HIJACK SYNDROMES: WHATEVER HAPPENED IN LONDON, STOCKHOLM AND LIMA?

The practice of hostage-taking and kidnapping has a long and established history, both in aviation-related incidents and other situations. Hostages have been known to react to captivity in a variety of ways, sometimes using their behaviour to manipulate their captors' actions, and ultimately affecting the outcome of the situation. **Lucy Rawlings** examines this behaviour and describes three of the main syndromes experienced by those involved in hostage-taking situations.

The taking of hostages is generally driven by one of two types of agenda; either 'expressive', often political motivations in which the hostage-takers wish to publicly voice a grievance and draw attention to their cause, or 'instrumental' – to obtain a particular outcome such as the release of imprisoned associates or to extort cash. Hostage-taking has become a relatively popular modus operandi for terrorists, particularly due to the resulting, often extensive, media coverage.

For authorities and security services dealing with these incidents, orchestrating the correct response so that there are a minimum number of casualties can be almost impossible. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the dominant method for dealing with such incidents was the 'suppression model' in which overwhelming physical force would be used in order to overpower the hostage takers. This approach can be successful; however, it can also be extremely risky and is often problematic under time constraints or when the lives of the hostages become increasingly at risk the longer the ordeal continues. Today, a preferred response is to negotiate with the hostage-takers, allowing authorities to buy time, gather intelligence and give hostage-takers an opportunity to 'cool down'.

For hostages, the time in which they are held captive can feel eternal and the responses and coping mechanisms of individuals can vary greatly, often depending on the motives and behaviour of their captors. Although it can be difficult to identify the true motives of the perpetrators, or the likelihood and extent to which they may cause the hostages harm, those involved can only act in a way they believe will prolong their survival. The behaviours of the hostage-takers and their actions towards the hostages may also change over time, depending on how the situation plays out.

Three 'syndromes' have often been referred to when discussing some of the behaviours displayed by hostages and their captors: London, Lima and Stockholm. Although none of them are true syndromes in a clinical sense, they are well-studied pathological responses that have been defined well enough that they are easily recognisable.

LONDON SYNDROME

London Syndrome is used to describe a response in which hostages do not co-operate with their captors and become disobedient, belligerent and/or argumentative. It is named after the Arab separatist take-over of the Iranian Embassy in London from 30 April to 5 May 1980. Six armed members of an Iranian-Arab group campaigning for Arab national sovereignty in the southern Iranian Khuzestan Province held hostage 26 people, including staff, visitors and a police officer. The perpetrators demanded the release of Arab prisoners of various Khuzestani prisons as well as their own safe passage out of the United Kingdom. Margaret Thatcher's government refused.

In the days that followed, police negotiations managed to secure the release of five hostages in exchange for small concessions such as the public broadcasting of the hostage-takers' demands. After six days, the gunmen became increasingly frustrated by the lack of progress in meeting their demands. That evening, one hostage was killed and his body thrown out of the embassy.

In an interview conducted by *The National* (UAE), one of the hostages, Mustapha Karkouti, explained the events leading up to the death of the man, who was later discovered to be Abbas Lavasani, the embassy's press attaché.

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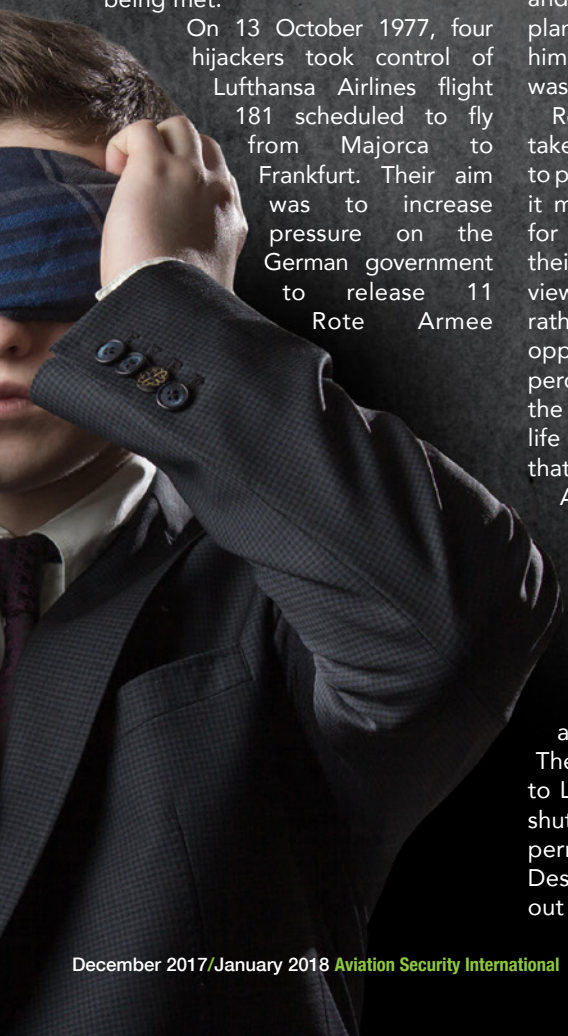
During the siege, Lavasani had become belligerent, and expressed political views that conflicted with those of his captors. Karkouti explained that, from early on, Lavasani had argued with the terrorists, much to the frustration of the other hostages: "When a gunman would enter a room where we were kept, he would argue with them. He marked himself as a martyr. That made the situation much more fearful and dangerous," he remarked.

Responding with resistance is not uncommon behaviour by hostages and can be essential to survival. However, it often proves to be a risky venture, particularly if the attackers are apathetic towards hostages and willing to commit murder for their cause. Non-compliance can also immensely frustrate and anger the hostage-takers who may become erratic when they feel they are losing control of the situation or do not feel that their requests are being met.



On 13 October 1977, four hijackers took control of Lufthansa Airlines flight 181 scheduled to fly from Majorca to Frankfurt. Their aim was to increase pressure on the German government to release 11 Rote Armee Fraktion (a West German far-left militant group) prisoners. The aircraft captain, Jurgen Schumann, never completely co-operated with the hijackers and made contact with authorities when possible.

Upon hijacking the aircraft after its departure from Majorca the lead hijacker, Akache, forced his way inside the cockpit. The aircraft then few to Rome, Larnaca, Bahrain and Dubai before heading towards Oman where they were denied permission to land. Running low on fuel, they had no option but to divert and land on a sand-covered taxiway alongside the main runway (which had been blocked) in Aden, Yemen. As the Yemeni authorities did not want the hijacked aircraft on their soil, the hijackers were told they would be supplied with fuel. Captain Schumann suspected the aircraft had sustained damage on landing, so Akache gave him permission to carry out an inspection. Having completed it, Schumann took the opportunity to try and speak with the Yemeni authorities and made his way, in full view of the hijackers, to the airport's control tower. Akache, incensed, threatened to destroy the aircraft. The Yemeni authorities did not wish to get involved and told Schumann to return to the plane. Upon his return, Akache took him to the First Class cabin where he was executed for his disobedience.

Refusal to cooperate with hostage-takers is not necessarily the best option to pursue if you value your life. However, it may often be the natural response for some who feel so strongly about their ideological, political or religious view that it is worth losing their life rather than willingly submitting to their opponents. Resistance may also be perceived as the ultimate selfless act – the resistor may feel that risking their life is a small price to pay if it means that other hostages will be saved.

Another reason for non-cooperation may be due to insufficient belief that the captors will cause hostages harm. On 24 December 1999, Indian Airlines flight IC814 was commandeered while en route from Kathmandu to New Delhi by hijackers acting in the name of an al-Qaeda affiliate based in Pakistan. The hijackers demanded the pilot fly to Lahore but the Pakistani authorities shut down the airspace and refused permission for the aircraft to land. Despite the aircraft rapidly running out of fuel, the hijackers did not want

During the 1977 Lufthansa hijacking, Capt Schumann seemingly created London Syndrome which resulted in his execution

the plane to land on Indian soil for fear that the Indian authorities would storm the aircraft. Captain Sharan suggested landing in Amritsar, a north Indian city approximately 50km east of Lahore, assuring the hijackers that the plane would be refuelled there. After some deliberation the hijackers agreed to this suggestion. Upon landing, the authorities in Amritsar aimed to stall the aircraft by delaying the dispatch of the fuel to allow more time for the National Security Guard (India's anti-hijacking force) to arrive from Delhi. The delay caused the hijackers to become increasingly uneasy and, after half an hour of waiting, they became convinced that security was going to storm the plane and ordered the pilots to depart. They segregated eight of the passengers, tying them to their seats and threatening to kill them if their orders were disobeyed. The passengers had been told not to raise their heads or look at the hijackers however, one passenger, Rupin Katyal, despite being warned twice, did just that leading to him being repeatedly stabbed in the chest and killed. The hijackers then threatened to shoot the pilots and kill all the passengers if the plane did not take off. Realising they were serious, the pilots agreed to depart.

LIMA SYNDROME

In other situations, however, hostage-takers may not intend to cause harm to their hostages at all and some, who start out feeling ambivalent towards their hostages, actually begin to develop sympathy for them. Those hostage-takers who develop sympathy are said to have fallen prey to Lima Syndrome.

Lima Syndrome is named after the Japanese Embassy hostage crisis, which began on 17 December 1996 in Lima, Peru. Fourteen members of the Túpac

Members of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement coined the phrase Lima Syndrome as a result of their sympathetic attitiude towards certain hostages

Amaru Revolutionary Movement took hundreds of diplomats, government and military officials hostage whilst they were attending a party at the official residence of the Japanese Ambassador to Peru. The insurgents made a number of demands including the release of prisoners and a revision of the government's neoliberal free market reforms.

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In an in-depth article following the event in *The New York Times*, it was reported that many hostages had explained that the commander of the operation, Nestor Cerpa Cartolini, had been trying to win over his captives through engaging them in philosophical conversation about the free market economy and using the first few days to expound his ideas. Foreign female hostages were released the first night and, within a few days, most foreign captives had been released and 225 were allowed to depart in a ''good-will gesture'' shortly before Christmas. They were reported to have been allowed to leave due to their captors developing sympathy for them and that those given the responsibility of killing the hostages in the event of an assault could not bring themselves to do so.

There are a number of reasons why this may occur: kidnappers may set out thinking they are capable of killing but then find they cannot; they may threaten hostages as a technique to apply pressure and achieve the outcomes they desire but actually have no intention of harming the hostages, or they may have no intent to harm the hostages at all and taking hostages is perceived as a means of drawing attention to their cause and providing leverage.

On 12 April 1999, a domestic Avianca flight from Bucaramanga to Bogota was hijacked by six members of the Colombian National Liberation Army (ELN). The hijackers took control of the plane not long after take-off and demanded they land at a jungle clearing in the Bolivar province. There, the passengers and crew hiked across the jungle and down to the Magdalena River where they were loaded into canoes.

The following day the hijackers released a baby and small group of elderly people, but 32 hostages remained. It was reported that those who were released unanimously confirmed that, although they had been terrified, the rebels had done their best to look after the hostages. One woman, who was released as she was two months pregnant, went as far as to say that, if she gave birth to a son, she would name him after the young guerrilla who looked after her. This woman could arguably have been suffering from our next syndrome…

The only person killed during the hijacking of IC814 was Rupin Katyal, seemingly chosen as a result of London Syndrome

STOCKHOLM SYNDROME

The final syndrome is by far the most famous. Stockholm Syndrome is the psychological response in which the captive begins to closely identify with their captor, as well as their agenda and demands. The name derives from an attempted bank robbery in Stockholm, Sweden, during August 1973, in which four employees of Sveriges Kreditbank were held hostage in the bank's vault for six days by 32-year-old career-criminal Jan-Erik Olsson and his former prison mate. During this time a bond developed between the captives and their captors.

Following the ordeal, all of the hostages spoke of being treated well by Olsson and believed they owed their lives to the criminal pair. One hostage, while on the phone to the Swedish Prime Minister during their captivity, stated that she fully trusted her captors but feared that she would die in a police assault on the building.

Occasionally, Stockholm Syndrome in a hostage can lead to Lima Syndrome in a captor. Olsson remarked at the beginning of the siege he could have "easily" killed the hostages but that had changed over the days: "It was the hostages' fault", he said. "They did everything I told them to do. If they hadn't, I might not be here now. Why didn't any of them attack me? They made it hard to kill. They made us go on living together day after day, like goats, in that filth. There was nothing to do but get to know each other".

In terms of aviation-related incidents, we should consider the TWA flight 355 on 10 September 1976, in which five Croatian separatists led by Zvonko Busic and his American-born wife, Julienne, hijacked the flight after its departure from New York. The aircraft landed in Montreal before continuing to Iceland, then Paris, where French authorities shot the tyres, forcing the hijackers to surrender. Given that the terrorists' goal was publicity for their cause, which they had achieved, they willingly gave themselves up and were sent back to America to stand trial.

Both the crew and passengers later reported that throughout the incident the hijackers seemed extremely concerned for their well-being. *Aviation Security International* met with Julienne Busic some years after her release from prison. She explained that, "At first there was some panic until the passengers

realised we were not 'lunatics'… Of course, we knew the explosives we had on board were not real, but they did not, so they felt great fear in the beginning. After they got to know us better, they said they became more relaxed. Then they read the leaflets and most told us they supported the Croatian cause for independence based on what they'd read, and wondered why they knew nothing about this issue. After our arrest, many of them wrote letters to our trial judge asking for leniency, and for years afterwards, several corresponded with me directly and even visited me in prison… It was a human situation, and people who can identify with the heart and not just the mind were the ones who kept in touch, wrote to the judge, visited me, and so forth. This didn't mean they approved, it meant they could identify with us on a human level".

Stockholm Syndrome, also sometimes referred to as 'terror-bonding' or 'trauma-bonding', does not have any widely accepted diagnostic criteria and is not included in major psychiatric manuals, but the underlying principles can be related to different situations. Psychologists who have studied the syndrome believe that the bond is initially created when a captor threatens a captive's life, deliberates, and then chooses not to kill the captive. The captive's relief then transforms into feelings of gratitude towards the captor for sparing their life. Both of the aforementioned cases show that it does not take long for these bonds to cement, which could offer evidence that the hostage's desire to survive takes precedence over the urge to hate the person who has caused the situation.

Patricia Hearst is often cited as a classic example of Stockholm Syndrome

Some psychologists believe that it is this survival instinct that is at the heart of Stockholm Syndrome and that captives often becomes hypervigilant to the needs and demands of their captors, making a psychological link between the captors' happiness and their own. The syndrome is also marked by not only a positive bond between the hostage and captor, but also a negative attitude of the captive towards authorities who threaten the captor-captive relationship. This attitude can be particularly strong when the hostage is aware that they are of no use to the captors except as a form of leverage.

An opposing psychological view is that, following a certain belief that they are about to die, hostages then experience a type of infantilisation, which renders them very submissive, seeking permission to perform even the most basic of human functions such as eating or going to the toilet. Small acts of kindness by the captors then prompt a primitive gratitude for the gift of life, and the positive feelings they express towards the captor put them in denial regarding who it is that put them in the situation; in their mind, they believe their captor is the person who is going to let them live.

Although this perspective may be true of some cases, the value of Stockholm Syndrome as a survival tactic, and the ability of hostages to utilise it to their advantage, should not be overlooked. Understanding that perpetrators can develop (if they do not immediately display) positive feelings towards captives is an important element of utilising the behaviours of Stockholm Syndrome in order to induce Lima Syndrome, and one which crisis negotiators often try to induce as it can improve the chances of hostage survival.

Natascha Kampusch was 10 years old when she was kidnapped by Wolfgang Priklopil on her way to school in Vienna and held in his basement for eight years. Despite prolonged captivity and being forced to perform sexual acts and extensive domestic duties, upon finding out that Priklopil had died shortly after her escape, Kampusch cried and lit a candle for him. She later rejected the label of Stockholm Syndrome during an interview in 2010 with The Guardian, explaining that she did not believe it takes into account the rational choices people make in particular situations; "I find it very natural that you would adapt yourself to identify with your kidnapper," she said, "especially if you spend a great deal of time with that person. It's about empathy, communication. Looking for normality within the framework of a crime is not a syndrome. It is a survival strategy".

CONCLUSION

Through a comparison and contrast of a variety of cases displaying each of the syndromes, we begin to see a pattern in the outcomes and may start to consider how this information could be used to enhance hostage survival and negotiation techniques.

Generally speaking, hostage-takers do not set out with suicidal intentions. Their hostages serve the purpose of drawing political and public attention to their cause as well as providing a starting point for bargaining. If perpetrators were suicidal, the act of killing themselves as well as a number of people would, without doubt, achieve this attention. We must therefore assume that surviving a hostage situation is the preferred outcome for both the hostage-taker as well as the hostages. Acknowledging this mutual desire to survive may be useful when considering how to negotiate.

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Of the two syndromes relating to hostages themselves (London and Stockholm), Stockholm Syndrome seems to provide the highest likelihood of survival – often as a gateway to inducing Lima Syndrome in the hostage takers. However, you don't want to end up with a situation where the hostages are physically helping the hostage takers. Of course, each of these cases are individual and situational, but this would suggest that hostages are more likely to survive when the hostage-takers are appeased and feel more in control of their immediate situation. The value of human interaction and establishing common ground should, additionally, not be overlooked. False assumptions surrounding the captors' intent to kill and challenging them to the point where they feel further agitated and angered can rapidly lead to the death of hostages. Things could have turned out quite differently in the Sveriges Kreditbank case had the hostages not been so submissive to Olsson. He himself even said that, in the beginning, it would have been easier to kill them. Appeasing the hostage-taker early on may additionally bide more time to judge the overall character and intentions of the captor.

Another syndrome which should be briefly noted is known as 'John Wayne Syndrome' or the 'Hero Complex'. This is an exaggerated belief in a hostage's abilities which drives them to become involved in the situation. It can often be dangerous as it affects the person's ability to accurately assess the risks and develop a calculated response – coming from the belief that the individual is bulletproof. Uncontrolled, this mindset puts a person in a situation for which they are ill prepared and ineffective against the threat. For example, on 25 December 1986, on a flight from Baghdad to Amman, a security man attempted to disarm a hijacker who was brandishing a hand grenade. In the struggle, the grenade went off, killing 62 of the 107 people aboard. However, if controlled, this 'heroic' mindset drives individuals to persevere and, sometimes, succeed. Perhaps we could recommend this behaviour in situations where hijackers act immediately with violence, however, if unilateral actions fail, the John Wayne Syndrome can easily be replaced by London Syndrome and single out the 'gung-ho' hostage as a potential target for the hostage taker's aggression.

A poignant problem, and one which has long been recognised in negotiations tactics, is that giving in to the demands of hostage-takers only encourages others wishing to achieve certain outcomes to capture hostages too. Of course, we should not consider giving in to all the demands of hostage-takers, but other means should be considered to allow them to feel that their concerns are being heard, that they are not at immediate risk and that they are in control of their situation. One method of achieving this is seemingly to encourage hostages to behave in a manner deemed favourable by the hostage-taker and to attempt to establish a human connection – without developing genuine feelings and falling prey to Stockholm Syndrome!

Lucy Rawlings is a Masters student at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London, studying for an MSc in Globalisation and Development. She is also an employee of Green Light Ltd, a London-based aviation security training and consultancy company. Contact: lrawlings@avsec.com