



# Under the Radar

Grant Rayner



**Street art in Beirut, Lebanon**

Photo by Grant Rayner

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## **Under The Radar**

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1. Travel
2. Travel Safety
3. Travel Security
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 of the facility late in the evening. This was one of those facilities that people don't talk about. I stopped the car short of the heavy security gates and stepped out to wait by the side of the road. 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 walked up to him, and extended my hand. He gripped it 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 people that shaped my life in those early and formative years.

Thank you.

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*No matter how brilliantly given an individual, no matter how great his good will, if he is lacking in security, he will eventually prove more of a liability than asset.*

—Allen Dulles

# PROLOGUE

It's 9.10 p.m.

You're alone, making your way down a small laneway not far from the main market.

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 last month. Dozens of people were killed in a remote village, including women and children. Another brutal act in a brutal civil war.

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, this 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. Probably fast asleep given the time zone difference.

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 take the opportunity to 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, this 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 seem to be moving about their normal business. You don't notice anything unusual or suspicious. Nonetheless, you feel the fear rise up from the depths of your stomach.

You steel yourself and knock on the door.

Nothing...

You knock again, slightly harder this time.

Without warning, the door is wrenched 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 three other men pointing their AK-47 assault rifles 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. Her husband is next to her. By the amount of blood on the floor next to him, he's definitely 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 exemplifies one of many potential scenarios you might face 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 mean the difference between life and death.



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

These books provide 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 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.

Under the Radar will place you directly into a range of dire and desperate situations. 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 ready to demand bribes from passersby, 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 designed specifically 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 a traveller somewhere in the world. Dangerous places also tend to be unpredictable places. The more you travel to dangerous places, 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 dangerous situations you might get yourself into, don't lose sight of the importance of trying to avoid getting into these situations in the first place.

A good trip is always an uneventful trip.

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 in a dangerous situation 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 come to your rescue and do the hard work 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 and take action at the right time.

## **This is just a book**

No book can adequately prepare you for the worst-case scenario. Reading this 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.

Your depth of character, maturity and common sense are also fundamentally important attributes. These attributes can only be developed through 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 of sorts. 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. However, 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.

## CHAPTER 1

# PREPARATION

*Preparation, I have often said, is rightly two-thirds of any venture.*

—Amelia Earhart

To be able to survive in dangerous and potentially hostile environments, you'll need to be adequately prepared. Preparation isn't just about packing the right things in your bags. It's also about who you are as an individual.

This chapter will focus on how you can prepare yourself to operate effectively in hostile environments, including by focusing on the following aspects:

- ✦ You as an individual
- ✦ Country and cultural awareness
- ✦ Travel arrangements
- ✦ Medical preparation
- ✦ Equipment and clothing
- ✦ Cover stories and pretexts

Let's start by focusing on you as an individual.

# END NOTES

## About the Author

Grant Rayner is an independent security and crisis management specialist based in Asia.

Grant's security career started in the military, where he served for a little over 13 years as a soldier, NCO and officer. During his period of service, he worked in infantry, special operations and intelligence units.

After his military career, Grant relocated to Asia, where he has been based for the past 20 years. He has held senior positions in several global security consulting firms, and has held a number of regional and global corporate security roles.

In 2012, Grant founded Spartan9.

During his time as a consultant, Grant has provided specialised security and crisis management services to global clients in dozens of countries. He has supported clients during a host of different crisis events, including major natural disasters, civil unrest, terrorist attacks and pandemics.

Grant is an active traveller, an occasional writer and a dilettante photographer.

## Other Titles

We have published a number of books focused on operating securely in higher-risk environments:

- ✦ The Guide to Travelling in Higher-Risk Environments
- ✦ The Field Guide to Deployment Planning
- ✦ The Field Guide to Personal Security
- ✦ The Field Guide to Accommodation Security
- ✦ The Field Guide to Transport Security
- ✦ The Crisis Response Handbook
- ✦ The Crisis Simulation Handbook
- ✦ The Security Evacuation Handbook
- ✦ Dangerous Travels

You can purchase these books from our [website](#).

## Feedback

If you identify any errors or broken links, or have thoughts to add on the topics in this book, please [get in touch](#).



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