



# **UNDER THE RADAR**

**Grant Rayner**



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## **Under The Radar**

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1. Travel
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4. Escape
5. Evasion
6. Urban Survival

The information in this book is intended to be generic and is not tailored to any one location. If you are travelling to a higher-risk location, seek professional advice in advance of your travel.

# **DEDICATION**

My journey started many years ago, in what now seems like another life.

I'd been driving most of the day, and reached the gate to the training facility late in the evening. This was one of those facilities that people don't talk about. I stopped the vehicle short of the heavy security gates and waited. I was acutely aware that this was a pivotal moment in my life. Nervous for what was about to come next, I took a few deep breaths to calm myself.

On the other side of the gate, a man stepped forward out of the darkness. Illuminated by the headlights of my car, he seemed like a giant. He unlocked the gates and stood in the middle of the road. His imposing figure seemingly forming another barrier on the road to an uncertain future.

I stepped out of the car, walked up to him, and extended my hand. He gripped my hand like a vice and stared right through me with cold eyes.

“Welcome to the real world,” he said.

This book is written in memory of the Iceman and the other giants that shaped my life in those early and formative years.

Thank you.

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*Now I'm hiding in Honduras  
I'm a desperate man  
Send lawyers, guns and money  
The shit has hit the fan*

—Warren Zevon

# PROLOGUE

It's 9.10 p.m.

You're walking down a dusty alley. Your meeting with a local source is in 20 minutes. She contacted you by email two days ago, promising to give you photographs implicating a local militia leader in the mass killing of civilians three months earlier.

It's an eerie and uncomfortable feeling. Even though you've been on the ground for a few weeks, the sights, sounds and smells still feel foreign. You're reminded of your time in Sana'a many years ago. Still, it feels... different. You just can't quite put your finger on why.

Your mind wanders to your husband and baby girl, You wonder what they're doing right now.

You drag your mind back into the present. This is no time to let your guard down, you chide yourself.

You can't shake the feeling that someone is following you, yet each time you look behind you can't see anyone suspicious. Everything looks normal for this time of the evening. Maybe you're just nervous. Probably natural to be a bit anxious, you tell yourself. If you're able to meet your source and get their information, the story could be the biggest break of your career.

It's worth the risk.

You check the street numbers. 22... 24... 26... You stop outside number 28 and look up and down the street once more. People are moving about their normal business, but nothing seems unusual or suspicious. Nonetheless, you feel the fear rise up from the depths of your stomach.

You knock on the door.

Nothing...

You knock again, slightly harder this time.

Without warning, the door wrenches wide open, and you stare in horror at an armed member of the militia standing just inside the doorway. You instinctively turn to run, but a powerful arm grabs you and drags you inside. As your eyes adjust to the semi-darkness, you look around the room and see there are at least five AK-47 assault rifles pointed directly at you. In the corner of the room, you can see your source. She's been so badly beaten you think she may be dead.

Suddenly, there's a piercing pain in the back of your head as the butt of a rifle slams into you.

You're out.

# PREFACE

The story in the prologue is designed to set the scene for what's to follow in this book. The narrative is designed to exemplify one of many potential scenarios you may be faced with when operating in higher-risk environments. You're doing what you do, all seems okay, and then things suddenly go south.

How you manage yourself in this type of situation could literally be the difference between life and death.



Over the past few years, I've written a number of books that focus specifically on operating safely and successfully in higher-risk environments.

These books provide useful and practical advice to help travellers keep themselves out of trouble. As a traveller, your abilities to dynamically assess threats and risks, and to mitigate those risks, are the foundations of assuring your safety and security while travelling.

But what happens if, despite your best efforts, you do get into trouble? What if you're confronted when out on the street? What if you're hauled in for questioning or interrogation? What if you're tortured? How about if you're locked in a secure facility? How would you escape? If you were able to escape, how would you successfully evade a search and get yourself to safety?

These aren't trivial scenarios, particularly in the context of being in a higher-risk location where, as a foreigner, you'll probably stand out like the proverbial sore thumb.

This book will place you directly into dire and desperate situations like those you might encounter in higher-risk locations. Rather than leaving you to fend for yourself, I'll walk you through how to assess your situation, devise a plan and then execute that plan. I'll share the essential planning considerations and operational techniques to help you get yourself out of dangerous and potentially life-threatening situations.

## **Who this book is for**

The world we live and work in contains places that are dangerous and volatile. In these places, authoritarian regimes are rounding up dissidents, militias roam the streets, corrupt police lurk in alleys waiting to bribe unsuspecting victims, and fundamentalists are holding foreign journalists for ransom.

While such places should probably be avoided, the truth is that some of us are drawn to these places, whether by necessity or passion.

At one end of the spectrum, we may be required to travel to dangerous places for our work. There might be oil and gas there. Or maybe it's rare earth minerals. There could be a famine that we need to prevent, a disease outbreak we need to contain or people we need to evacuate. Or perhaps there's a source we need to interview.

At the other end of the spectrum, we may be seeking a unique travel experience. There could be a mountain we want to climb or a place we want to explore and photograph. There may even be a relative or friend we want to visit.

This book has been hand crafted for anyone who needs to travel to the fringes of war zones, to failed states, or to countries with authoritarian or deeply corrupt regimes. You may be an aid worker, a human rights advocate, a journalist, a security contractor, an adventurer or a business person.

Regardless of your reason for travel, if that travel takes you to dangerous places, you'll find the details of this book useful. At the very least, I'm confident you'll find much of it entertaining and thought provoking.

## **Shit happens**

Remember that shit happens. In fact, shit is happening all the time. It may not be happening to you right now as you're reading this, but it's certainly happening to somebody somewhere in the world. Dangerous places also tend to be unpredictable places. The more you travel to dangerous locations, statistically the more likely it will be that shit will happen to you. This book is designed to prepare you for that moment.

## **Prevention is always better than the cure**

While this book will primarily deal with managing the consequences of the dicey situations you get yourself into,

don't lose sight of the importance of trying to avoid getting into these situations in the first place. The perfect trip is always an uneventful one.

That said, if you do find yourself in trouble, this book will help you to analyse your situation, build a viable plan and get yourself to safety.

## You will need to depend on you

Ultimately, your survival will come down to your own capabilities and resourcefulness. How quickly can you assess the situation? How adaptable are you to take advantage of fleeting opportunities? How resilient are you when facing hardship? How disciplined are you when it comes to managing sensitive information? How long can you follow the correct protocols before there's a lapse someone can exploit?

Perhaps most importantly, are you prepared to do what it takes when the time comes?

Here's the bottom line: whatever situation you get yourself into, you'll need to get yourself out of it. Don't expect anyone else to do that for you.

Nothing in this book will suggest that you need to be physically strong or unusually courageous. Of course, some strength will certainly be useful if you need to haul yourself over a chain-link fence, and a little bit of endurance will help if you're trying to run away from a group of street thugs. But overall, strength and courage are less important than your ability to think on your feet.

## **This is just a book**

No book can adequately prepare you for the worst-case scenario. Reading a book won't give you hard skills. What reading this book will do, though, is give you greater awareness of the skills and aptitudes you may need, allowing you to develop both over time in the real world.

That said, your skills alone won't carry you through a critical situation. Most times, your survival will come down to your good judgement in a very specific moment in time. Good judgement isn't just about knowing when to do something. It's also about knowing when to do nothing.

One's depth of character, maturity and common sense are also fundamentally important attributes. These attributes can only be developed with experience. This experience will take time to develop. The more you travel, and the more you operate outside your comfort zone, the more experience you'll build and internalise.

## **How this book is structured**

This book is a journey. You'll start the journey by learning about the preparations you can take as an individual to put the odds slightly in your favour. From there, you'll progress through a chronology of events, from street confrontations to detainment, interrogation, torture and imprisonment. Finally, you'll learn how to escape your captors, evade your pursuers and get yourself out of the country to safety.

It'll be epic.

## Background reading

I'm going to be brushing over a lot of the basics of personal safety and security in order to get to the meatier problems. The basics are still important, so there's value in spending your time to learn them. As a starting point, read [The Guide to Travelling in Higher-Risk Environments](#). In many ways, this book is a progression on the fundamental aspects of travel safety and security contained in that guide.

From there, progress to the [Field Guide series](#). There are four volumes to this series, covering deployment planning, personal security, accommodation security and transport security. The information collectively contained in these guides will give you a strong foundation in different aspects of security in higher-risk environments.

Okay. Let's get to it.