

SURVIVING THE INTERNATIONAL WAR ZONE

**Security Lessons Learned and Stories From
Police and Military Peacekeeping Forces**

Robert R. Rail



Chapter 8

ETERNAL HATE

The Little Boy and his Stick

It was a wonderful day, even if I was thousands of miles away from home, and in the troubled Balkans. Being of American Scottish decent I was always kidding my colleagues that the best weather for me was cool, overcast, and with the constant chance of rain. I would always tell them that there are no rainbows without rain.



Good “Scottish” weather in the Balkans

I was in a great mood. I was off duty, at the end of my day of teaching induction training to a room full of international police officers for the United Nations and all had gone well. My ride had dropped me off just off from the main road and I didn't have far to walk to my

accommodation. The two types of roads we had to travel on in the Balkans were either broken asphalt with pot holes, or narrow dirt roads with holes that were filled in with anything that could be gathered and dumped into them. The standing joke about the dirt roads was that they were made of either dry mud, wet mud, or frozen mud. It always seemed so strange to see the local women sweeping the dirt road in front of their homes as I walked by, but this is what they did every day of the week. I could never understand how you can sweep dirt away from dirt. Are they sweeping and cleaning the street down to a layer of cleaner dirt? I never knew if it was just an effort of futility, or an outlet for frustration on their part, trying to keep a bit of sane routine in their shattered world.

As I walked by a house about a half a kilometer from my accommodation my attention was drawn to a small boy that looked like he was taken right off a picture on a tourist post card. He couldn't have been more than five or six years old. Beneath a wild tangle of dark brown hair, two big, wide open, happy brown eyes looked directly into my eyes. A little voice came out of this post card child and he said, "Dobra Don" (good day). And I responded by saying "Dobra Don" back to him. After our exchange of the customary greetings the little boy returned to his task at hand. He was carving on a stick that was about as long as he was tall. His little face was very serious as he went about his task. He was very busy carving a point on the end of the stick. From the amount of wood shavings I could see all over the boy and the ground he had been working on this for quite some time. A nearby woman walked over to where I was standing to watch the little boy carve. She greeted me by saying, "Hello American Police", in a polite but cold tone of voice. Her attitude was more clearly understood than what she said. It was very obvious what she really wanted to say was, "What do you want American? I don't want you here!" Her eyes didn't look at me – they looked through me. She was tired. Not just tired from the day of labor she had

done but from the life she was resigned to living in such a forsaken place. I very respectfully asked the lady to ask the boy what kind fish he was going to spear when he used his stick at the nearby stream. The lady just looked at me with a very slight sinister smile. I asked again, and added, please ask the child. She reached out and gently touched the head of the child and asked him my question. He stopped sharpening the stick and looked up at me with a look that was tragically determined far beyond his years. He answered with an answer that was too long for a child of his age to make. After a pause, he returned to sharpening his stick with a new strength and focus in his little body. I looked at the woman, waiting for the answer to my question. I could see her body signs change in front of me. She stood up straight and proud and actually smiled. There was great resolve and pride in what she was about to say to me. She said the little boy told her he was making a very sharp killing stick so he could avenge the death of his uncles and father, over and over again for the rest of his life, and kill as many as he could for his God and family.

Like a farmer casts out seeds on the fertile soil of his land, so too here in the Balkans the seeds of hate have been cast out on the fertile and impressionable minds of the children. It has been this way in the past and it will be this way in the future. I have heard it said far too many times by the locals that the flames of the Balkans can only be extinguished by the shedding of blood. But it's that very same blood that waters the seeds of hate as they are planted in the hearts and minds of the children that walks these intolerable dirt roads.

Chapter 9

ETERNAL HOPE

The Scarf

Being a patrol officer in a war zone is not like anything you could ever imagine. The only thing you could count on is when you were supposed to start your patrol and where you thought you were going to be patrolling. Past those ideas the options were wide open to every heartrending, ludicrous, dreadful, and forbidding thing that could possibly happen. The shift I preferred working was six at night to six in the morning. I liked working in the darkness. It was kind of relaxing for me to hide in the night and no one else wanted to patrol in the shadows. My partners would say they hated not being able to see the enemy but I thought the enemy couldn't see me either. I never used my lights and liked to park up on high ground with my engine off, not making a sound, just waiting for whoever or whatever to make their first mistake in the darkness. After each night's "tour of duty" my shift would meet with the next shift and go on the road to brief them on what had happened that night and any problems we thought they may encounter on their tour of duty and how to handle those possible incidents. It was important to suggest these ideas with the local police because we were not just working with them, we were training them. These officers didn't have an easy lot in life. They walked to their assigned patrol station in this small village regardless of the distance. They ate their meal before their tour of duty and usually didn't eat again until they walked back to their homes. They rarely enjoyed the luxury of a ride to work or bringing something with them to eat on patrol. Most of the international officers attributed the local officers' slim physique to fitness and not to being in a state of borderline starvation most of the time, a circumstance they endured without complaint.



This Police Station was one of the best in the area.

One of the Kosovo police officers I would see every morning was a tall, slender, young man that was always wearing a clean and pressed uniform with polished shoes and a matching uniform scarf around his neck. He was there every day without fail. I don't think I ever saw him take a day off. My attention was first drawn to his eyes. They seemed to possess an unusual, wisdom like quality. I'm at a loss to completely explain or describe the look in his eyes. His eyes were clearly relaxed but yet alert and intent on every detail around him. His eyes appeared to reveal an understanding of the world around him to a level far exceeding his youthful years. Through his jokes on me and mine on him we developed a very strong big brother/ little brother relationship between us. On one particularly hot day I asked my young friend if he was going to be wearing his scarf with the collar buttoned up on such a hot day, or be like me and patrol with an open collar. He stood close to me and put his hand on my shoulder and said very quietly that he could

never be like anyone else and asked me if he could talk to me away from the others. We stepped outside and I watched in a state of controlled shock as he unbuttoned his collar and carefully removed the scarf from around his neck. From just under his left ear to just past the midway point across his throat, going under his chin was an indescribable scar. I could see it was an old scar from a wound that must have literally opened up the entire side of his neck. I could also see without even looking close the jagged crisscross of crudely gouged-in stitch marks that closed this wound and brought the two sides of this horrendous slash together. My young colleague began to tell me that several years earlier he had been with other youths of his village when they saw some soldiers they hated passing down the main street of their village. As they chased the soldiers, throwing rocks at their vehicles he made the mistake of running too close to one of the vehicles. To the horror of the villagers who were standing along the roadside, one of the soldiers reached out from his vehicle, grabbed the boy by his hair, pulled him up onto the side of the vehicle, stabbed a bayonet into his neck, and then ripped it across his throat. The soldier thought the boy was finished so he just let the body fall to the ground. He fell on to the road and then rolled into the ditch. Some of the local women grabbed him out of the drainage ditch. Without hesitation and literally out of nowhere, more women came and pinned him down while others crudely stitched his neck closed. The locally distilled alcohol drink was poured on the raw wound and then it was covered with mud and wrapped as tight as they could wrap it. He told me that according to the old women of the village; the real battle began when the fever came. He was told that “every hour and every day that passed brought him closer to his loved ones and further from the hands of God”. Each old women of the village took credit for his survival because they all had their own secret healing broth that they took turns feeding to him. As he slowly started to cover his neck with his scarf he told me something that truly amazed me. He

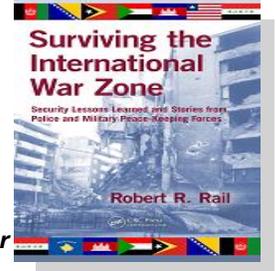
said that every day when he gets up and looks in his mirror and sees the scar that could have resulted in his death he pledges to his God that he will not be like the man who tried to take his life. He will always remember that all people are to be treated fairly whether they are part of the enemies of the past or not. He said that the scar will remind him as a police officer to be just and fair to everyone for the rest of the life God has given to him as a gift.

Moving first-hand accounts of police and soldier's war-zone life from officers who have been there!

Surviving the International War Zone: Security Lessons Learned and Stories from Police And Military Peacekeeping Forces

Author/Editor: Robert R. Rail

NEW!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Robert Rail was an International Police Officer for the United Nations Police Task Force in Bosnia and Kosovo. As a war zone officer, Bob performed a wide variety of enforcement assignments including patrol, general peacekeeping activities and riot response. He was also responsible for designing curriculums and instructing the elite police officers from 56 nations who have been deployed in Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. He has been a physical confrontation advisor and resource training provider to personnel for NATO and OSCE.



Dr. Rail has been a resident instructor at the Specialized Advanced Training Unit of the High Institute of the Baghdad Police College and was awarded a second doctorate degree for his exceptional abilities as an international police instructor. He has received numerous other awards for his work in the international community. He is an internationally respected and acclaimed master instructor. He is a frequent contributor to publications, television, and radio programs and conducts both training and consulting services for universities and corporations worldwide. He is the author of four other books including: *The Unspoken Dialogue*; *Defense Without Damage*; *Custodial Cuffing and Restraint*; and *Reactive Handcuffing Tactics* all available from Varro Press.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Surviving the International War Zone is a collection of original stories and insights written by military and police officers from 13 different countries who have lived and served in the different war zones around the world. This book will give the reader a look at the life of both the officers and the local people living in the war zone environment. The stories cover many facets of daily life and will help the reader develop an understanding of how to survive in an international war zone. Some of the stories will make you laugh; others may make you cry. It is guaranteed that all will be moving and reveal first-hand accounts of the full range of deep-seated, and sometimes conflicting, emotions that those serving in war-zones experience during and after their time of service.

Key Features:

- Offers an international perspective from authors from such countries as Romania, Russia, Egypt, Spain, Germany, France, Turkey, Austria, Norway, Cameroon, Zimbabwe and the UK
- All accounts are written by people who actually lived in a war zone and served in military peacekeeping operations

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