

**SPEAKER 1:** At 5:30 in the morning, a jet went by our apartment building. We were on the 14th floor. And my roommate, another American, said a jet went by. And this was real strange because military jets are not in the air over there. And this jet was headed for the communications tower two kilometers south of our apartment building.

And they knew exactly what they wanted to knock out. And that was all the microwave dishes that had to do with the telephones, which turned out to be three. That cut us off then to the outside world and cut us off in our telephone district so we could not call outside of our district.

**SPEAKER 2:** Did you know what was happening?

**SPEAKER 1:** No, we had no idea. We turned on-- we had CNN International available to us in our apartment. So we turned it on, and they had said that indeed Iraq had invaded Kuwait. Then we turned on the BBC and Voice of America, and they confirmed the same thing.

**SPEAKER 2:** What did you do at that point?

**SPEAKER 1:** It was a normal workday. It was Thursday morning. And we worked from 7:00 to 3:00 on Thursday, which is the last day of the week in a Muslim world. Friday is the day of rest. So we went to work.

And about 9:30 that morning, we noticed a lot of smoke, artillery shells bursting around the international airport, which was about four kilometers northwest of our plant. And at 10:00, two airbursts went off in the air 1,500 feet above us over the plant. And most of my crew of a hundred are subcontinent types-- Bangladeshis, Indians, and Pakistanis. And they all come running up the administration building very scared and says, we don't want to be killed, we don't want to be killed.

So I made the decision to put the plant on our weekend schedule and send everybody home in the buses. And they stayed there until they were able to escape out of Kuwait. We never went back to the plant. We were told on Monday night by the ministry to shut the plant down and bypass the raw sewage into the gulf, Arabian Gulf.

**SPEAKER 2:** This was a wastewater treatment plant?

**SPEAKER 1:** Yes, this was a wastewater treatment plant, treating approximately 18 million gallons of raw sewage a day.

**SPEAKER 2:** Of course, you, as an American, were in a potential danger or extreme danger right from the beginning. Did you know that?

**SPEAKER 1:** We knew it on the second Tuesday after the third Thursday of the invasion. I don't remember the date now. But Mr. Shakir, my Indian manager, came over. And he says, Mr. Ralph, I think I can get you back to the plant.

I said, what about all the Iraqi checkpoints? He says, well, I think I can get you through. So we had a chance to go back to the plant and salvage our accounting books and a few little items that had not either been broken or stolen by the Iraqis.

But the treatment plant itself, the administration building was completely trashed out. I mean, there was nothing left in there. They destroyed \$150,000 worth of test equipment, both electronic and laboratory for the chemistry. From that day on, I went back to the apartment and then we were hiding for the next 50 days.

**SPEAKER 2:** So you knew at that point then that you had to stay out of there.

**SPEAKER 1:** The minute I walked in my office and saw the way it was trashed out, I said to Mr. Shakir, I said we're all done here. This project is done at this point.

**SPEAKER 2:** Where did you go into hiding?

**SPEAKER 1:** We stayed in our apartment. Our apartment complex was an American architect designed. We had two towers, 20 floors. And we were on the 14th floor of one tower. We had our own health club, swimming pool, tennis court, and thank goodness a satellite dish so we had access to CNN International. We stayed in our apartment. Mr. Shakir would come back and check on us about every fourth or fifth day, bring us rice, milk, juices, vegetables, and fruit that he could find on the market and chicken once in a while also.

**SPEAKER 2:** So he was risking.

**SPEAKER 1:** Yes. Well, he was an Indian. And they weren't worried about the expatriate Indians. They would let them drive about. And he had the proper paperwork for his automobile, so they wouldn't steal it from him. If you did not have the proper paperwork for your car, then they took it from you. And they were stealing cars as fast as you could see them on the street.

**SPEAKER 2:** You were in hiding then for 50 days.

**SPEAKER 1:** Yes.

**SPEAKER 2:** What happened on that 50th day or the 51st day?

**SPEAKER 1:** Well, the night of September 19th, our Egyptian friends in the apartment building came to us and said, you got to get out and hide. Tomorrow, they're going to make an apartment by apartment search of the buildings. And since my roommate and I had no place to hide, we decided we would stay in our apartment and see what happens.

And they brought in the Republican Guards as we know them now. The Red Brigade troops surrounded the building. And they started up on the top floor, and they got down to our building, at our apartment, about 9:30 in the morning. We had a deadbolt on our door. And we broke the key off in the lock so they couldn't use the master key. And it took them 35 minutes to break into our apartment.

They had eight secret police in civilian clothes, each with an AK-47, along with a Palestinian who did their translation, and the apartment manager who was a Kuwaiti. And he wouldn't let them break down the door so they had to take the glass pane and the molding and the grillwork off the window. And they crawled in through the window. And that's how they got the door open.

And they saw the deadbolt, and they opened it up. They came to my bedroom and kicked the bed. And I was under the covers. And I had my earphones on, listening to the radio. And I made believe I was asleep because when they kicked the bed, I pulled my head out.

And they said, why didn't you open the door? And I said I was half asleep. I didn't hear you. And they said, well, get dressed and come out with us. And so I got dressed. And just as I was getting out of the bed, the secret police left.

The Kuwaiti manager stayed behind. And he says, I'm sorry, Mr. Ralph. But he says, I'm under orders. I can't help it, apologizing for the situation. And just as I was ready to leave the bedroom, two of the secret police came in with their AK-47s.

One took it and poked the barrel right into my stomach and says, where is your car keys? And this was through the translator, of course. And I says, I don't have them. See, my roommate, he has them. And he didn't believe me.

And he poked the barrel further into my stomach. And he had his finger on the trigger. And that was one of the two times I thought I might get blown away. I was very scared. And you could hear my heart. It was like a bass drum. And I said, see my roommate. He has the papers and the keys.

So they went over to see him. And Gary surrendered the keys and the papers. They were happy. And we came out. And he says, take your time. There's no rush. This is for your protection. We'll take good care of you. You'll have medical care. You'll have food. You'll have lodging, so forth.

And I said, well, could we have a cup of coffee? And they said, sure. So Gary and I stalled, and we had a cup of coffee. And I said, what can we take with us? And he says, take whatever you want. So we were lucky. We were able to take virtually all of our personal belongings with us.

For me, that was my personal computer, my briefcase, and three bags that were packed. And they've been priority packed. One of these bags I might say had 38 programs of Garrison Keillor's Prairie Home Companion and the American Radio Company of the Air. And I was very happy that I was able to bring those along with me on that.

So we were taken then to the Regency Palace in Kuwait City. And we were held there for six days until they had 28 Westerners, which was a busload. And then we were taken to the Al-Mansour Melia Hotel in Baghdad. That was the clearing house for all hostages. And I was there a day and a half.

And then I was taken out to a plant, which turned out to be 60 kilometers southwest of Baghdad, which was a munitions plant built by the French and Belgians, not in full production. It was still being built just on the tail end of construction. And they manufactured powders there.

And our translator on the second week told us that they'd be testing bombs every morning from 7:30 to 2:00, except on Friday. And they indeed did until the day I left. Every day, they were testing bombs, some very loud, some very small. It was only half a kilometer from the little guardhouse where we were kept.

But we were in what I call a POW camp. There was a small building of about four rooms. And they had a fence around this compound and sheet metal there to keep us in. We had a guard translator in the building, a guard at the door, a guard at the gate, one in the street, all armed with AK-47s.

**SPEAKER 2:** How were you treated when you were there? Were you indeed a guest of Saddam Hussein?

**SPEAKER 1:** Yes. I was very, very lucky because the plant that I was stationed at-- and it was called [INAUDIBLE]. And from what I determined, it was bombed last Saturday, according to the reports I got on CNN in the briefings. I believe it was bombed last Saturday.

But the plant personnel, engineering plant personnel and maintenance were responsible for our accommodations and food. And they were very good. And once we got to know them and we got talking with them-- they had radios, so they were able to listen to the outside world and know what's going on. So they liked or favored our positions in this.

But they, of course, working for the government, didn't have any choice. We could only talk freely with them when there were no guards around. So we had to be real careful about the guards. Because the guards were all secret police, very high up in the Ba'ath political party. And the plant personnel did not like the guards. So we did everything we could to cause problems between these two groups.

**SPEAKER 2:** Oh yeah. Such as what? What did you do?

**SPEAKER 1:** Oh, we accused the guards of stealing food at the beginning because they couldn't figure out where all our food was going. Because we were getting 12 bottles of milk every day. We're getting fresh fruits, fresh vegetables. The next morning, they're all gone. And we kept telling the guards that they're stealing them at night.

And they didn't-- or the plant personnel. And the plant personnel didn't believe this. So then they finally gave us a refrigerator in each of our rooms, and we kept our food in there.

And then they realized we were telling the truth. But they were jumping on the secret police all the time about stealing food, and they were denying it. But they were heavily rationed in Baghdad. And that's why they were taking all the food home.

**SPEAKER 2:** Oh, OK.

**SPEAKER 1:** Yes.

**SPEAKER 2:** OK. So do you think that the sanctions were working?

**SPEAKER 1:** They were working to a certain amount. Now you have to realize that Iraq is self-sufficient in food, except for the production of rice, tea, coffee. Sugar they produce there. So they have to import that along with infant formula. Everything else they produce within country, and there's plenty of that.

So the sanctions are not going to cut into the food supply. Where the sanctions are going to hurt are spare parts for the military, spare parts for all their factories, spare parts for automobiles. And when they came into Kuwait, the first thing they sold were tires because they had no tires in Iraq. And you'd see cars in Kuwait City jacked up and the tires all missing. And usually, the radio cassette player in the dashboard is stolen at the same time.

**SPEAKER 2:** Yeah.

**SPEAKER 1:** But that's where it's going to hurt. When I came through Baghdad in September, the streets were crowded with cars. When I came through in November, there was about one fourth the cars on the street because of lack of spare parts.

**SPEAKER 2:** So you were released in November.

**SPEAKER 1:** November 28th. I was taken from our hostage camp into the Al-Mansour Melia to be prepared to be released with Muhammad Ali.

**SPEAKER 2:** OK. Muhammad Ali, of course, the boxer.

**SPEAKER 1:** Yes.

**SPEAKER 2:** A very well respected in the Muslim world--

**SPEAKER 1:** Yes, very highly respected. Yes.

**SPEAKER 2:** --was able to get a number of hostages out.

**SPEAKER 1:** 15 of us out. Yes.

**SPEAKER 2:** Yeah. What did you think when you heard about the airstrike by the American Air Forces on Baghdad?

**SPEAKER 1:** I was very, very happy, I hate to say this, but for the main reason that if we would let Saddam Hussein pull out of Kuwait and go back to Iraq, he kept his army, and he kept his industrial complex, which many Americans did not realize. He had this large industrial complex. So we haven't changed anything.

We'd be back to August 1st again. I feel in three to four years, he'll have the nuclear capability. So either we stop him now or we stop him down the road. I think it's better to stop him now before he has that nuclear capability.