

TERRY ANDERSON

On March 16, 1985 Islamic militants kidnapped journalist Terry Anderson and detained him with other Western hostages in dungeons under the ruined buildings of war-torn Beirut, Lebanon. Despite extreme conditions, he remained physically and mentally active during his seven year captivity, the longest of the 92 foreigners abducted during Lebanon's civil war.



His Hezbollah captors hoped to use Western hostages to obtain the release of 17 Islamic militants in Kuwait. Supported by the Government of Iran, they also sought to punish the US for its strategic relationship with Israel and for providing the Israeli military with weapons used against Muslim targets. Terry Anderson's experience demonstrates the willingness of terrorist organizations to kidnap and detain American civilians to influence US foreign policy.

Be cautious when traveling overseas. When possible, avoid areas with political uprisings and civil disturbances. If you are captured by a terrorist organization, the US government might not be able to secure your release.



Beirut had been extremely volatile since its Civil War and Syrian occupation in the 1970's, and various Islamic groups engaged in kidnappings and assassinations. In 1987, the International Committee of the Red Cross estimated 6,000 Lebanese had been kidnapped or disappeared since 1975.

Nevertheless, Anderson did not believe he would be taken hostage even though two foreigners had been kidnapped on the two preceding days. He considered himself a friend of the Lebanese people who sought to tell their story through the news media. On the morning of March 16, 1985, as Anderson was returning from a tennis game, three young, bearded men armed with 9mm pistols forced him from his car, shoved him into the back seat of a green Mercedes, covered him with a blanket, and sped away. In captivity, he was initially kept isolated, blindfolded, and chained.

One of his captors, Imad Fayez Mugniyah also known as Hajj, is suspected of many Hezbollah attacks on US assets. These include the bombing of the US Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983, attacks on the US diplomatic mission in Beirut in 1983 and 1984, and the hijacking of TWA 847 in 1985. He is also believed to have strong ties to al Qaeda and may have participated in the attacks on Khobar Towers in 1996, the US Embassies in Africa in 1998, and the USS COLE in

2000. Informants reported he took orders from Iran. In 2001 he was placed on the FBI's most wanted terrorists list. In 2008, he was killed by a car bomb in Damascus, Syria.

If you are in an area where other people have been targeted for terrorist attack, understand the tactics used by the terrorists. This may help you identify a threatening situation early when you still have time to react.

In time, Anderson was put in a room with several other hostages, but still blindfolded and chained. Their captors beat them, and threatened them with execution. Still blindfolded, they listened while a fellow detainee, William Buckley, suffered a slow and excruciating death from pneumonia. Following Buckley's death, their captors gradually improved conditions and Anderson was allowed 15 minutes daily to shower and wash out his clothes. Several times, he was told his release was imminent, only to have his hopes dashed. One fellow hostage attempted suicide and another tried to escape, and both were severely beaten as punishment.



Anderson sought to preserve his composure and his will to survive. He learned that his wife had given birth to their daughter, Sulome, three months after his kidnapping. Anderson was an inactive Catholic, but he asked his captors for a Bible which he read repeatedly and experienced a rebirth of his faith. When he learned that a fellow captive was a priest, he asked and was permitted to make confession to Father Lawrence Jenco, his first in 25 years. Eventually he was given writing materials and Anderson wrote poetry and kept a journal. To keep his mind sharp, he imagined the detailed, step by step process of designing and building a home. He and fellow captives debated politics and shared humor in a conscious effort to stay engaged. Anderson imagined goals for his life after his release: to move to a farm and open a blues restaurant, two goals he subsequently fulfilled. To stay physically active, he walked vigorously around his room forty times every morning when he was unchained.

During hostage detention, try to improve your mental and physical condition. Eat the food and water you are offered and create a daily exercise routine. Read, write, and keep socially engaged with fellow detainees. Focus on your personal values and faith. Request additional items from your captors, especially any medications you might require.



The UN sought the release of the hostages, and gained some Iranian cooperation in 1988. But, even after encouraging and funding Lebanese militants for many years, the Iranians could not compel the release of hostages. UN Under Secretary Giandomenico Picco decided to speak directly to the militants, and went to Beirut to allow himself to be detained on the street in August 1991. This began a series of reciprocal detainee

releases by the militants and Israel, each facilitated by Picco's courageous willingness to surrender to the militants eight additional times. Anderson was the last American released after 2,455 days in captivity, and on December 4, 1991 his captors drove him to Damascus, Syrian and left him on a street.

After his release, Terry Anderson won a suit against the Iranian Government and received a multimillion dollar settlement from frozen Iranian assets in 2002. With part of his settlement, he co-founded the Vietnam Children's Fund which has built schools for more than 12,000 children where he served as a US Marine in the Vietnam War. And, he created a charitable foundation in the memory of Father Lawrence Jenco who died in 1996. In 2004 he lost a bid for Congress in Ohio, gaining 47% of the vote, and he remains an advocate for the safety and rights of journalists.

Many hostage situations are quickly resolved; however, be prepared to endure captivity that could last several months or even years. If captured, maintain your long range perspective and goals. Plan for the future after your release, and expect to live a fulfilling life.