“Our second surprise was the source of the uranium-235. All of the analytical graphs, the fingerprints, matched the fingerprint from the

uranium-235 used in Joe-4. Fingerprints from later Soviet tests were slightly different.” *Now we’ll see if he understands. His answer will tell me if he does, and if Russia is involved.*

“President Alexander, I am not sure what you mean,” Karpov said, his voice betraying his anxiety. Are you accusing us of supplying the uranium to the terrorists?”

“No. I am not accusing Russia of providing the uranium—the fissile material—to the terrorist. The uranium used in the bombs matches uranium produced in the Soviet Union in the early 1950s. The questions we must answer together are how did the terrorists get large quantities of Soviet uranium? Where did they find it? Is there more?”

Karpov relaxed somewhat. “If this is so, we will certainly cooperate. Can you provide detailed information?”

“Most certainly. I am prepared to send one of our scientists, Doctor George Landry, and an FBI agent, Teresa Lopez, to Moscow to brief you and provide copies of all our information. They’re prepared to depart today and to stay as long as necessary to assist in your investigation. They will bring samples of uranium collected from our cities.”

“Please send them. We must solve this puzzle as quickly as possible.” Karpov said, and paused to quickly read a note about Lopez that his aide had handed him. “Would Agent Lopez be the person responsible for catching the terrorists with the radioactive dispersal bomb?”

Alexander chuckled. It was a good opportunity to break the tension. “Yes, she is very bright. We’ve given her the task of finding out how the terrorists got the weapons into our country and hid them. I am sure she will be of assistance to your investigators.”

“Yes. A young fresh mind may see things older minds have accepted without question. Do you have any idea where to begin the search?”

“Nothing concrete, just a hunch. Our Manhattan Project worked on developing both types of atomic bombs. Did the Soviet bomb development group attempt to develop a gun-type bomb like our Little Boy? We have nothing to suggest they did. However, we have speculated the weapons used to destroy our cities could have been test devices.”

Oh no! Not another skeleton from Stalin’s closet. Karpov winced. “I will start an investigation, and meet with your Doctor Landry and Agent Lopez as soon as they arrive. You can depend on our full cooperation.”

“Thank you, Mr. President. I’ll keep you informed of important events. Good-bye,” Alexander said, concluding the call. *Now I’m certain Russia had nothing to do with the attack.*

Nice job. Wellington thought. *He’s established an excellent relationship with Karpov. This could have resulted in a disaster. I’ll make sure my people help Landry and Lopez.*

Alexander's phone buzzed. It was Captain Taylor. "Sir, Bill Fobbs would like to see you."

"Okay, ask him to join us," the president replied.

A few minutes later, Fobbs entered smiling broadly. *Looks like something is going well*, Alexander thought as he stood. "Good morning, Bill. This is Martha Wellington, our acting CIA Director. Martha, meet Bill Fobbs, our Secretary of the Treasury and other domestic agencies."

After the usual pleasantries, Fobbs said, "Nora's conference call yesterday morning with the banks and credit card companies was *very* interesting. At first she met with a lot of resistance. It seems your announcement about seizing the assets had a profound impact. When the second conference call convened, everyone was very cooperative, and creative solutions were found. The bottom line is, some credit card terminals should begin working on Friday. It will take some time to get the complete system on line. Nora did a great job," Fobbs concluded, still smiling.

Credit cards, Wellington thought. *I have been so concerned with my agency, I hadn't thought about credit cards. Yes, they're very important. Very few people carry much cash anymore. So many different problems—I wonder how Alexander keeps his sanity? He's a delegator, and people respond to his confidence in them.*

Young walked in and greeted the group, "Good morning, sir. I received a call from Ronald Jefferson. I assume you know him. He said he was the Under Secretary for Border and Transportation Security, Department of Homeland Security." For an instant, Alexander's face showed anger, and the others noted his expression. "He and his family were vacationing on Lake Powell. Seems they were in a remote area of the lake and didn't find out about the attacks until Sunday morning. He wasn't able to contact anyone until he reached the town of Page yesterday afternoon. They're on their way, and should arrive this evening."

Alexander received the news with a stoic expression. Frowning, he muttered, "He may be the senior executive in Homeland Security." Looking down, he added, "The agency's been doing just fine without a leader." Looking up, he continued, "Jefferson's a political appointee, a *darling* of the former president. His ideas differ from mine. We butted heads on occasion. He opposed my illegal alien policy. Well ... we'll have to see if he can cut it. Charlie, have someone see if there's a house available for them. They used to live in Georgetown, so they will need a place to live ... and they'll need a motel for tonight."

"Yes, sir. Sergeant Troy will take care of it."

Turning to Wellington, the president said, "Martha, you need some time to get organized. We'll meet in the conference room at 1400. I'll expect an update on North Korea and Pakistan. Also, prepare a list, including the exact

geographical location, of every Arabic TV station studio and transmitter in the Middle East.

“Charlie, please show Martha where Barry’s office is. He can help her get settled in a temporary office until the intelligence building is ready.”

At nine o’clock, Governor Richards called for his daily teleconference with the president. “Mr. President, the seizure of the Arabs’ assets and using them to pay wages has boosted the country’s spirits. The nation has confidence in your leadership. A couple of governors complained during our afternoon teleconference, but the others told them to grow up and smell the roses.” Richards chuckled. “We’re getting a lot of questions from the press and citizens regarding oil, and what’s being done to obtain a reliable supply.”

“Kurt, thank the other governors for their support. The seizures are working. The treasury’s banked over two trillion dollars, with much more to come. As to the oil issue, pass the word that plans are underway to solve the problem. Future events will be self-explanatory.”

Richards laughed. “I can’t wait for your next surprise. North Carolina’s Governor mentioned the Eighty-Second Airborne was preparing to leave today for an unknown destination,” Richards said, fishing for information.

Alexander grunted, ignoring the question. “We expect to have some credit card terminals activated starting tomorrow. It’ll take a while to phase in all areas of the country. Good progress is being made in rerouting the telephone network around the destroyed cities. The Chicago switching station was rerouted, and Boston’s should be up by the end of the day: Atlanta by Saturday, but New York and Washington will take longer. Same goes for TV and radio networks. FOX and CBS have functional networks. CNN, NBC and ABC should be ready by Sunday.”

“I don’t know whether to be glad or sad,” Richards commented. “FOX and CBS have been showing scenes from the Middle East. Stuff taken from Arabic television. Arabs cheering and dancing, celebrating the destruction of our cities, and mobs sacking Western embassies, offices, homes. Stoning of what appeared to be Western women ... brutal stuff ... bodies hanging from bridges and gates. Our citizens are calling for blood. The mood is shifting from shock to anger. Our nation wants revenge, nothing less.” Richards’s last statements hung in the air for several seconds, before he continued. “Internment operations are going better than I expected. The radicals are easy to identify. They’re full of what is being called ‘jihad fever.’ As soon as those with the fever cause trouble, the others get as far away from them as possible. It’s been necessary to shoot some of the ones with the ‘fever.’ Troops guarding them are in no mood to take insults—especially when urine and feces are thrown at them. Are you going to court martial guards for shooting prisoners?” Richards asked.

“No. Not if they had a reason. The radicals *must be ... will be* controlled. We should have shot a few of them at Gitmo. Failure to follow orders, throwing urine and feces, and other rebellious actions is sufficient provocation. Have there been any serious problems with the other group, the cooperative ones?”

“No. In fact it’s been quite the opposite. It’s our nature to be kind to the unfortunate. The ones who behave and cooperate are being well treated, especially the children. What are we going to do with them?”

“I don’t know. Our IFAC starts today. I’m depending on them for ideas.”

“How many members?”

“Three. A rabbi, a Catholic Islamic scholar, who happened to be here on vacation, and Reverend Smyth. We hope others will join, however, the three may be enough.”

Julian Taylor and Teresa Lopez were finishing lunch at the officers’ club. Both felt the tug of their mutual attraction. Teresa would leave for Moscow in a few hours. Julian knew of the president’s North Africa invasion plans, and the scheduled attack on Algeria. Both were aware of the gathering storm clouds portending a new world war. Soon the U.S. and its allies would be engaged in a battle for North African oil. Pakistan was about to explode in revolution. And North Korea and Iran were wildcards in the table-stakes poker game for world domination. Someone had brought their old WWII recordings and was playing them as background music throughout the club. Somehow, they seemed appropriate for the present. Especially to the young couple who sat listening to the haunting words of “ ‘Til Then:” a song about lovers parting and one going off to war. Neither of them spoke. They felt no need for words. The song said it all. Would the lovers meet again? “ ‘Til then.” Looking up at Julian through misty, soft brown eyes, Teresa said in a low husky voice, “Let’s go to my apartment.”

The Caliph’s Palace, Tehran, Iran – 9:00 a.m., Thursday, June 1st.

The *Shura* and Saladin were listening to an address by the governor of the Central Bank of Iran. His message was not being well received. “I have spoken with the chairman of the Swiss National Bank. Our assets are frozen, and they are being transferred to the U.S. The Great Satan threatened the Swiss with an attack, if they failed to follow instructions. I was assured the issue would be brought before the UN Security Council. However, there is no Security Council. It was destroyed with the UN building in New York.”

“Praise Allah. If the Swiss pigs do not give us our money, threaten them with an attack,” one of the clerics yelled, his voice shrill with anger.

Bowing slightly to the upset cleric, the governor replied, “Allah be

praised. The Great Satan is a superpower. It can attack any country. We cannot. We do not have missile submarines, bombers, aircraft carriers, a huge navy—”

“We have missiles and nuclear warheads! We are a nuclear power! Threaten them! Tell them we will attack them!” the hysterical cleric shrieked.

Saladin suddenly wished he were somewhere else. Unlike the crazed clerics, he was a modern man: as such, he was starting to grasp the reality of their situation. They had four useable nuclear warheads. Three were committed to attacking Israel and the U.S. Navy. Thinking it was better to be on the offense rather than the defense, Saladin sneered at the agitated cleric and said, “Tuesday you wanted to use our nuclear weapons to destroy the Great Satan’s Navy and The Little Satan. Now you propose to use them to threaten the Swiss. What, or whom will you want to use them on tomorrow?” Before the cleric could reply, he continued, “Besides, we’ve told the gullible Europeans we *have* no nuclear weapons, and they believed us. Now you want to threaten them with our non-existent ones. Do you really expect them to believe such a threat?”

“After we use them, they will know our threat is real,” the cleric retorted, vibrating with rage.

“Yes, and we’ll have none left to use,”

“How can they know that?” screeched the cleric.

“How can *you* be sure they *don’t*?”

Khomeini interrupted the bickering. “Allah will guide us. The greedy Swiss love money. The Great Satan does not keep great sums of money in their banks. We do. Governor, remind the Swiss of this. Tell them our empire controls all Middle Eastern and African oil. If we cannot count on them to protect our money, we will bank elsewhere.”

I wonder where ‘elsewhere’ is? Saladin thought, beginning to understand what being a superpower really meant. *The damnable Americans can reach anywhere. The general was right. America’s military power is immense. Even though they were reeling from my attack, they were able to swat the Egyptians like a fly ...* Logic and fanaticism would clash once more, and once more fanaticism would win. *No ... we’re Allah’s chosen people. He will show us the way. It is our duty to spread Islam from pole to pole. We will prevail.*

“Soon Pakistan will join our empire, and we will have many more nuclear weapons and missiles,” Khomeini continued. “After we destroy the Little Satan and the Great Satan’s Navy the world will tremble before Allah’s wrath.”

London, England – Thursday, June 1st.

Prime Minister Talbot sat slumped in his office chair. Events were moving much too fast. *How could the world have changed so much in just a few days? I have been pushed aside. The Americans have taken over. My own people are going along with them. I'm not even being consulted. I was just informed the U.S. moved nuclear bombs into our country, and the Royal Air Force is cooperating. What am I to do?* he fretted.

Britain was in turmoil with Muslim uprisings, suicide bombings, and rampaging rioters. The English people were angry at their government, especially Talbot and his party. Unlike their American cousins, Brits were not allowed to have firearms for protection. The police were out-gunned by insurrectionists. Many citizens were being killed. Finally, the army had to be called out to quell the riots.

The British public was demanding Talbot and parliament grant them the right to defend themselves. The media had suddenly turned on him, as evidenced by today's lead news item. The press and public alike were in an uproar over a court decision involving the right to bear arms. According to London's tabloids, a farmer was serving jail time for shooting two burglars in his house in the middle of the night. Having twice fallen victim to the same robbers, the next time they struck, the fed-up farmer used an "illegal shotgun" on the "bloody sods." One of the robbers was killed, the other injured. For his trouble, the farmer was thrown in jail to await his day in court. At the time, British papers fully agreed with the court's decision to jail the owner for having an illegal gun—much less using it to shoot someone. The burglar eventually recovered from his wounds, and he too was sentenced to jail. To add insult to injury, the farmer received a longer jail sentence than the burglar; and he'd been successfully sued by the dead burglar's family for personal injuries and loss of work. Worse, the liberal British government picked up the tab for the burglar's suit. "Where is the justice?" the public screamed. Their tax dollars were going to support the socialist government's aid to a convicted criminal. While the farmer rotted in jail on appeal, he was being forced to pay the £50,000 judgment. He was in danger of losing the only thing of value he owned—the very property he fought to protect.

All over England, Talbot and his liberal cronies were being vilified. Sanity was returning to the citizens of the United Kingdom.

Talbot's only recent good news was the capture of a truck carrying a radiological dispersal bomb. An observant taxi driver alerted the police, and the truck driver and passenger were captured before the bomb was in place.

We are running out of oil, Talbot worried as he sat wringing his hands, All shipments from the Middle East, and now Africa, have been stopped. Britain cannot pay £173 per barrel. Our economy will collapse. What am I to

do?

Unlike Talbot, Britain's Air Marshal, Sir James Murrell, knew what needed to be done. U.S. and British fighters were being positioned at Gibraltar and Italian Air Force bases. Royal Marines were embarking for Libya. The Brits' Royal Parachute Regiment was preparing to jump with the Americans on the Libyan pipeline. *Britain's not going to miss this party. Anyone who does will be, as the American's like to say, "sucking hind teat." We may not regain all of our former empire, but I'm going to make damn sure we get some of it back. It will be Operation Torch all over again. I wonder what Rommel, Montgomery, and Patton would think of our new tanks?*

Young Prince Harry was also keenly aware of the situation. *The Prime Minister and Parliament have demonstrated their inability to cope. Unlike the Americans, we have no strong leader, no Churchill, Thatcher, or Blair. Perhaps it is once again time for a strong king—not my father or brother. I must speak with the queen.*

Kennedy Strike group – Thursday afternoon, 1 June

Reconnaissance of the North African coast revealed a gathering of men and ships—many types of ships—at the Algerian harbors of Bejaïa, Mostaganem, and Skikda. Admiral Krugger, using a secure data link, was discussing the reports with Army General Samuel L. Letterman, Commanding General of Operation Flare, the invasion of North Africa. President Alexander had expanded Central Command to include the entire African continent and staging areas in England and Italy. A unified command was essential for success.

"Photos and human intelligence agree, this is an invasion fleet. We believe its purpose is to invade Spain. Their caliph stated his intention to reclaim the Islamic Empire. This appears to be his first step," Krugger said.

"What do you suggest?"

"Obviously their ships and men must be destroyed, which provides us with an interesting opportunity," Krugger observed.

"Opportunity?"

"Yes, sir. An opportunity to conduct joint strike operations before the Libyan invasion—a shakedown exercise with live ammunition."

"Hmmm ... I'll consider it. We do need to conduct joint operations. What is your condition?"

"We're low on fuel and ordnance. We've enough to defend ourselves, but not enough to conduct strikes against the Algerian ports. We're saving our ordnance to support our Marines when they land on Sunday. Replenishment ships won't arrive for several more days. The *Eisenhower* and *Enterprise* will be on station by then.

“The caliph’s invasion fleet makes a mighty tempting target for the B-52s. Plenty of fighter cover at Gibraltar. I’m sure Spain will want a piece of this. Portugal and Italy may want to join too. I’ll lay on a strike for tomorrow evening. I don’t think the Algerian fighter pilots know how to fly after dark,” Letterman concluded with a chuckle.

“Aye, aye, sir.”

West of Albuquerque, NM– Thursday evening, June 1st.

Heading east on I-40, Cassandra Jefferson was at the wheel of their dark-blue Honda Odyssey van, driving down the long hill leading to Albuquerque. She was looking for Exit 145. Tired from her long day, Cassandra was annoyed with her husband. The boys behaved well for most of the trip, but were beginning to get restless. Roger was bored by the never-ending desert. Joshua showed some interest, but soon retreated into his video games. Glancing at her husband, she said, “We have to get some new movies. The boys have memorized the ones we have.” Roland grunted in reply, angrily listening to the ringing of an unanswered phone in his Bluetooth earpiece. “Please pay attention and help me find the motel, we’re all tired,” Cassandra snapped.

Roland Jefferson’s cellphone had made a connection with a tower when they approached Flagstaff, then lost contact after passing through Winslow. The cell briefly connected once again at Gallup, but made no further contact until twenty miles west of Albuquerque. Jefferson had used every available minute of phone time to call various offices in his agency. Frustrated with the lack of available tower connections, he spent most of the trip berating the lousy phone service. When he finally got through to a field office, he was enraged over the reports he received. Mexicans crossing the U.S. border seeking employment were being arrested. Designated as illegals, those “poor wretches” were being arrested by his agents and thrown into detention pens. He quickly ordered them released into the local communities. He was further appalled to learn foreign passengers, landing at U.S. airports Friday evening, were being detained and questioned by his airport security agents. He ordered them released and became outraged when most of the airport agents in charge refused his orders. “Sorry, sir, but we’re operating under presidential orders,” they told him, “Only the president can change them.” Some U.S. citizens were also being detained, but that didn’t seem to bother Jefferson.

Cassandra who’d done most of the driving was irritated with her husband. He’d subjected everyone to mile after mile of his tirades. All she wanted to do was to find a motel get some dinner and some rest. She had asked him several times to call Colonel Young to ask for a recommendation for a motel. All he wanted to do was use the damn phone to call his people. If

she'd not insisted—threatened to throw a fit—he wouldn't have called Young and learned a room was reserved for them at the Holiday Inn. Now all she had to do was find the motel. Her husband was still frantically trying to reach people in his agency. Most had gone home.

They finally reached the motel at 7:30 p.m. After unpacking, the family enjoyed a Mexican style dinner in the motel's restaurant. Cassandra and the boys went to the pool. Roland settled down to watch the news. CBS was showing reruns, so he had to turn to FOX. A network he detested. "What's wrong with CNN?" he grumbled. "Why aren't they on the air?" After thirty minutes of watching Fox News Alerts—especially reports of public support for the president—Jefferson was beyond being upset. When Cassandra and the boys returned to their room she found her husband near hysterics. Unable to calm him, she suggested they go to the bar for a drink, while the boys got ready for bed. "The man's *a maniac*," was the last thing Joshua heard his father say before the door closed.

Five U.S. cities are destroyed by Islamic terrorists using nuclear devices. MG George Alexander, Secretary of Homeland Security, becomes president, forms an interim government, pulls the nation together, and then confronts the Islamic whirlwind sweeping across the globe.

Behold, an Ashen Horse

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