

A Crisis Threat Assessment: The Boy in the Bunker

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In January 2013, the FBI assisted local and state law enforcement and public safety agencies responding to one of the most complex hostage-barricade incidents in recent times in the United States. The Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU) supported media, negotiations, and tactical operations during the crisis. This article examines the crisis threat assessment applied to this case. Crisis threat assessment involves ongoing, continually evolving behavioral threat assessment and management, conducted on a moment-by-moment basis in response to the confluence of offender and hostage behaviors, external factors, and public safety needs. Specific threat management strategies proposed during the incident are explained in detail within the context of the facts available to the BAU at the time. Considerations for future crisis events are offered based upon the authors' experiences in this case.

Keywords: crisis threat assessment, crisis threat management, hostage barricade, ongoing violence, behavioral analysis

It was midafternoon on a quiet, cloudy day in rural Midland City, Alabama. Sixty-five-year-old James “Jimmy” Lee Dykes approached a stopped school bus making its afternoon drop-off rounds—the bus driver was a friend of his and so there was nothing unusual about Dykes walking up to say hello. What happened next was nothing the driver could have anticipated. Dykes boarded the bus with a gun, a zip tie, and a demand. He insisted the bus driver, 66-year-old Charles Poland, Jr., choose two boys aged six to eight, restrain them, and hand them over to Dykes. Poland, Jr., refused. Approximately 4 min later, Dykes shot and killed him while he was sitting in the driver’s seat—his body was later found still partially seat-belted in. Dykes then abducted five-year-old Ethan Gilman from the bus and hauled him off to an underground

bunker he had prepped and waiting, setting in motion one of the most complex hostage-barricade incidents in recent times in the United States.

This article will describe how the authors applied traditional threat assessment and management principles to a protracted crisis situation. The term *crisis threat assessment* is used to describe ongoing, continually evolving behavioral threat assessment and management conducted on a moment-by-moment basis in response to the confluence of offender and hostage behaviors, external factors, and public safety needs.

In order to protect the integrity of future operations, as well as the privacy of Ethan Gilman and others, some facets of the case are intentionally not presented, or only partially presented, herein. Case facts presented in this article are drawn from accurate open sources, information released to news media, or information presented publicly by the FBI. Generally, the case facts represented below are those that were available to the authors as the crisis unfolded; some pieces of information may have been proven inaccurate or incomplete later on. Conversely, significant facts discovered subsequent to the conclusion of this crisis are not included because they were unavailable to the authors at the time of the assessment. True names have been altered in some cases, where

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those individuals have not been publicly identified.

During this crisis event, the authors consulted with the other members of the Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU), as well as the BAU's contract psychiatrist, Dr. Gregory Saathoff, University of Virginia, on aspects of the situation; Dr. Saathoff's contributions to this matter were invaluable to the efficacy of the threat assessment and management plan proposed in this matter.

January 29, 2013

Following Ethan's abduction, Dykes went directly into his bunker from the bus, approximately 300 feet away. He placed a call to 911 once he got Ethan inside:

- 911: 911. Where is your emergency?
- 911: (to others) Medic one.
- 911: 911
- Dykes: Yes, this is Jim Dykes.
- 911: I'm sorry?
- Dykes: This is Jim Dykes. I'm at 1539
- 911: (to others) 502.
- Dykes: This is Jim Dykes. I'm at 1539 Private Road.
- 911: (to others) 502. You're screaming. We can't understand you.
- Dykes: I'm at, I'm, I'm, I'm at 1539 Private Road.
- 911: Yes, okay, yes sir. What's going on?
- Mr. Dykes: I have a hostage.
- 911: (to others) I have the suspect on the phone. (relays additional information about shooting and abduction to others)
- Mr. Dykes: I shot the school bus driver because he did not do, he

did not do what I needed him to do.

- 911: Sir, what's wrong? What's going on?
- Dykes: I have a, just come to, come to lot 256. At the front gate, you will find a white post there that you can talk through on, you can talk through. I'm in a underground bunker.
- 911: You're in an underground bunker. Okay sir. You have a child with you?
- Dykes: Yes.
- 911: Okay. What's your name, sir?
- Dykes: Jim Dykes. And I—
- 911: Okay sir. Where are you? What's your address?
- Dykes: Uh 256 Private Road 1539
- 911: (to others) I'm simulcasting.
- 911: Okay, sir. Sir.
- Dykes: Yeah.
- 911: (to others) Attention all units. Be advised I have suspect on 911. 256 private road 1539. 256 Private Road 1539. Is armed, does have the child hostage, he's in a underground bunker at a white post.
- 911: Sir? Is—Sir? Sir—is the child harmed? Hello?
- 911: (to others) I just lost the guy.
- [Call disconnects. New call begins.]
- 911: 911, where is your emergency?
- Dykes: Yes, this is Jim Dykes again.

911: Yes, sir.

Dykes: When the, when the cops get here, they can talk to me. They can talk with me. They stop at the front gate. They can stop there and talk to a white post, a white PVC pipe sticking up. And I can talk through that pipe to them. I won't be talking any more on the phone, okay? They talk to me through that pipe, got it?

911: Okay, sir, sir, sir.

Dykes: Everything's fine, it's fine. Don't worry, the kid'll be fine. I'm sorry I had to shoot that bus driver, but he would not do it. I asked him please, don't, don't, nobody would be harmed. But he has, he just wouldn't do it. I told him there wouldn't be any harm to anybody. And there will not be any harm to the kid. But I've got, I've got to speak. I'm gonna say something. And I, but I've had enough of this talking here. But they can talk to me through the PVC pipe. And then we'll go from there. Okay—I will not be talking on the phone anymore.

911: Okay.

[Call disconnects]

This 911 recording has been publicly released and is available online (Phillips, 2016). On the call, Dykes' breathing was labored, possibly from the physical exertion of carrying Ethan into the bunker or from stress, or both. This, combined with the difficulty of conversing with a 911 operator who was also speaking to others at the same time, may be responsible for some of the stops and starts in his speech. He did not come across as uncertain or hesitant in any way on the call audio recording. To the contrary, he sounded controlled and focused, if

winded. His voice was calm and his speech was not particularly rapid.

Upon arriving at his address, responders easily found the four inch diameter PVC pipe sticking straight out of the ground. It was approximately 5 feet high and had a 90-degree angle at the top, allowing a person to stand in front of it and speak directly into the opening. What they did not know was that Dykes had booby-trapped the speaking tube with an improvised explosive device (IED), rigged to go off at his command.

Back at the bus, a note was found next to Poland, Jr.'s, body, written to him from Dykes.

At Quantico, Virginia, where the BAU is located, the second author was notified of the homicide and abduction that evening. Working with the barest of facts at that moment, he had two essential pieces of advice for responders: First, they should begin finding out everything possible about the offender. That information would be crucial. Second, any media messaging should focus on the victim's recovery rather than on the murder of the bus driver. If he was watching the news, it could be detrimental for any messaging to focus on the murder. Publicly reinforcing that he had already taken a life could negatively impact negotiations by injecting a hostile message into the situation. This, in turn, potentially increased the risk that Dykes would be unable to envision "a way out" without resorting to further violence.

Late that night, the authors and other members of the BAU received a transcription of that note from Dykes to Poland, Jr. It read:

Remain calm, act natural and read:

I have a story to tell. I need two hostages to force the powers that be to listen. You will choose two smart, well mannered, good kids, age 6–10, preferably boys with no physical/mental/medical problems. You will connect them at the wrists with this tie, bring them forward, they & I will leave the bus. You will immediately drive down the road and call the law. No harm will come to the kids. When the story is finished, they will go free and then I will die. Do exactly as I say, please do not make any wrong moves, I do not want to shoot you. I do not want to traumatize the kids any more than absolutely necessary. Now get this done as soon as possible. My cell ph. # is 904–412-3127. My name is Jim Dykes. Take a deep breath; you can do this. Again, do not mess this up and no one will be harmed.

P.S. Thanks Chuck, I'm extremely sorry, but I have to do this. Please do not make me do something I don't want to do!!

Don't ask me anything, don't tell me anything. Just do it quickly.

The note has been publicly released and is available online (Phillips, 2016).

The BAU was asked to quickly assess the note and provide any operational guidance it could offer. The original, handwritten version was not yet available. Although careful study of the note was conducted continually throughout the crisis, several immediate observations were made that night and passed to responders at the scene. Analysis of the note had to be both rapid and conservative—relatively little was known at that time and so relatively little could be offered with confidence. The BAU's assessment included these points among others:

1. The content of the note was considered in light of known case facts at that point—that its author had killed and kidnapped, and was now barricaded inside an underground bunker with a young child as his hostage. He already made one promise of violence if his demands were not met. When they were not, he kept that promise. Thus, the BAU assessed that James Dykes would likely be willing to engage in further violence, and that Ethan was in a very precarious position.
2. Dykes demonstrated an ability and willingness to engage in behavior he knew to be wrong or distasteful as a means to an end. He appeared confident and resolved. Any reluctance was overridden by dedication to his perceived mission. As he observed in his note, the necessity of his mission would dictate how much trauma the hostages would have to endure.
3. Dykes's assertion that he planned to die at the conclusion of the crisis correctly raised alarm. Combined with a need to tell "a story" before he died, an expressed sense of having no choice but to do what he was doing, and his demonstrated ability and willingness to use lethal violence, this assertion was assessed to represent an authentic plan, at the time the note was written, to die. Inasmuch as expressed suicidality can indicate a person of concern is engaging in last resort thinking (Meloy, Hoffmann, Roshdi, Glaz-Ocik, & Guldinann, 2014), this

justified even greater caution for responders dealing with Dykes.

4. The children were somewhat depersonalized. Although Dykes would not have been expected to know their names, his references to them as "hostages" and "kids," along with descriptors of ideal candidates, nevertheless suggested he viewed them in utilitarian terms. He was likely not sympathetic toward the children, as evidenced by the pronoun separations "they & I" rather than "we," and lack of any expression of regret or remorse for what he was about to do to them. Conversely, the note did suggest sympathy and remorse regarding Poland, Jr., which offered a potential negotiation theme.

These observations were provided to FBI personnel at the scene working closely with local and state law enforcement. On the following morning, the BAU and other assets of the FBI's Critical Incident Response Group deployed to Alabama to assist on-site.

January 30, 2013

By the time the FBI deployment team reached the crisis site on the afternoon of January 30, negotiators had convinced Dykes to accept a "throw phone," a hardline telephone used in crisis negotiations. Importantly, this not only facilitated communications with Dykes, but also helped him become accustomed to speaking with negotiators and established that he was willing to do so. Other means to monitor activity inside the bunker were established.

Once on-site, the authors worked in a primarily reactive mode for the first two days, responding to information as it came in, often at a frenetic pace. Tasks ranged from assessing volatile or concerning statements by Dykes to interviewing witnesses who appeared unbidden at the command post to volunteer statements. Much information was discovered about Dykes in the following days, although it is important to note that some of it was revealed to be inaccurate, further complicating the situation.

Almost immediately, Dykes told negotiators he had to "tell a story." This echoed a primary theme from the demand note, strongly suggesting that Dykes' story, whatever it was, and his

ability to share it publicly was and would remain of great importance to him. The content of the story he wanted to tell, however, was unclear. In addition, he insisted he would only tell his story in person, to a young, female TV reporter whom he identified by name. He repeatedly demanded that authorities send this particular journalist down into the bunker, at which time Dykes would release Ethan. Clearly, this demand was not one that public safety agencies could entertain—supplying him with another hostage would be plainly unacceptable. Therefore, this demand would never be met. However, it did provide insight into Dykes' ability to realistically assess his options. Rigid adherence to this unrealistic demand suggested an impaired ability to employ objectivity or view the situation from a viewpoint other than his own.

James Dykes' criminal history was discovered to be relatively minor up to that point in his life. Prior arrests resulted from incidents of driving under the influence, grand larceny, drug possession, assault, and brandishing a weapon—the latter was a very recent charge. He was known as a local menace, and had just been arrested within the past couple of months for brandishing and possibly shooting a gun in relation to an argument with a neighbor.

Dykes reportedly built up a speed bump of sorts on the dirt road leading past his house. Neighbors thought he did so because he felt that people drove too fast while passing by his property. One day after the makeshift speed bump was in place, a truck hauling a moving trailer damaged the speed bump somewhat when traversing it. According to Dykes' neighbor who rode in the truck, Dykes became very angry at the incident and, when she tried to smooth things over, he ran to his van, retrieved a pistol, and reportedly fired twice at the truck; her family was inside.

The district attorney's office charged Dykes for the incident. When a sheriff's deputy came to serve an arrest warrant and take him into custody, Dykes was fully compliant and well-behaved. While riding in the back of the deputy's patrol vehicle, he vented his anger that a neighbor could so easily have him charged with a crime. However, he displayed no anger or aggression directed toward the deputy. That same neighbor later said this about Dykes,

Before this happened I would see him at several places and he would just stare a hole through me. On Monday I saw him at a laundromat and he seen me when I was getting in my truck and he just stared and stared and stared at me. (Rawls, 2013)

Significantly, Dykes was due to appear in court on that very charge on Wednesday, January 30, 2013—the day after he murdered Poland, Jr., and abducted Ethan.

Ethan Gilman was revealed to be a 5-year-old boy diagnosed with what was then known as Asperger's disorder (now subsumed by autism spectrum disorder), a developmental disorder impacting a person's ability to effectively socialize with others and often resulting in restricted, repetitive behavioral patterns (*Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders-IV*, 2000). He took prescription medications to control these conditions; negotiators convinced Dykes to accept medication deliveries several times a day (Thomas, Date, Cloherty, & Krolowitz, 2013).

Dykes began revealing greater detail of his plan to negotiators. In addition to receiving the specified reporter in the bunker, to whom he would relay his story, Dykes planned to hold her hand while she broadcast his final message out to the world. After that, he would commit suicide in her presence by putting a plastic bag over his head and filling it with helium. He said he had the necessary supplies with him. Although we did not realize it at the time, this method of suicide was similar to one described in the book *The Final Exit* (Humphry, 2002). The updated information about his planned suicide method enhanced our opinion that Dykes' intention not to survive the crisis was probably genuine.

A significant and early advancement came with the authors' viewing of the school bus video camera's recording of the incident. This video has been publicly released and can be found online (Phillips, 2016). A video camera was mounted at the front of the bus, facing rear, and captured the entire event. Although neither Dykes nor Poland, Jr., could be seen, all conversation could be clearly heard, and the children on the bus were easily observable except for Ethan, who was also too far forward to be fully captured by the camera's lens. The entire event, from the time Dykes boarded the bus until the assault concluded, took approximately

four minutes to unfold (some speech between the two overlaps):

Dykes: I'll shoot. I don't want to shoot you now. I don't want to shoot you. I want two kids, six to eight, six to eight years old.

Poland, Jr.: No

Dykes: I mean it. Right now. Right now. Two kids. Six to eight years old. Get it. Get it. Make a move, I'll shoot ya. Do it.

Poland, Jr.: I can't do it.

Dykes: Do it!

Poland, Jr.: Sorry. You're gonna to have to shoot me.

Dykes: How about I shoot a kid?

Poland, Jr.: No.

Dykes: You're gonna do it.

Poland, Jr.: No.

Dykes: You will. I, I—Now they won't be hurt if you, if you, if you st—

Poland, Jr.: No, I—I cannot risk the kids—

Dykes: You will. It's the only chance I have. It's always gonna take place. It's always gonna take place. Do it. Do it.

Poland, Jr.: No.

Dykes: Do it. I don't want to shoot you now. I don't wanna shoot you. I don't wanna kill you. Do it. Do it. You're out of (expletive) time.

Poland, Jr.: Lord, help us.

Dykes: I can't—they won't be hurt if you let it—if you do it. I need two kids, two boys—

Poland, Jr.: They are my responsibility to keep kids on this bus.

Dykes: I need two boys, six to eight years old! You will not be hurt! You will not be hurt in any way! Two boys, c'mon! (Pause) It's got to take place. I don't wanna do this. I don't wanna to do it. But it's gotta take place.

Poland, Jr.: Why don't you just get off and go on.

Dykes: No, it won't be that way. It's gonna end right here.

Poland, Jr.: [Unintelligible] some people who can help you.

Dykes: It's gonna happen. Don't (expletive), Don't (expletive) with—It's gonna happen right now. Now you just do it. I need two kids! Two boys, young b—you in the red shirt in the back seat, come here! Come here!

Unidentified passenger: Me?

Dykes: No, in the back seat, the red one! Come here!

Dykes: Uh-uh, don't you do that. I'm a have to. I'm a have to. All right I hate to do this now. [Pause] Come here, c'mon.

Poland, Jr.: No, not Ethan.

Dykes: It's gonna happen, I don't wanna hurt you now. C'mon! Do not! Do not! Do not!

Poland, Jr.: I cannot do it. I can't.

Dykes: You got to. It's the only way, they will not be harmed! And you won't be harmed!

- Poland, Jr.: It's my responsibility to keep these kids on the bus to keep them safe. [One shot fired]
- Dykes: I can't help that. I can't help that, [unintelligible]! This is—I won't go for the rule. Dykes: C'mon! C'mon!
- Poland, Jr.: I can't turn them over to somebody else. [Three shots fired]
- Dykes: The rules are—we can't have it. It don't matter. It's got to go. (Pause) Come here, kid. The two in the back seat. You, the girl and that boy right there. Come here. You will not be harmed. You will not be harmed, I'm tellin' you (Pause). Come here. Come on. Come on. Dykes: Come here! Come here, kid! Come here! C'mon! C'mon! Come here! C'mon! No don't! Come here! Come here! Come here, I— Come here! Come here! Come here!
- Poland, Jr.: He's—he's scared to death. He's scared. [Dykes departs]
- Dykes: Uh-uh. Uh-uh. You—you will not be harmed, son. Dykes repeatedly commanded a particular boy at the rear of the bus to come forward, but the boy refused to move. Throughout the confrontation, the children on the bus except for Ethan hid behind seats and slowly, unobtrusively moved toward the back of the bus one by one. One boy quietly called 911 early on and remained on the line throughout the ordeal, describing for the dispatcher what was happening. Ethan was seated directly behind the bus driver. After he killed Poland, Jr., Dykes grabbed Ethan, hoisted him over his shoulder, and carried him off.
- Poland, Jr.: (to boy) It's all right. Jimmy Dykes was a stranger to his hostage and had no connections to the Gilman family. Ethan was in all probability taken because of his proximity to his abductor—the other children had put distance between themselves and Dykes. During the assault, Dykes raised his voice and shouted at various times, and clearly indicated he feared time was running out. However, it was unclear what emotions were aroused, as he maintained a loud but relatively flat tone of voice. Certainly, it appeared that he used a loud voice as a method of command and control. However, he did not necessarily express anxiety, fear, or other emotions. At this early juncture, a confident assessment on this point was difficult due to a lack of evidence of how Dykes behaved under “normal” conditions, or under conditions in which he became emotional but was not engaged in violent crime. In other words, an adequate baseline of his verbal behavior was not available for comparison. Nevertheless, during the somewhat chaotic conditions occurring throughout the confrontation and assault, Dykes remained focused and in control, staying “on mission” in spite of the challenges he faced, such as the children's and
- Dykes: You will not be harmed, son.
- Poland, Jr.: I'm sorry, I cannot do this.
- Dykes: I'm a have—I'm a have to shoot you now. C'mon, I don't have any time, the Goddamn law's comin.' C'mon! (Pause) Don't! Don't!
- Poland, Jr.: I can't do it.
- Dykes: Don't!
- Poland, Jr.: I can't.
- [One shot fired]
[Continuous screaming from the children]
- Poland, Jr.: Ah!
- Dykes: All right now, do it! Do it! No don't!

Poland, Jr.'s, collective refusal to comply. Reaction to unforeseen responses was minimal. He repeatedly stated, "It's got to take place," no matter how many times Poland, Jr., refused to give up the children under his care. He persisted even after the children flatly refused to budge.

In considering both the note and the bus video, Dykes appeared to fully expect that he would in fact leave the bus with the hostages he came for, regardless of what hurdles or challenges presented themselves. In addition to having these expectations, it also appeared that Dykes perceived he had no other choice but to follow through with his plan, as described in his note. Several warning behaviors (Meloy, Hoffmann, Guldimmann, & James, 2011) had been observed at this point. Warning behavior analysis can be applied to help threat assessors identify increasing or accelerating risk in future targeted violence assessment situations (Meloy et al., 2011). We applied it to this continuing violence scenario for the purpose of considering future action by Dykes:

1. Pathway warning behavior (Calhoun & Weston, 2003; Meloy et al., 2011) was clearly observed, at minimum by the implementation of attack behavior—Dykes had boarded the bus, killed Poland, Jr., and abducted a hostage.
2. Last resort warning behavior was observed in both the note and on the bus video in the form of time ("C'mon, I don't have any time, the Goddamn law's comin'"; Mohandie & Duffy, 1999; Meloy et al., 2011) and violent action ("P.S. Thanks Chuck, I'm extremely sorry, but I have to do this. Please don't make me do something I don't want to do!!"; De Becker, 1997; Mohandie & Duffy, 1999) imperatives.
3. Directly communicated threat warning behavior (Meloy et al., 2011) was demonstrated in both the note ("Do exactly as I say, please do not make any wrong moves, I do not want to shoot you") and on the bus video ("I'm a have—I'm a have to shoot you now").

The "speaking tube" was revealed to be the above-ground end of a 170' long, subsurface PVC pipe running to the bunker from his driveway, which doubled as ventilation to provide

fresh air into the bunker. X-rayed imagery taken for officer safety revealed an IED was inside, constructed of explosive powder and shotgun pellets. A trigger cord ran through the pipe all the way to the bunker. Bomb technicians assessed that the device would likely explode if triggered.

January 31–February 1, 2013

By the following morning, as many as a dozen or more PVC pipes had been observed sticking up from the ground around Dykes' property, raising concerns about an entire minefield of IEDs laid out to harm responders who would approach the bunker. Once sufficient daylight existed to conduct thorough inspections, bomb technicians spent several hours studying the pipes. They found no additional explosives.

Almost nothing was known about the bunker at first, but as the days went by a great deal of information was discovered. Early reporting suggested that Dykes dug out and built the bunker within a month or so prior to the crisis. However, it was soon revealed that he had been working on it, including burying the speaking tube, for nearly a year. One neighbor reported,

I think that he was obviously been planning something for a long time. I had always figured he was more or less a wacko survivalist, but it's obvious that he had this very well thought out and arranged, and it explains as to why he did so much work in the dark. (Dolak & Benitez, 2013)

She went on to describe often observing Dykes armed and patrolling his property on her way home from work. Sometimes he patrolled as late as midnight. She noted that within three months before the hostage crisis, a cargo-type container showed up on his property. "He's been digging. He moves dirt shovel by shovel. He made tiers. He moved cinder blocks from place to place to place, to however he wants to shape the land" (Dolak & Benitez, 2013).

The bunker was approximately six feet by eight feet, and tall enough for a man to stand up inside, with a chute and permanent wooden ladder access route to a heavy, wooden surface hatch. Significant effort went into building the structure; he recruited a neighbor to help him, claiming it was to be a storm shelter. The bunker was constructed with wood paneled walls and ceiling, electrical wiring, ventilation, a TV,

bunk beds with bedding, and a makeshift latrine. Cinder block steps provided a permanent, stable approach to the hatch, which was secured from the inside with bolts and cables. It appeared that he had sufficient supplies for several weeks underground.

Dykes' residential property was an approximately one-acre parcel of land. A driveway connected the public roadway to Dykes' residence. The structure closest to the driveway was his trailer home, purchased from a neighbor approximately two years prior to the incident. Behind that was a shipping container similar to a rail car. Behind the shipping container was the bunker. Dykes' rear property line ran behind the bunker.

Reporting, unconfirmed at the time, included information that he had recently created a short driveway on his property specifically so the very school bus he attacked could use it as a turnaround point. The attack did, in fact, occur on the turnaround. Additional reporting suggested that Dykes intentionally cultivated a friendship with Poland, Jr., in the months before the incident. They may have swapped home-grown vegetables and other products with each other. Establishing and maintaining such a friendship was potentially a break in pattern for Dykes—although he was able to coexist with select neighbors, he was not generally known for being friendly with others. In the absence of definitive evidence regarding Dykes's motivation for becoming friendly with Poland, Jr., we avoided speculating about it. It likely made his mission easier to accomplish, but we did not know with certainty if that was Dykes' goal from the start.

The BAU reviewed other written materials by Dykes, from years prior, in which he expressed a sense of injustices for the "little guy." He appeared to harbor intense dissatisfaction with his treatment at the hands of authorities who held him accountable for minor infractions for which he did not feel personally responsible. In these writings, he linked his personal situation to a more generalized deficiency of justice for those without power or celebrity.

Ethan's diagnosed conditions presented concerns about his ability to cope during the crisis, although presumably any child that age would have struggled with fear, anxiety, and confusion. Concerns also existed regarding his ability to interact with his captor. It was, therefore,

considered a significant victory that negotiators were able to convince Dykes to accept medication for Ethan several times a day. Dykes did, indeed, provide the medications to his hostage when prompted to do so by negotiators. Ethan was able to maintain composure a majority of the time in the bunker. The specific extent to which his medications helped him remain calm in the face of his particular situation was not known, but the benefit was probably substantial. Additionally, negotiators also persuaded Dykes to accept coloring books, toy cars, and special snacks to keep Ethan occupied.

Dykes had a working TV in the bunker, affording another potential means of influencing him. Although it was difficult to discern what he was able to watch or was watching, it did mean that media messaging directed toward him had a chance of influencing his behavior, in a positive or negative way. The authors collaborated with media liaison and negotiation representatives to craft a message that, if heard, might be beneficial. In one message, Dale County Sheriff Wally Olson went on camera and publicly thanked Dykes "for taking care of our child" (Thomas et al., 2013). The hope was that offering thanks in this way would encourage Dykes to continue treating Ethan well, and combat the negative emotional effects of any unflattering coverage he may have seen on TV.

At one point, Dykes opened the hatch to accept a medication delivery and thought he saw a gun pointed at him by one of the FBI special weapons and tactics (SWAT) agents who made the deliveries. Dykes quickly closed the hatch and retreated into the safety of the bunker. This was a significant moment. He paced, bent over and took rapid, shallow breaths, and cradled his pistol. Wiping tears on his shirt, he called negotiators and raged about seeing a gun. With difficulty, negotiators calmed him, but Dykes was visibly and deeply shaken. This raised questions about whether Dykes was really willing to die for his cause and whether he was having second thoughts about how he wanted the crisis to end. After scrutinizing the scene many times over, however, we suggested that Dykes's response may have been a fight-or-flight response, rather than the emotional basis for a genuine reconsideration of his strategy. Dykes might not have wanted to die in a way that did not conform to his plan, but we

could not conclude from the incident that he was *unwilling* to die.

In speaking to negotiators on the phone at that moment, he implied that, if he died, Ethan would have access to the IED and had been taught to detonate it should anything happen to Dykes:

If I fall dead and blood goes every goddamn where, he's going to have access to that weapon, and he's very likely going to get to it and pull that trigger before they will be able to come through that door. (Phillips, 2016)

He also said, of the agent holding the gun he saw:

That trigger-happy son of a bitch. He may think he's Rambo, and he may think he's going to be a hero if he does that, but he's not going to be no goddamn hero when the world knows he's responsible for killing this kid. (Phillips, 2016)

February 2, 2013

Bomb technicians at the FBI Laboratory had purchased materials to match what Dykes had recently bought according to a store receipt found in his trash. With those materials, they were able to construct an IED using a propane bottle duct-taped to a PVC pipe filled with gunpowder. It could be detonated by shooting an air-gun pellet into a shotgun shell primer, which had to be embedded in the pipe's end cap. Dykes had a pellet gun with him in the bunker—that much was known. Bomb technicians tested several copies of the device built at the laboratory; they all exploded with enough force to have killed anyone in the bunker. A video of the test is available online (Phillips, 2016). This meant that Dykes had enough knowledge and sophistication to construct at least two devices capable of killing himself, his hostage, and law enforcement personnel.

The chaotic information flow experienced during the first two days on-site had settled to large degree, and a clearer picture of Dykes began to present itself. He resided alone in his mobile home, and had lived alone since moving back to the area in 2011. Establishment of a comprehensive pattern of life was quite difficult; few family members and fewer friends were available to be contacted.

The scant information available revealed that Dykes was one of four children born to an intact nuclear family. His parents were farmers who raised corn and cotton in Alabama. By those

providing information during the standoff, his childhood was described as unremarkable. As a child he was apparently easygoing and friendly, neither overly social nor withdrawn. At the age of 16, he entered the United States Navy during the Vietnam Conflict, returning from service at the age of 19 following an honorable discharge. Dykes indicated to negotiators that he had experienced direct combat action and may have been wounded in action; family members interviewed during the crisis were unaware of any combat service, however. There is no reference in his military record indicating he was ever in combat (Wilder, 2013). Family members began to note minor changes in his personality upon return from military service, such as reduced joviality and a shorter temper. These observers, however, simply attributed this to increased maturity. At that point in his life, he sometime remarked to one of his sisters that their father would not be able to beat him anymore. According to her, corporal punishment was at times meted out in the Dykes household when the children were growing up, though it was in no way characterized as abuse. Examples included spanking with a belt or a switch. Dykes' sister recalled that incidents of corporal punishment inflicted on her brother typically followed challenges to authority or rules of the household. She opined that Dykes harbored a lifelong dislike of and bias against authority.

Dykes married circa 1968 and the union resulted in the birth of one daughter. Approximately two years later, the marriage ended in divorce. At some point subsequently, Dykes was married to or in a stable relationship with Nelda Lukers, resulting in another daughter, Cindy; this relationship ended in 1988. Family members lost substantial contacts with him between then and the mid-1990s, and therefore finer details of his life are unavailable for this period. During that time, Dykes and a childhood friend worked together as long haul truck drivers and in other labor jobs. They found employment around the southern United States, and Dykes reportedly began using illegal drugs including PCP, "speed," and marijuana. When they did have contact with him, relatives noticed his personality was changing; one family member discussed this with Dykes, and told him that his PCP use was affecting his personality. Dykes' reaction to this conversation is unknown.

From approximately 1989 through 1996, Dykes developed an obsession with dog races, and sometimes went to one particular track with two relatives. He developed a habit of plotting out races and their outcomes covering a span of 10 to 15 years on poster boards. Dykes may have had as many as hundreds of poster boards that he studied at length as a tracking system to determine if a track or tracks were cheating him out of money. He seemed to abruptly halt this study of dog track racing for unknown reasons in 1996. However, contact between Dykes and the authors' primary source of family information was greatly diminished at this time, and completely ceased within another year, somewhat limiting the confidence of and context for this reporting.

In 1996, Dykes moved into the home of his sister, "Ann," and her family in the Midland City area, where he resided for approximately six months. Ann became fearful of Dykes' short temper and frequent outbursts over minor issues. She eventually asked him to leave, and so Dykes moved in with another sibling, "Brenda," near Midland City. He remained there for approximately six months. One day, Brenda set a coffee cup on the arm of a chair while the two were seated in her living room. Her brother took an immediate dislike of this action, confronted her, and demanded that she use a coaster. Angry, Brenda replied that it was her house and that he should not concern himself with where she placed her coffee cup. Dykes stood up and threw his coffee cup against a wall, shattering it. This resulted in further argument, during which Dykes brandished a firearm. Frightened, Brenda called Ann's husband and asked him to remove Dykes from her home. Ann's husband did so, and Dykes moved out without further incident. Later, Brenda confided to Ann that Dykes had also hit her several times during his residence in her home.

Dykes was never violent with Ann or Brenda when they were children. However, he was apparently well aware that their father would employ corporal punishment if he hit his sisters. Therefore, it was unclear if Dykes would have become violent with them as youngsters had he felt free to do so. After Dykes moved out of Brenda's house, the family lost contact with him until approximately 2011. Out of the blue, Dykes telephoned Ann in 2011 to let her know he was once again residing nearby. He provided

the name of a road, but did not offer a physical address or telephone number. This was a brief and mostly one-sided conversation, and Ann did not press for details at that moment. She assumed Dykes would call back because he appeared to be trying to reestablish a relationship. He never did.

Dykes had a history of domestic violence in addition to menacing and hitting his adult sisters, with several specific examples provided to investigators by family members. He physically abused both his first wife and Nelda Lukers during those relationships. Lukers was so fearful of him that she pointed a firearm at him one day. He took it from her and beat her with it so badly that she was hospitalized. She left him because she was sure he would eventually kill her otherwise (Phillips, 2016).

At the time of the crisis, Dykes was known as the "mean man" of the rural neighborhood. People largely avoided him when possible. When he moved into the area, he immediately replaced a neighbor's mailbox with his own, for unknown reasons. Soon thereafter, he had a reputation for promising to shoot anyone or any animal that came onto his property. One neighbor described him as "a ticking time bomb" (Genovario, 2013).

As partly detailed above, Jim Dykes had a long history of emotionally overreacting to minor irritants. Many of these actions may have been perceived by others as impulsiveness. During these moments, it could appear at first blush that his actions, such as throwing a coffee cup, were in response to a sudden state of heightened emotion—that of anger. However, careful assessment of his history revealed that he repeatedly demonstrated thoughtful, prior planning ability and failed to demonstrate impulsivity at critical moments. For example, his actions on the school bus appeared to have been taken substantially in compliance with his plan; Dykes did not impulsively shoot Poland, Jr. Rather, he warned his friend many times to comply, which Poland, Jr., consistently refused to do. When he shot Poland, Jr., he was following through on his word and effectively removing an obstacle to successful completion of his mission. In another example, Dykes had become irritated by a neighbor's dog crossing his property in his current Midland City neighborhood. He told the dog's owner that he would shoot the dog if it returned to Dykes' property.

When the dog did, Dykes beat it severely with a lead pipe and delivered it to his neighbor's porch. According to the dog's owner, Dykes told her his only regret was not beating the dog to death (Genovario, 2013). It died a week later. While such an act was unquestionably horrific, it was not impulsive on its face. Dykes provided advance notice of the consequences of a certain act then followed through with that consequence when the triggering action occurred. Dykes was a *violent promise keeper*—he promised he would resort to violence if others failed to meet his demands; when they did fail, he kept those promises. In this instance, it meant killing his neighbor's dog the next time it trespassed on his property. Even though he was not necessarily impulsive, we nevertheless agreed with negotiators' concern that Dykes's temper and reactivity were forces to be reckoned with.

Throughout his adult life, Jim Dykes demonstrated what would be colloquially referred to as a "hair trigger temper." The stimuli responsible for provoking his temper could be unpredictable both in terms of content and timing. During negotiations, Dykes appeared to become annoyed at being complimented or overtly shown respect. Any topic except for Ethan could potentially set him off.

His response to negotiation efforts was extremely challenging, as he rigidly adhered to his vision for getting his story out and was extremely resistant to considering alternatives. Although he was open to engaging in occasional chat about other topics, such as TV talk shows and long haul trucking, whenever the conversation turned to the abduction or to the ills of a corrupt government, he was intractable in his grievance-fueled opinions.

For the first several days of the crisis, one of negotiators' few reliable topic changes to calm Dykes was to ask about Ethan. Dykes frequently engaged in lengthy rants about the corrupt government, untrustworthy police, and how members of society would revolt once his story came out. He displayed a highly volatile anger response to many topics, and became increasingly frustrated with negotiators for failing to ensure his demands were met. When the conversation became heated, negotiators sometimes inquired about Ethan's comfort and needs as a means of redirection. Often, Dykes would immediately disengage from the subject of his anger, check on Ethan, and report back to ne-

gotiators how the boy was doing. When this pattern was noted, the authors became concerned that continually refocusing Dykes's attention onto Ethan could eventually create additional safety concerns. For example, a discussion transpired between Dykes and a negotiator about the logistical challenges involved in providing something in particular for Ethan. Dykes turned to Ethan and snapped that it was all Ethan's fault. While the negotiator was able to diffuse Dykes' irritation, this was a reminder that Ethan's position was and would remain precarious while in Dykes' custody.

Consistently resistant to considering alternative scenarios to bring the crisis to a conclusion, Dykes became furious any time negotiators attempted to bring up the topic of coming out or releasing Ethan. He was steadfast in his refusal to see himself as any part of the solution to the problem he faced. He routinely ranted that the stand he was taking would cause chaos and lead to riots, once it became known. "People are going be standing up to this [expletive] dictatorial, incompetent, self-righteous, bunch of sorry bastards in government," he insisted ("*Inside Alabama Kidnapper's Bunker*," 2013).

Dykes never did clearly articulate what his "story" was, despite repeated prompting by negotiators. When asked what he would say once he had the TV reporter with him, he replied,

You know goddamn well what I'd say when I go public. . . . It's going to create chaos. It's going to create riots. . . . People are going be standing up to this [expletive] dictatorial, incompetent, self-righteous, bunch of sorry bastards in government. ("*Inside Alabama Kidnapper's Bunker*," 2013)

Yet, he failed to articulate the message itself he wished to deliver. In one conversation, Dykes told negotiators that he knew there was someone "out there" who had the ability to get Ethan released, and placed responsibility for finding that person on negotiators. He did not appear to consider himself as a potential candidate for being the person who could secure Ethan's release.

Through further investigation, a few additional behavioral observations about Dykes could be made. These included:

1. Dykes profoundly disliked authority and had for many years. He believed that rules infringed on his personal rights. Therefore, he tended to oppose those rules that

affected him personally, such as any restrictions on land use or use of his possessions.

2. Dykes felt government was corrupt and unjust, and believed that power was held by those with money or celebrity status.
3. Dykes was reportedly a heavy consumer of alcohol.
4. Dykes was very concerned with the method of his death, and stated that he did not want to die violently.
5. Those who knew Dykes reported that he liked children.

At one point, the topic of Dykes' adult daughters came up in conversation with a negotiator. The absence of a relationship with them became a focal point of his attention, and Dykes began to cry. This moment represented a potential breakthrough in that this was the first expression of genuine emotion, other than anger or stress, we observed from Dykes during the crisis. The authors viewed this as evidence that Dykes potentially had the interest and emotional ability to bond with his children if the circumstances presented themselves.

February 3–5, 2013

During the latter half of this crisis, one of Dykes's adult daughters agreed to talk to her father (Phillips, 2016). She had not had contact with her father since childhood, approximately 25 years prior. We collaborated with the negotiation team in assessing and preparing her for this contact. After a protracted period of no contact with his own children, the challenge was to create a situation that facilitated his desire to bond with someone outside the bunker, specifically his daughter, and encourage Dykes to envision a future in which he was alive and had relationships with people who cared about him. After his daughter's agreement to come to the site and communicate with her father, negotiators raised the possibility with Dykes. He expressed an interest in talking with her, and therefore a plan to implement this had to be formulated.

Working with Dykes's daughter, specific techniques to facilitate this bonding included recollection and development of positive memories of the two of them together from her childhood, as well as recall of positive aspects

of Dykes's character—these would become topics of discussion during an eventual conversation with her father. She was cautioned to avoid topics that would likely agitate him. In the event that a topic did appear to anger him, she and the preparation team constructed themes of conversation to redirect and calm him—primarily involving a reversion to positive memories of their time together years ago.

During this preparation process, she relayed a story from her childhood that affirmed the assessment that Dykes was a violent promise keeper. One day, while standing in the kitchen of her family home as a young girl, she remembered observing her father open the window over the kitchen sink. He pointed a rifle through it and fired. Her father then took an empty garbage bag from the kitchen and walked out of the house with it. Looking outside to see what he was doing, she watched as he placed a neighbor's dog into the garbage bag and walk toward the neighbors' house with it. She recalled how that particular dog frequently came onto the Dykes' property, and it made her father angry.

Throughout the crisis and particularly during the final days, the authors developed several evolving, core behavioral observations about Dykes. These included:

1. In adulthood, Dykes' life pattern included a history of becoming easily agitated, explosive anger reactions to even minimal provocations, profound isolation, and low empathy toward others.
2. Dykes perceived himself to be a victim of many injustices, which influenced his view of the world as a threatening and harmful place. His behavior often struck others as self-centered and grandiose.
3. Violent actions committed by Dykes were, in his view, merely logical consequences of others' actions or failures to act. He was a violent promise keeper.
4. Throughout the crisis, Dykes continued to reiterate the same demands to negotiators, reinforcing his unwillingness to consider alternatives to his plan.
5. During the crisis, he cared for Ethan's needs but did not appear to be affectionate or emotional; rather, he most likely considered his hostage to be merely an instru-

ment by which he would force the world to listen to his “story.”

Threat Assessment and Management

Beginning on the third day of deployment, enough clarity regarding the situation, offender, and hostage existed to begin proactively engaging in threat assessment, rather than simply reacting to issues as they arose. Our primary behavioral observations of Dykes that were relevant to resolution of the crisis can be summarized as follows:

- As a lifelong pattern, Jimmy Dykes was profoundly isolated and usually demonstrated low empathy. He had explosive anger tendencies and was often easily agitated.
- Dykes cared for Ethan’s physical needs, but was not affectionate with him. Ethan was merely an instrument by which to tell Dykes’s story to the world.
- Dykes perceived himself as a victim of injustices. He displayed behaviors that appeared consistent with narcissism and grandiosity.
- Violence by Dykes was merely a logical consequence of others’ actions (or failure to act).
- The apparent emotions Dykes displayed during the crisis appeared to be primarily stress-related, such as anger, frustration, or anxiety about his safety.
- Throughout the crisis, Dykes was generally unable to envision acceptable alternatives to his plan.

An evolving threat assessment and management strategy was developed in close coordination with the media liaison, negotiations, and tactical elements. The strategy was divided into three essential components. First, suggestions were developed to help resolve the impasse created by Dykes’ refusal to consider alternatives to his plan. Second, suggestions were developed to contend with Dykes’ explosive and unpredictable anger. Third, considerations were developed to support a potential rescue attempt. While we developed suggestions based upon traditional threat assessment and management principles, specific methods of implementing any accepted recommendations were decided by the appropri-

ate operational element, for example, negotiators.

Impasse Strategy

Dykes appeared to lack resilience and the ability to foresee alternatives to the scenario he mapped out, creating an impasse between his position and the need to convince him to relinquish Ethan unharmed. Dykes was immovable, and yet a strategy had to be identified to persuade him to be flexible. Suggestions designed to help Dykes establish a perceived bond with someone other than Ethan, to increase his personal resilience, and help him see himself as a hero to Ethan, were offered as part of a strategy to try to resolve the impasse and encourage alternative thinking by Dykes.

Bonding versus isolation. Dykes lived alone and appeared to be socially isolated. He maintained no bonds of closeness with family or friends to the knowledge of investigators. No emotional tethers appeared prominent, or even observable, in his life. This isolation was a concern for a potentially violent outcome in the case. Social bonds tend to be stabilizing factors that act as a buffer against engaging in targeted violence, whereas isolation is considered a threat enhancing factor (Mohandie & Meloy, 2014; White, 2014). In his life, Dykes seemed to have no one from whom he wished *not* to be separated, and no bonds of affection or positive influence to buffer his anger or perceived need to commit violent acts.

Ironically, this dimension of his life was altered to a degree with the introduction of Ethan’s forced companionship. Speculation arose that Dykes appeared, at least superficially, to be forming a bond of *an unclear nature* with Ethan. He consistently looked after Ethan’s needs including provision of food and drink, allowing law enforcement to provide toys, snacks, and medicine for him each day, and generally looking after his physical well-being. Ethan made a drawing for Dykes and expressed affection for him one day. While this took Dykes by surprise, he returned the statement to Ethan. It was difficult to confidently determine whether this expression by Ethan stemmed from thoughtful emotion or as more of a learned behavior with caretaking adults. It was also difficult to confidently opine about whether Dykes’ response stemmed from thoughtful

emotion or out of reflex. Any potential bonding with Ethan presented possible benefits and risks, particularly as the nature of any such bond was unclear early in the crisis.

In the short term, a bond, if it truly existed, possibly could have prevented Dykes from forming a serious intention of hurting Ethan. In the longer term, however, negotiators would have needed to consider the possibility that Dykes could refuse to give Ethan up if he developed a belief that only Ethan cared for him. Dykes had no relationship with his own children, two grown daughters. A relationship with Ethan could conceivably have become attractive and important to him. These behaviors were not yet understood well enough to confidently opine as to their meaning and consequences.

Dykes' profound isolation was of great concern. It would be important to counter it with a sense of belonging, if possible. However, showing Dykes that he had options to develop a relationship aside from Ethan, with someone who cared about him, could be difficult. We suggested attempts be made to recruit one or both of Dykes' adult daughters to, ideally, come to the crisis site and communicate with Dykes. While there was no indication that he had tried to establish contact with his children, in at least the recent past, he was in personal crisis at this time and may have been more open to emotional decision-making and bonding than he otherwise would have been. We believed this recommendation was likely consistent with negotiation strategy already being devised.

Resilience versus anger. Dykes was angry over a number of issues, as observed in his conversations with negotiators. He tied disappointments in his own life to government corruption and a general lack of justice in society. He repeatedly referenced various situations in his life when he had felt betrayed by persons in authority, continually relating those past situations to the current problem. Hostility and mistrust of the government and police seemed to be directly tied to perceptions of injustice in his past. Regardless of how long ago any given underlying issue occurred, his feelings of intense dissatisfaction remained fresh. This was a concern because incidents of targeted violence are often inspired and preceded by the formation and nurturing of deeply held personal grievances or perceived humiliations (Calhoun & Weston, 2003). He felt aggrieved by numer-

ous betrayals at the hands of authority figures and humiliations by others, such as his neighbor who damaged the speed bump, and potentially felt the betrayals were continuing at the present time. He repeatedly expressed distrust of law enforcement responders during the crisis and exhibited outbursts of anger.

In a related concept, Dykes seemed to collect slights or injustices inflicted on him over the years, cultivating them for potentially long periods of time during which his anger did not abate. This lack of resilience, or ability to "bounce back," was a concern because negotiators would normally attempt to help him see alternatives to violence. The authors feared this effort would be hampered by Dykes' monochromatic view of the world as a threatening and harmful place. Negotiators repeatedly assured Dykes that he would not be harmed if he surrendered peacefully. While Dykes responded that he did not trust those assurances, we nevertheless encouraged that they be repeated when appropriate in conversation, with the hope that he might begin to believe it as time went on.

Dykes was mission-focused and not easily distracted. This was a concern because Ethan was a crucial part of the mission to get his story out to the world. Throughout the crisis, Dykes remained clear and consistent that Ethan *could not* go free until a reporter was provided to broadcast his story. He also recognized his leverage and protection from a tactical assault might evaporate with Ethan's release. The evidence further suggested that Dykes likely had not thought through any contingency plans in case his primary plan failed. Therefore, he would probably not be easily persuaded to see alternatives to his vision of how the situation should unfold. We suggested that negotiators consider proposing alternatives such as establishing a closed-captioned TV or video teleconference connection to tell his story to someone outside the bunker, if and only if this was deemed feasible and appropriate within the context of the overall crisis event strategy. This could have enabled Dykes to perceive achievement of one of his goals. An additional benefit could potentially have been that Dykes might begin to view negotiators as a problem-solving resource. This, in turn, may have had the effect of broadening his worldview slightly to allow for the possibility that this crisis could be re-

solved in a different way than originally planned.

Hero versus victim self-image. Dykes viewed himself as a victim of a corrupt government, untrustworthy authorities, and other societal ills. He had multiple grievances and an extremely low sense of personal responsibility for his part in any situation in which he found himself. His communications were replete with abdications of personal responsibility and externalizations of blame. He also viewed Ethan, at least partially, as a tool to be exploited to get his story out to the world. He remained committed to his course of action in not releasing Ethan until his demands for a forum in which to tell his story to the world were met.

Ironically, Ethan's personal story could be likened to how Dykes saw himself. Clearly, Ethan was an innocent child who did nothing to deserve the trauma of watching his bus driver murdered, being abducted and held hostage against his will, and kept from his family and his life. One suggestion was to attempt to introduce the idea to Dykes that Ethan was very much like Dykes—a victim who did not deserve what was happening to him. As evidenced in his writings and conversations during the crisis, concepts of fairness and justice resonated strongly with him. If Dykes could be inspired to question the justice and fairness of what he was doing to Ethan and see that he was treating Ethan the way the world had treated him, we questioned whether this might facilitate guided conversation intended to help him reevaluate his tactics. Perhaps Dykes could see himself in the role of hero to Ethan.

Explosive Anger Management

Beginning some time following his military service, Dykes developed an unpredictable and explosive temper. He was physically abusive toward women and others in his life. He was known to become enraged and violent toward inanimate objects in response to situations perceived by others as insignificant. The coffee cup throwing incident at Brenda's house was one example of this. During the crisis at Midland City, his anger frequently manifested as sudden and angry verbal lashings directed at negotiators. An obvious concern was that Dykes would potentially take his anger out on Ethan at some

point. Dykes had demonstrated an ability to lash out at others in the past.

Research has suggested that listening to music may have the ability to decrease psychobiological stress response in human subjects (Thoma et al., 2013). Various reasons may exist for this; these may include physiological reactions in the brain in response to musical sounds (Baumgartner, Lutz, Schmidt, & Jäncke, 2006) or simple association between familiar music and memories from happier times past (Krumhansl & Zupnick, 2013). We suggested exploration into the possibility of delivering a means for Dykes to listen to music, which might in turn have a calming influence on him. To socialize the idea of music to him, we proposed that negotiators raise the issue in connection with Ethan, rather than Dykes himself. Most inquiries related to Ethan had been positively received by Dykes up to this point. Introductory questions such as, "Do you think there is any special kind of music Ethan would like" or, "Is there any music you think would be calming for Ethan?" were recommended. A hypothesis was that, given the opportunity, Dykes might project his own desires onto Ethan and choose music he liked or perhaps remembered from when he was Ethan's age. Alternatively, he may have requested popular music from his adolescence or young adulthood. Reporting thus far suggested that Dykes' negative temperament qualities began to manifest after his early adulthood. The hope, therefore, was that any associations he made between the music of his younger days and his personal memories, would be largely positive. If Dykes did not have an immediate answer to this inquiry, he could be offered the opportunity to think about it and make some musical selections in the ensuing days. He had a portable stereo in the bunker, which suggested that he may already have had an interest in music, although none had been played to our knowledge up to that point. Cassette tapes or compact disks could be delivered to him at the same time as Ethan's medication delivery. Another consideration was to allow Dykes to select the music and to be able to turn the music off and on as he desired, as control appeared to be important to him.

In this case, music was indeed offered to Dykes in conversation with a negotiator. He was apparently distracted by other matters at that moment and did not respond to the offer.

Therefore, the opportunity to test this theory in practice did not materialize.

Rescue Considerations

The *apparent* bond between Dykes and Ethan continued throughout much of the crisis period. The two exchanged statements of affection, Ethan gave Dykes at least one drawing that Dykes posted on the wall, and Ethan offered Dykes bites of his food; other examples were noted. This pattern did not hold 100% of the time—Dykes demonstrated willingness to snap at Ethan and occasionally seemed impatient with him. However, his general pattern was to be attentive, gentle, and generous with his hostage. This raised our concern.

Stockholm syndrome became something of a household term after the 1973 robbery of Kreditbanken in Stockholm, Sweden. Two bank robbers took several bank employees hostage for just under a week. The hostages lived in the bank vault together and developed a familiarity with their captors. Against all logic, they developed an emotional attachment to offenders (Westcott, 2013). When a hostage is held by a captor under intense circumstances, without the occurrence of abuse (beyond hostage status), and where there is continued contact between captor and hostage, conditions could become favorable for the development of Stockholm syndrome (Fabrique, Romano, Vecchi, & Van Hasselt, 2007). Essentially, over time the hostage begins to see the captor as giving life simply by not taking it. Hostages may develop positive feelings for their captors, and could then mistrust or fear police or other responders (Fabrique et al., 2007).

In this case, Ethan spent nearly a week with Dykes under circumstances capable of generating high emotions. He was treated relatively well, discounting his hostage status. Dykes fed him, allowed him favored toys and snacks, helped him use the latrine, and more. Therefore, serious consideration had to be given to the possibility that Ethan may have felt a potentially significant bond to Dykes. The authors suggested this was of relevance to tactical personnel in the event of a rescue operation; Ethan could, essentially, have chosen to stay close to Dykes even if given the opportunity to flee. He may have obeyed a possible command by

Dykes to come to him, in what would likely have been a chaotic and confusing situation.

As for Dykes, it was difficult to opine with certainty as to the nature of his feelings about Ethan. While he was engaging in caretaking functions and appeared to be superficially gentle and generous, it nevertheless remained a fact that Ethan was taken as a hostage and remained Dykes's best tool for mission success. Dykes repeatedly stated his belief that Ethan was the only thing preventing a tactical assault on his position. As soon as he gave Ethan up, he understood his vulnerability would increase dramatically.

In previous relationships with others, Dykes exhibited low to no empathy for those individuals. Even with close family members, Dykes was not known to have had an empathetic side. If he sincerely empathized with Ethan, that would have represented a significant deviation from his entire life pattern as known to the authors, as well as creating a significant weakness in his plan. Therefore, it was assessed that Dykes likely continued to view Ethan in more pragmatic and utilitarian than emotional terms, and no assumption could be made that Dykes would be reluctant to harm Ethan if he felt his alternatives had evaporated.

Accordingly, when the situation began to deteriorate several days into the crisis and a rescue contingency was being seriously considered, it became important to communicate this observation to decision makers formulating overall crisis event strategy. Dykes had grown noticeably impatient with Ethan and distinctly disinterested in his comfort. This was a significant change from his initial response pattern, and created grave concerns. In addition, he may have taught his hostage to take an action that would detonate the IED inside the bunker.

After a day of steady deterioration, during which Dykes began issuing deadlines, handling his firearm more frequently, and challenging law enforcement to try to come down into the bunker, which he now called a "funnel of death" (Phillips, 2016), the decision was made to rescue Ethan. All of these factors contributed to a dramatic increase in the authors' level of concern for Ethan's safety. This was relayed to incident commanders, although it was not the function of the BAU to recommend specific command decisions regarding the exercise of tactical options versus further negotiation. For

incident commanders, however, that expression of concern was a highly relevant factor to the decision to engage in a tactical intervention. Several conditions-*precedent* had to be in place before a rescue could begin, and when they were, FBI Hostage Rescue Team (HRT) operators entered the bunker. Decisions relative to the rescue are not the focus of this article and therefore not repeated at length here, but essentially, the conditions-*precedent* were that (a) Ethan had to be away from the chute when HRT breached the bunker's hatch, and (b) Dykes had to be in the chute at that moment (Thomas et al., 2013). When HRT entered the structure, Dykes immediately fired on them. He pulled the command cord, detonating the speaking tube bomb. He was in the process of attempting to detonate the bunker IED when he was killed (Thomas et al., 2013). Ethan was rescued, unharmed. No HRT operators were wounded or killed.

Crisis Threat Assessment

We were unable to identify previous research or publications addressing specific examples of behavioral threat assessment in ongoing critical incident operations from a law enforcement standpoint. Biesterfield (2014) alluded to its potential in SWAT missions while describing an example of battlefield threat assessment in World War II. Lacking, however, any published, experience-based behavioral threat assessment and management (TAM) resources applicable to protracted hostage-barricade situations; we relied upon traditional TAM principles as a guide during this incident.

Following the conclusion of this matter, we engaged in careful self-assessment to consider the work we conducted, its effectiveness, opportunities for improvement, and thoughts for the future. From that, we offer several considerations for threat managers dealing with active crisis cases:

1. Traditional TAM principles can be successfully applied in continuing violence cases such as this crisis event. Although the brisk pace and frequent ambiguities of an unfolding crisis create a number of complications, the fundamentals of TAM work well as long as there is enough information available to conduct a viable assessment.

Information gathering and vetting, although challenging in circumstances such as the Dykes case, is the foundation upon which a solid assessment is built. A behavioral threat assessment is only as good as the information upon which it is based. During the first hours and days in this incident, before a critical mass of information had been accumulated, we primarily reacted to immediate needs for situational assessments. Investigation took place throughout the entire six days, but was largely accomplished after the initial chaos had subsided, and significant resources had arrived on-site to address the situation in an organized manner. Once enough data had been gathered to allow for thoughtful and reasoned analysis, we immediately began applying the same TAM principles as we would in "normal" threat management cases. Although the operational tempo was quite intense due to obvious situational factors, the essentials of practice were substantially the same.

We combed through the information available, identified threat enhancing and threat mitigating factors, and thoughtfully considered them in light of the current situation. In a very obvious sense, it was clearly appropriate to opine that Dykes presented a high level of concern for significant and imminent violence toward Ethan. Just as in any TAM case, however, offering threat *management* recommendations provided the real value in advancing the investigation and the crisis resolution.

Generally, threat management involves carefully planned interventions focused on the person of concern or subject, the victim(s) or potential victim(s) if known, the grievance or issues involved, and/or the physical setting in which violence might occur. Preventing violence, or in this case preventing further violence, may begin with effecting change with regard to one or more of those elements. In this protracted crisis incident, we had the opportunity to consider and propose several threat management suggestions to mitigate the extremely high concern for additional violence that he presented. Through dedication of a tremendous amount of local, state, and federal assets, enough information was developed to enable solid, evidence-based assessments and threat management recommendations. The need for threat management forms the basis for lesson learned #2.

2. Crisis threat assessment should, we propose, follow at least one golden rule: Every assessment, observation, or conclusion put forth by the assessor to decision makers, should be actionable in some way. In any crisis, there will likely be a quantity of intriguing and relevant information related to the offender(s), victim(s), or situation. However, if such information is just that—interesting information without a related recommendation to advance resolution of the crisis, stabilize it, or prevent it from becoming worse, the assessor risks wasting decision makers' precious time and attention. Even a thoughtful and well-supported observation without an actionable suggestion will be of limited value at that time. For example, in this case we noted Dykes's profound isolation from any loved ones, those around him, and his community at large. He eschewed contact with family, rejected attempts at neighborliness and friendship, and even ignored normal cultural identification as a Southerner. He seemed to be truly alone. Isolation of this nature can be an important threat enhancing factor in any "person of concern" assessment (Mohandie & Meloy, 2014. White, 2014). It suggests a deficiency in the stabilizing effects of positive, healthy relationships with others. Healthy relationships affect and influence behavior in a positive way. Relationships with others can, themselves, be things of intrinsic value to a person of concern if he becomes unwilling to sacrifice them by going to prison or even being killed in an act of violence.

Regarding Dykes, simply observing his isolation and identifying it as a threat-enhancer would have been of little help to negotiators trying to persuade him to let Ethan go, or tactical planners thinking about a rescue. This would be similar to conducting a threat assessment without a threat management plan to go with it. In a crisis, as in any case, threat assessment is only the beginning of its resolution, not the end. There may simply be no time for decision makers to spend considering observations and opinions that do not clearly support an operational decision. We propose that each point of assessment should identify an action that [a] can be taken by a particular operational component and [b] is designed to bring about a beneficial change to the status quo, stabilize a situation, or prevent deterioration. Actions can include those that directly affect a crisis situa-

tion, for example, offering music to the subject, or which indirectly affect it, for example, conducting additional investigation about an aspect of the situation.

Relative to Dykes's isolation, the actionable suggestion was to recruit one or both of his adult daughters to communicate with him in the hope of showing him he was not alone, after all. This management strategy could be similar to any "person of concern" case in which threat managers recommend encouragement or facilitation of healthy bonds with someone who can positively influence behavior.

3. Particularly early in the crisis, but all throughout the incident, information development was chaotic, at times unreliable, and difficult to predict. Solid facts one day turned into falsehoods on the next. In addition, circumstances inside the bunker changed from hour to hour and day to day. This is likely inevitable in evolving crisis events, as it has been experienced by the authors in other instances. The rapidly unfolding nature of crisis situations will probably always pose challenges to critical evaluation of information during the initial response and assessment period. A conservative approach to the content of assessments, particularly before the situation is fully understood, is recommended in order to avoid the hazard of inaccuracy.

The crisis very reasonably generated a great deal of excitement in the local area and multiple residents appeared at the joint operations complex eager to report what they knew with the hope that it would help save Ethan. However, rumor and speculation often accompanied confirmed facts, and it was not always possible to sort fact from guesswork without further investigation. The best and most efficient way to prevent the overall crisis event strategy from being influenced by an inaccurate behavioral assessment was to take a conservative approach and avoid trying to do too much, especially early on. As difficult as it was, the authors had to be patient and wait for a critical mass of reliable information to become available before engaging in proactive assessment.

4. On several occasions, we could have offered a more detailed assessment or recommendation than we did. Precision, however, can be at odds with accuracy, in that the more precise an assessment is, the more precise it may force others to be who are acting on an assessment or

implementing a recommendation (Meloy, 2015). Greater specificity can narrow choices, or create too many choices, while not necessarily improving accuracy.

It is accurate to say that Dykes's isolation was a concern because it meant that he lacked emotional tethers to loved ones outside the bunker. We considered it a threat-enhancer, and likely a barrier to progress in negotiations because it limited the pool of possible intermediaries. We could have been more precise than simply commenting on generalized isolation. Gradients of isolation appeared to exist in his life. While he was completely estranged from family and had no intimates of any kind, he was reported to have some superficial associations. A more precise assessment might have added that he was potentially more comfortable in his everyday life with superficiality than intimacy, but would likely have done nothing to enhance the effectiveness of negotiations. The authors could have offered descriptions of individuals whom Dykes tolerated in an effort to describe all possible third party intermediaries, but this may have become a distraction and interfered with quickly honing in on an *effective* intermediary. Realistically, the increased specificity of commenting on his gradients of isolation would likely have created more problems than it solved.

Conclusion

Crisis threat assessment involves ongoing, continually evolving behavioral threat assessment and management conducted on a moment-by-moment basis in response to the confluence of offender and hostage behaviors, external factors, and public safety needs. Traditional behavioral threat assessment and management principles were applied in the context of this protracted crisis event, and found to work well. Though gathering information quickly was challenging, reliable data upon which to base assessment were acquired as time went on. Assessment of threat enhancing and mitigating facts and circumstances, as in any TAM case, provided a clearer picture of Dykes, his world view, and potential strategies to manage him away from further violence.

Dykes was a violent promise keeper. He had a history of promising violence in response for others' failures to meet his demands, and keeping those promises. He rigidly adhered to his

insistence that he had no role in Ethan's safety—only others were responsible. His deep distrust of law enforcement personnel involved in the case and his belief in his own victimization presented significant, additional challenges to resolving the crisis without further violence. Anger was a substantial complication, in that his temper flared frequently and unexpectedly. The authors focused on providing actionable threat management strategies in response to these challenges and concerns. Each suggestion offered had a goal of advancing resolution of the situation, stabilizing it, or preventing deterioration.

A conservative approach to TAM under the circumstances proved to be both wise and effective. Avoiding an inaccurate assessment was of particular importance in this rapidly unfolding crisis. Once presented to an operational element, an assessment could have been acted upon quickly. Therefore, while an appropriate sense of urgency was absolutely necessary, patience was also required before engaging in proactive assessment, while we waited for a critical mass of reliable information to be accumulated. Reliable information allowed for construction of assessments and recommendations that were accurate, but not so precise as to create distractions.

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