

JIM SCHWEBACH

INTERVIEWED BY KEN FOLLETT

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TAPE #59

KEN FOLLETT: You were in Teheran and you evacuated when?

JIM SCHWEBACH: 28th of December.

KF: Oh, you came out after they¹d been arrested?

JS: Well, what happened was when the original evacuation took place on the eighth of December I was one of the area coordinators for that evacuation and after we had been notified and people from my area came to the apartment I had gathered up the paperwork and went up to EDS World Headquarters in Bucharest to turn in the paperwork and do all the administrative drill. And in the process of doing that I went in and talked to Bill Gaden. The upshot of the conversation was that while everybody else was leaving there were a certain number of us that were staying behind to maintain liaison with customers and provide a presence, if you will, and that I was going to be one of those folks. There were about 14 of us, I guess, that stayed back and everyone else evacuated. The holiday was coming up. We all went to separate houses during the holidays.

KF: Were you in the high stakes poker game or the low stakes poker game?

JS: Well, I don't gamble so I didn't ...

(Laughter)

On the 28th we got the word that the rest of us were leaving and this was -- and I'm not sure -- it was about the time that Paul and Bill were going to their meeting. In the meantime, we flew out to Rome, to New York and I got back home on the 31st of January right in the middle of a big snowstorm.

KF: That was the Midwest?

JS: I went to Eau Claire, Wisconsin. That's where my parents live and Rachel and the kids had gone there when they were evacuated on the 8th.

KF: Eau Claire?

JS: Eau Claire.

KF: O-c-l ...

JS: **No**, it's E-a-u-C-l-a-i-r-e. Clear water in French.

KF: Two words?

JS: Yeah. So, I'd gotten back home on the 31st of January. I got a call from Pat Scully in Dallas saying the boss wants to see you in his office at eight o'clock in the morning. As I said, we're in the middle of a rather large snow storm in north central Wisconsin. They had rolled up the streets and runway about two hours before because they were all under a lot of snow and I told Pat: "I don't know

if you realize this but we're separated not only by distance but by a lot of time right now and I'll try to get down there as quick as I can." Our airport was closed, so we drove to the twin cities the next day and after waiting for flights and having flights cancelled, I finally got to Dallas late on the evening of the first. I was picked up at the surtran station in Dallas and taken to the back entrance of EDS and spirited up the freight elevator and taken to the seventh floor, walked in to the conference room up there and the whole team was gathered together. Pat Scully said, "You know what's going on?" I said, "No, I don't, Pat." And he said, "Well, take a look around at who's in the room and bear in mind that Paul and Bill had been picked up." And the light came on. He said, "Colonel Simons is there." We went down and met Colonel Simons [Merv Stauffer's] coming out of Merce Stouffer's office. Back in the conference room, I thought for a while generally about the situation and general conversation with the other guys that were there -- what you've been up to; how are you doing; ta-da-da-da, like that. We went -- we decided we were going to meet in the conference room again the next morning. We went to the Hilton, where we were staying. [Poche] Joe Porchet and I were sharing a room at the Hilton. The next morning we got a call from Merv and we were told to go down and secure -- to go rent two station wagons and pack our clothes back up because we were going to move out of that hotel. So we went down to the Hertz place and rented two Ford wagons, went back out to Forest Lane. There had been some conversation the night before about how secure

the conference room was, whether or not it was a good idea to run the operation out of Forest Lane because there were a lot of people from Iran in the building because EDS people are naturally inquisitive and want to know what's going on. It's very difficult to hide our presence from those people and because word in a more or less restricted environment, which EDS is on the enclave on Forest Lane, it spread rather fast. It would be bad for security. We needed a safe area, if you will to train and plan this thing. So, the decision was made to move the operation to Grapevine and for the rest of us to stay at the marina. So, we went that day to Grapevine, had an initial planning type meeting there and went back to the marina and stayed there that night and then went into the training effort. I'm sure other people have gone over what went on during training. We did the mock up. After having talked the thing through a number of times we came up with, based on what we felt was the best intelligence at the time, a plan of action to go through at the prison, at the minimum security prison where Paul and Bill were being held at the time. We dry ran that using a van that we had got from the security group in Dallas and did some weapons training, worked on home made explosive devices. The reason we did that there is basically because there was a feeling at one point in time that we might need a diversion as part of the scheme and we were going to have part of the diversion, or as part of the diversion either to block access into the area, that security forces set some vehicles on fire using time delay incendiary

devices. And we did some work on some clockwork mechanisms. The premise was we couldn't carry anything in with us. We had to use what was readily available in **the** country, which meant clockwork, which meant using napalm type of incendiary because you can get gasoline and styrofoam or soap flakes practically anywhere and especially in Iran.

KF: It was you who made instant napalm bombs _____

JS: Yeah. In a little bit of oil. So, while we were in the training phase in Grapevine we came up with the mechanism whereby we were going to bring in the weapons if that was determined to be necessary.

KF: Before you get onto that, tell me about the timing mechanism for the explosive device.

JS: Because the device had to be independent of an electrical source, what I did was get a number of timers. One was a typical stove top lined up timer that you use that you set a time on and it ticks around and rings a bell. It does that using a striker. It gets to a certain point and triggers the striker. That begins the bell-ringing mechanism working. We had a dremel tool there.

KF: A what tool?

JS: A dremel -- it's a high-speed, motor-driven drill motor basically that we had bought to obliterate the serial numbers on the weapons. This is another part of the story.

KF: If I remember rightly, you never actually did obliterate the serial numbers.

JS: No, we didn't.

KF: Because it was against the law and the colonel didn't want to do that at the last minute.

JS: No. The plan was, as far as obliterating serial numbers, is we would stage out of Paris. The colonel would go into Iran initially. I had built a case with a false bottom in it. We had a case with a false bottom in it that was built at Ross's wood shop in his house. We had another case very similar to it, not exactly like it, also prepared. The initial case went in with the recon team, if you will, to see whether or not it would pass customs. There was no problem with it. If the case passed customs and if there was a need for weapons then I was to return to Dallas, load the weapons in the other — wipe out the serial numbers on the other weapons, throw them in the case and bring them in from Dallas, or from however I came into the country with the other case. That didn't happen. But, getting back to the original question, I had the stove top timer and I had purchased a couple of what looked like the old-fashioned alarm clocks with the two bells on top. The reason I bought those is because generally when I was working with this stuff for a living those types of alarm clocks had really strong springs. It turned out the quality had deteriorated over the years and so I was using springs from various of the

clockwork mechanisms, working with them laying on the floor while everybody was coming up with the master plans, drilling holes in springs and putting things together. Basically, the way it would work is that when the striking mechanism hit it would drag a phosphorous type match across a striking surface to light a mechanical fuse, a regular fuse that would set off the jellied gasoline. It was very primitive but, once again, the context was that you had to be able -- none of this stuff could be taken in so we had to be able to use what was available in the country. If, for instance, you could have built a very simple electrical device using things that you buy in the hobby store -- basically, in the hobby store. They make just dandy time pieces, but they didn't allow the kind of hobbies in Iran that they do in the United States. So toy rocket motors, which is basically what you use as a fuse in a situation like that, and batteries and wires and that stuff on a timing device just weren't available and we wanted to go in as clean as we could. So we worked on that. We packed up and went to Paris in the meantime.

KF: Let me interrupt. Didn't you also work on a device with a candle and wax paper?

JS: Yeah.

Voice: We tried everything. We had about five different devices. We were always careful _____

JS: As a-matter of fact, we left Grapevine. I left

JS (CONTD): some jellied gasoline underneath ... I never did really mention that. That stuff will dry out after a while. It just turns into kind of a putty-like substance that is not explosive because the gasoline evaporates out of it and you end up with just a putty-like plastic substance that really is not even that flammable. I left them under the steps. I also left a mock up shotgun that was made in the closet of Ross's bedroom. It's embarrassing. But anyway, after we had left apparently, I am told, the security people came out and cleared that stuff out. I did, I think, tell Merv at one point in time that the gasoline was under the steps and the jellied gas was under the steps and make sure they got it.

KF: At the end of all this experimenting what was your conclusion, what was the favorite method?

JS: Probably the favorite method at the end of it all was to use a candle. It was a little sloppy but it was also the most reliable. Just use a candle that would burn down to a point and set off a small charge made basically with match heads, and that charge would set off the jellied gasoline. One of the things a lot of people don't realize is that the old lucifer matches, or kitchen matches --

KF: The kind that you can strike on a wall?

JS: Uh-huh. Can be made into a really nice little explosive device. They're very handy to use in this kind of thing.

KF: Do they actually have phosphorous in them, those things?

JS: Yeah, uh-huh.

KF: So you just scrape off the head?

JS: Uh-huh. Use the head and the flame, but the head is the real -- the head of the match itself is the real key.

KF: So you scrape off that stuff from the head.

JS: Pound it, you know.

KF: Grind it?

JS: Grind it. You can make it into a powder and it's very flammable, very volatile.

KF: And then what do you wrap that powder in?

JS: You wrap it in anything that will hold it in but the secret to converting a flammable item into an explosive item is containment, and it's also flash point to an extent but basically containment. If you can hold it in long enough for it to burn it builds up pressure and that pressure is what makes the explosion rather than the flammability. You can burn wood but it's hard to make it explode. You can burn gasoline and gasoline will burn but if you hold it in it will explode, and that's the difference, and that's what you try to do.

KF: Okay; so you would shave these match heads, put

KF (CONTD): the powder into a piece of aluminum foil?

JS: Pieces of aluminum foil, and you use two or three. You really have to fool around with it to figure out how much you need or don't need to get the amount of bang that you want. It'll mix.

KF: And the match head explosive.

JS: I was the trigger.

KF: Okay. And then that sets off what? What's next in the ...

JS: It was just that that was set up in a stopper. What I did was I put jellied gas in a small plastic container and let the flame burn down to the powder, and when that powder went off it would drive the flame down into the jellied gas and set it off. And that's the kind of thing that was about the size of a hip flask, that kind of a size, that you could very easily put in the back seat of a car, light the match and leave and -- you light a match to a candle and leave and the candle _____ . You test burn the candles to see how long it takes to burn an inch and then figure out from that how long to cut the candle, light it and walk away from it. Fifteen minutes later you've got a nice little fire going.

KF: What was the aluminum foil buried in or resting on? You had a plastic container.

JS: With a small neck on it.

KF: What was in the neck?

JS: You shim — the aluminum foil becomes the plug, like a stopper, and the thin side of it is toward the inside of the flask so when it goes off you have what is, in effect, a small shape charge. The explosion will always follow the path of least resistance so you leave the thin side toward the flammable material that you want to set off so that it jets down into it.

KF: And the base of the candle would also be buried in the aluminum foil.

JS: Yeah.

KF: But when it burned down the heat would warm up the aluminum foil and that would ignite the powder, there would be an explosion and because the foil is finished underneath that would break through the foil and the hot gases would ignite the instant napalm.

JS: Uh-huh. And just dandy. So I fooled around with that. The only hard equipment that we took in initially were the knives and some buckshot that we picked up in Paris. Not buckshot, number 6 gooseshot. We didn't pick that up in Paris, we brought that from Dallas.

VOICE: [Unintelligible]

KF: That was because you could buy in Teheran, you could buy slugs with birdshot in it, so all you needed was the buckshot, then you could reload.

JS: We used number 6 gooseshot rather than buckshot.

KF: Tell me the difference.

JS: Number 6 gooseshot is much smaller, not much smaller, but it is approximately half the size of buckshot. The problem with loading buckshot into a 12-gauge or 16-gauge shotgun is that you don't get many buckshot in there, and what we're going to use the shotguns for is primarily to stop vehicles that were following us, any chase vehicles, and we wanted enough spread on the shot to blow out a windshield or ruin someone's vision to get them away from us. Buckshot's got a lot of penetration but you don't get a lot of spread of it, and gooseshot will give you both the spread and it will knock down somebody if they get hit with it, and it'll knock down more than one if they get hit with it, which is really the object. We decided on shotguns: 1) because they were obtainable in the country, and that was, once again, the real key. We didn't want to carry in a whole lot of equipment because the more equipment you carry in the more risk you're got of being caught. Pistols are relatively easy to hide. The knives were taken in the country and were easy to hide. If you understand how customs folks, they were easy to hide.

KF: Who among you understood how customs folk worked?

JS: Well, the stuff went in in my suitcase. The recon team, which was Joe, the colonel and Jay, went into Teheran initially from Paris and then Pat and I came in later. We brought in the shot and the knives. There was an incident in the airport at Paris, at Charles DeGaulle in Paris, where as we were waiting for the aircraft an Iranian lady attached herself to us, asking, "Where are you going?" Started talking to us and stayed with us all through the flight, and there was some consternation as to whether or not she was a plant and was trying to figure out what we were up to.

KF: This is when you and Scully went in?

JS: Yeah.

KF: I don't especially remember the date of that.

JS: It was probably ... I think the main portion of the team arrived in Teheran on or about the 12th of January. Pat and I came in about two days later. That would have made it the 14th. As I said, on the flight down this lady attached herself to us and was very friendly: "How are you going to get into town? Can I have a ride with you?" and all this other business. So, when we got into the airport we ditched her.

KF: How?

JS: She went to get her luggage and while we were waiting for the luggage ours came out, luckily, first. Pat, I believe, said, "I'm going to take the luggage." Pat went and got a cart, loaded it all up in the cart and said, "I'm going to go up to

JS (CONTD): stand in line", said, "If you'll excuse me, I'm going to the bathroom." Very original, but effective. "And I'll be back to help you with your luggage when it comes off the line." He went over and ran the cart through customs and we're off. Joe met us outside and took us out to the car where we were accosted by another group of Iranians saying, "What are you doing here? You're Americans, what are you doing here?" And we explained to them that we lived in Teheran, we worked in Teheran and we're here to do our jobs, and we were told, "This is not a good place for you to be," and all that sort of business, and we said, "This is where we live, this is where we work, this is what we do. We trust the Iranian people," and all this other business. It was just a question and answer thing. And they were, I think, trying to tell us to get our little cheeks out of there because it was not a good time.

KF: And they weren't official people, they were hanging around.

JS: No, no, they were just Iranian citizens, normal everyday folk. Then we went to ^{Dvoranchik's} Gerancik's place and met Jay and Joe and the colonel at Bill's. And it was decided at that point in time that Pat and I were the two people that would not be seen, we would not go out because if, in fact, we had been placed under observation it was important that nobody knew how many people were involved with the operation, so Pat and I were the inside people. We didn't leave the apartment unless it was dark or if we left, we left during the day on a couple of

JS (CONTD): occasions to get into various places. We went to various apartments to gather food. One of the things that we needed to do as part of the initial plan was to acquire and modify some vehicles. I had the tools to do that at my apartment, so we went over there during the day to pick up tools and pick up some additional food and when we got to my place, my apartment had already been looted and **all** my tools were gone and what was left of the tools that I had not take previously was gone. The place had been gone through. A lot of things were missing. I said, "Time to leave here", and went to some other apartments and picked up food. We weren't able to pick up any other tools but tools were easy to get. We could get the kind of tools that we needed to modify vehicles and cut the hole in roof of the van and so forth. We had keys to most of the apartments and what apartments we didn't have keys for we could get into.

KF: By other means.

JS: By other means, yes. We were there about two days when some other options started to surface. The original plan was continually modified as situations changed. We found out, for instance, before we went in that they had ... I believe we found out before we went in that they had been moved. It certainly modified the plan when Colonel Simons relayed word back to us that it would not be a good idea for Ralph or Ron to come into the country. That changed a lot of things.

~~stop~~ [stop]

KF: Now, Ralph's name was on the ~~Scott~~ list. Was Ron's name on the Scott list?

JS: I don't know, but I don't think it was.

KF: So, why wasn't it a good idea for Ron to go in?

JS: Basically, because at that point in time there weren't many blacks in the country and that was the big thing, I think, more than anything else, is the fact that he would ...

VOICE: ... Afghanistan ... they had black Iranians over there but they were in the southern part of Teheran and Americans were being about. You know, when you talk about identification like Jim, he could grow a beard and throw them off just like ... went right in ... customs, or things like that ...

KF: Okay. So, basically, it was because you were evidently an American.

VOICE: That's right. People knew that I worked for ... a lot of people, high people knew that I worked for EDS and that I had also been in contact with some of the high-ranking American officials and Iranian officials, officials ...

JS: So, we were modifying plans as we went along. There was a possibility at one point in time that Paul and Bill could be paroled. When that possibility arose we decided if they can be paroled we can pick them up on the street or pick them

JS (CONTD): up from wherever they're paroled to. and spirit them out of the country if we could get them on the street. To support that we needed communications gear. We needed two-way radios and things like that. And we also needed some good topographic maps of the area. So, it was decided that Pat and I would go back and pick those up.

KF: Why did you need topographic maps?

JS: Basically because the maps that we had of the country and the maps available in country were tourism maps more than anything else, and they gave you lines drawn on the road, and we'd had some experience with these maps at the Jeep Club where the instructions would be "drive down this highway, turn right at the dead horse." And depending on how old the instructions were ... not exactly what you would call clear instructions. We needed good topographic maps for the overland part of the operation. We had discussed while we were _____ on the various methods of getting out of the country, of going south and using a boat to go to Kuwait, going through Turkey using various methods of extraction by air. We had discussed bribing helicopter pilots into the use of the aircraft and there were a number of things that had been discussed. The planning phase ... the planning in this was very, very fluid and flexibility in approach was very evident. Working initially with very poor intelligence and working in changing situations forced that type of planning and the fact that the colonel was very flexible in his thinking, that was one of the real keys to

the whole thing. It was finally decided that probably the most assured way of getting out, the way over which we had the most control was to go out overland, and what we needed to do that were good ~~maps~~ ^{maps} [maps] because we had originally planned on going into the northeastern part of the country and enlisting the aid of the Kurds to smuggle us across the border because in that part of the country the borders are drawn on a map by somebody else and the Kurds, although they understand they are around or in Turkey, or in Iraq, they really don't pay that much attention to it. We also knew, and the colonel knew that they could if they wanted to, and for the right price, could feel the kind of security force we might need and they could also get us across the border. Smuggling is something that is not uncommon in that part of the country. We needed the maps to confirm more we weren't being led astray and to confirm that they were where we thought we were. So Pat and I were sent to London to pick up the radios, some cash and maps.

KF: How long had you spent in Teheran?

JS: We'd been there, I would imagine, about three to four days.

KF: So it's now about the 18th of January.

JS: Yes.

KF: Which is about the time Paul and Bill were moved.

JS: Uh-huh.

KF: But you feel they probably moved before you went back, before you left Teheran? By this time the focus of planning has changed from getting them out of jail to getting them out of Teheran.

JS: One, getting them out of jail became a problem because we had been denied the use of two of our team members, both of them, two guys ... I don't recall exactly when the move took place, and I've got a feeling that it occurred ... once again, time is slightly muddled but I've got a feeling it occurred after Pat and I left. The focus ... the idea that to get them out of Teheran was a problem. There was the problem as opposed to getting them out of jail was: one, a question of part of the team not being there; two, the development that there may have been a possibility to parole and that's why we needed the extra equipment, that's why we left to get it. The radios came in with Bill Gaden from Dallas, who left them in London. We picked them up in London along with some cash. The maps, Pat and I went into London itself, made some contacts with a couple of places and finally found a place that would sell us military maps of that area. We secured those maps.

KF: Do you remember where that shop was?

JS: No, I don't. I really don't.

KF: There's a map shop in Fleet Street.

VOICE: Does that ring a bell?

JS: Down in the basement. It has ...

KF: A geographia shop.

JS: They sell tourist maps upstairs and down in the basement, if you ask the right questions, they have the military maps. I don't know exactly where it is. I don't recall exactly where it is. Pat and I were in London for about four days. We had gotten all of our stuff. We made reservations to get back into Teheran when they closed the airport in Teheran. Ahabad Airport was closed and we couldn't fly out of London. We decided, fine, we can't fly out of London. We'll try an alternate route. In the meantime, we found out that Ralph [Boulware] Bolwer was in Istanbul and this wonderful idea that we would go to Turkey and go in to Teheran overland, so we flew from London to Copenhagen, Copenhagen to Istanbul and married up with Ralph at the Sheraton in Istanbul and commenced to make some arrangements with ^{Mr. Fish} [REDACTED] to get Pat and I to the border, primarily to get us to the border and across and then drive into Teheran. We received instructions from Dallas that that was not a good idea, just to hold where we were and wait for things to develop. We did that. While we were in Teheran we scouted out the area and found some places where we could ... not in Teheran. I'm sorry. In Istanbul. While we were in Istanbul we scouted out some places where we could acquire some weapons that were not generally available and almost got ourselves into some trouble there because we had the radios with us. Pat and I had brought the radios with us. The first

JS (CONTD): day that we were in Istanbul we were in Ralph's room which overlooked the park outside of the Sheraton and noticed the military chasing this Turk through the bushes and caught him and beat on his head a little bit. We didn't think a whole lot of it and we were going to test the radios. What we thought we would do is take one radio down into the park and keep the other one up in the hotel room and talk to each other, or one of them, you now, to test each of them out. In conversation with ^{Mr. Fish} [REDACTED] the following day we found out the radios were highly illegal to have, so we hid them in our rooms. They had been in our luggage and we hid them in our rooms where the maids would not find them. We were told that it was not uncommon for the maids to go through your luggage. If you didn't want that to happen and you left a bottle of liquor out they would leave your stuff alone but they would drink some of your liquor and replace whatever they drank with water. You had some very light colored scotch after a while. After Tuna told us not to fool around with the radios we hid those away. We hid them in the air conditioning ducts, not too original, but it worked ... and left them there when we finally were recalled. We started to make arrangements to go into Teheran overland. This was just, I would imagine, three days prior to the actual jail break we were recalled. They told us to leave Istanbul, there's no need for us sitting around anymore. Ralph stayed in Istanbul. Pat and I went back to the United States. I went to Eau Claire and Pat went back to Dallas. I got back home. I was there about two days

JS (CONTD): and got another phone call saying go to Washington, D. C. and meet Ross at the Madison Hotel in Washington. So I grabbed a plane and went to Washington. Once again, I arrived in the middle of a snow storm. It seemed like every place I went during this whole operation in the United States there was a snow storm going on. There was in Eau Claire when I got home originally. There was in Dallas when we went down for training and there was in Washington when we met the 707. I went down to the Madison, met Ross. Morrison was there. We looked at maps for a while, went over what was happening. Early the next morning went out to the airport. That's where I met Ron again, and Pat, and Dick, and Julian, and the stewardesses were there. We got on the aircraft and flew ... we flew directly to Istanbul from Washington. Went into Istanbul, went to the Sheraton where Ralph had set us all up with rooms. Ralph had remained in Istanbul this whole time. We made our plans. On the way over we made plans. Julian and I sat down and made some plans for how we were going to use the aircraft in various situations. We had set up originally in Teheran some markings that would be left with the vehicles that would key us as to what ... if it was necessary for us to cross the border and find the vehicles, signals that would tell us from the air whether or not, or where the people were, or what had happened to them.

KF: Do you remember what the code was for the route markings?