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Kidnapping and beheading as a tactic of asymmetric warfare

Security implications for Australia, the EU and beyond

04 May 2015



Event Principal Partner

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CRICOS Provider Code 00301J

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Strategic Context

- Kidnapping for Ransom (KNR) is not a new phenomenon.
- The epicentre of KNR has been South America - Mexico last year over 100,000.
- Geographic shift coincided with rise of terrorist organisations.
- Since 2010 over 50 foreigners abducted in the ME, North Africa, Pakistan / AFG.
- ISIS has elevated Kidnapping for Beheading as a tactic of asymmetric warfare and terror marketing – it captures, torments and terrifies democratic nations.
- Since 2011 – INGOs biggest threat and most likely form of violence from KNR.
- Where you are from will determine your fate: citizens from US/Britain/Australia are likely to be killed and used as a tactic of asymmetric warfare.
- Those from Europe are valuable commodities because European countries pay.
- Ransoms paid bank-roll ISIS warfare and terror.



Key Points

- ISIS has changed the dynamics and consequences for the victim's government – shaping the battlefield.
- Beheadings are a tactic of asymmetric warfare – one person in the desert with a knife can terrify and psychologically invade a nation and its values.
- Now serious potential domestic and foreign policy impacts for Australia.
- How will the Australian Government respond to public pressure if an Australian citizen appears in an orange jumpsuit or in a cage in the middle of the desert?
- Should companies / INGOs that receive Australian taxpayer's money for projects and humanitarian work in hostile environments be mandated to have adequate security training, security contingency plans and SOPs in place, and be held responsible for actions that result in KNR?
- Need stronger policy: prevent – refuse – deny







Strategic Models of KNR

Model	Proponents
Business / economic	Al Qaeda (all affiliates) / Abu Sayyaf Group / Mexico KNR gangs / Taliban / Somali Pirates / FARC
Political	Al Qaeda / IRA / FARC / Hamas
Human / sex slavery	Eastern European Mafia / Trans-national Criminal Organisation and Gangs / Indian Gangs
Warfare	ISIS & (al Qaeda in Iraq)

Some Facts and Figures

- Since 2008 al Qaeda has raised \$125m from KNR - \$66m paid in 2013.
- Since 2013 ISIS has taken 23 Western hostages – only US / Britain / Japan hostages beheaded – European countries pay-up.
- ISIS received \$18m for the release of four hostages in 2014 – demanded \$132m for James Foley.
- ISIS released 15 Western hostages in 2014 all for ransoms paid.
- Italian aid worker taken with David Haines (beheaded) was released - allegedly a \$7m ransom paid.





Management of Savagery

- Evolved out of a frame of reference constructed by narrative-strategists symbolism and branding: *The Management of Savagery*
- One single act of graphic, unvarnished brutality can traumatise a nation.
- Our 24/7 news cycle and obsession with social media magnifies the impact.
- ISIS knew exactly what it was doing by beheading the US/UK/Japanese hostages - deep, psychological and communicative impact forcing a foreign policy reaction that potentially plays into their strategy.
- Warfare along a mental-moral-physical continuum of conflict - moral manoeuvrability:
 1. No consequences for the perpetrator – if caught he would be treated under Western rules of engagement / afforded human rights
 2. Use of Westerners to conduct the beheadings: creates an *esprit de corps* - terror marketing within a prophetic-morality of inspiration.
 3. Paralyses or causes internal friction within victim's nation



Examples

- 2004 de la Cruz kidnapping - Philippines withdrew from US-led coalition in Iraq
- 2004 Nick Berg beheaded by Abu Zaraqawi (AQ in Iraq evolved into ISIS) one of the first youtube released beheadings (followed release of Management of Savagery)
- 2010 Pakistan Taliban kidnapped 60 people including women / children in Parachinar. Pakistan military launched aerial assault.
- June 2014 Hamas kidnapping and killing of three Israeli teenagers led to Israel launching a massive assault into Gaza and the West Bank.
- 2014 ISIS beheading of US / UK citizens contributed to US-coalition airstrike campaign that continues.
- Jordanian Pilot burnt in cage – Jordan military targeted ISIS with airstrikes.
- Two Japanese hostages beheaded in response to Japan's policy against ISIS







Tactics of KNR – the attack cycle

- The tactics techniques and procedures of KNR revolve around the attack cycle.
- The process by which the group observes, selects target, plans and executes the kidnapping.
- Random, unplanned KNR rarely happens – exception may be where an unofficial checkpoint is set up.
- Often local staff / local police are involved.
- Highest incident occurs when victim is mobile.
- The habits of life will get you killed.
- Al Qaeda produced its own KNR Guide Book in 2004.







ISIS KNR Operations

- Clandestine network to identify foreigners and their local fixers.
- ISIS determine when and where foreigners are working, their movements and begin tracking their habits (attack cycle begins).
- Spotters at border crossings and internet cafes.
- ISIS knows the routes foreigners use to return, how many and exactly who is in the vehicle.
- Often use a chase car or set-up a checkpoint as a net.
- ISIS have established KNR networks outside of the Syria/Iraq conflict area into Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, KRG – even set up fake YPG recruitment sites.





Lessons from Syria KNB

1. They believed their missionary status would protect them.
2. Their experience in other countries became a template.
3. The organisation ignored changes in atmospherics.
4. Built up their own invulnerability syndrome - they survived going down that road last week.
5. They ignored changes or failed to recognise changes in the operating environment or human terrain.
6. Most importantly they failed to take action even when they detected the presence of the abnormal.
7. Assumption it was bad-luck or opportunistic / random.
8. It is the simple things that will save you or kill you.

My golden Rule: Trust no one question everything.





■ Questions?

