

# Covert Operations, Fairhope

An excerpt from

## *TechWorld Terrorism*

by

Roger C. Bull

**8:30 P.M. CST, K4R4, the designation for H. L. Sonny Callahan Airport, in Fairhope, Alabama –**

“4-Romeo-4 this is Bravo Tango Golf 7-2-5, please repeat your last instructions. Our radio picked up some radio interference.”

“Sssssssscrchrchrhsssssssssss...”

“4-Romeo-4 this is Bravo Tango Golf 7-2-5, please repeat your....”

“Zzzzzzt. Pop, pop!” (The electronics and lighting go completely dead. The pilot releases the mike button.)

“What the heck is going on?” The pilot of the Beechcraft King Air 100 is struggling with a ‘blacked-out’ aircraft about to land, or about to....

“Circuit breakers blew. Won’t reset. Tried three times.”

Less than 500 feet in the air and about a mile and a half from the airport, Jack Thompson is fighting the 25 knot crosswinds buffeting the blinded aircraft. The plane is traveling at about 11,000 feet per minute. If the pilots could see the ground, it would be a blur.

The runway lights flicker, go out, back on then out again.

“Jack, did you see that? Even the street lights are out. We have no landmarks or bearings to guide us in! Son of a...”

100 foot altitude and 700 feet out.

“Tom, I’m guesstimating the runway location from our last known point and adjusting accordingly.”

“Roger, Jack.”

“We’re close, Tom. Hang on.”

Twenty-five feet and crossing the end of the runway. Suddenly, the runway lights flash on. Both pilots are startled by the turn of events. The cockpit lighting and controls snap on. With a grimace, Jack sees that the plane is 20 feet left of the centerline.

Jack makes the appropriate maneuvers to realign the flaps, ailerons, rudder and throttle. His neck muscles show the action of quick but steady manipulations on the controls to lift the craft high enough for the gear to drop and to center the plane with the runway.

“Gear down,” he barks at Tom.

He has the rudder turned to push the aircraft into enough angle to slip to the center line then straightens it just as the wheels grab the concrete ribbon. With a synchronous rush of lung exhaust, Jack and Tom release the tension they felt in these last terrifying moments.

“Dag-nab-it, Jack. That was some good flying.”

“I can’t tell you how relieved I was to see those lights come back on, Tom.”

“You don’t have to tell me.... You don’t have to tell me.”

The pilots give each other a knowing glance.

### **9200 block of Thoroughbred Run –**

Fourteen year old Alex Johnson steps out of his ranch-style home at 8:25 to feed his cocoa colored Labrador retriever, Fetch. The back screen door slams shut with a loud wood-on-wood noise.

“How many times do I have to tell ya not to slam the door, Alex?”

“Okay, okay, mom. Sorry.”

After filling Fetch’s water bowl and food dish, he hears an incoming aircraft, a turboprop, heading towards the Callahan airport. Always excited and curious about pieces of metal being able to fly, he searches the sky until he sees the airplane, well, at least he sees the landing lights.

Suddenly, he sees the lights on the craft extinguish, along with the surrounding street lights and his home’s lighting. He stands in complete darkness in the southwest Alabama rural area. There is a certain haunting quality about this event.

What is it? He looks around and sees nothing.

What IS it? Ah. Alex knows exactly what seems so strange. Whatever caused the power outage also turned off the runway lights.

*Crash. A crash is imminent,* Alex thinks to himself.

He hastens to his back door. The door slams behind him as he enters. His mother doesn’t shout at him this time. He sees that his parents have located the emergency flashlights and candles that they keep on hand for power outages during hurricanes.

“Mom, Dad. The lights are out all over Fairhope, including the airport. I saw a plane coming in for a landing; but it disappeared in the darkness. It’s landing lights went out, too.”

“Mildred, where’s the portable radio?”

“You know darn well that it’s in the emergency kit, Basil.”

“Hump. Okay. Okay. I have it.”

“I’m going back outside. I’ve got a flashlight and my cam-era. I want to take pictures if the plane crashes.”

“Honey, that’s not a nice thought,” Mildred exclaims.

“But it’s the truth. The dang thing could crash. The authorities will want photos to study, ya know,” Basil replies. “Go ahead, son.”

What Alex doesn’t realize is that the incident was over before he reached the camera.

### **Five minutes before the Beechcraft malfunctions ---**

Parked on the side of the Bath and Kitchen Interiors, LLC. on S. Greeno Road in Fairhope, two men of middle eastern descent, one born and raised in a local community and now an integral member of an Al Qaeda terrorist cell, work on an electronic device that consumes most of the rear of the white rental van that they occupy.

“Do you have it connected?”

“I am not completed. Are you sure this device functions properly?”

“Would it be testing, if it functioned as planned, Habib?” “Sorry Al. I am nervous.”

“Tell that to Alla if we fail!”

### **Ono Island, one of many homes of Robert Seachain ---**

“Marcel, the world is a doomed orb floating in the vast emptiness of the universe if we can’t stop these hack attacks in our government servers,” Robert Seachain says to his right hand man, Marcel Jeanfreaux.

“What do you mean by that, sir?”

“Every terrorist group in the world has targeted our government servers that monitor our economy, our infrastructure and our military. Do you get my drift, now?”

“We’re attacked all the time, Robert. What’s the difference today?”

“Today, not only are our servers shut down, the main server farms that control our nation have ceased to operate....” Sea-chain lets the image settle into Jeanfreaux’s brain long enough for him to construct a mental picture of the results of those events.

“Oh, crap, boss. We’re in deep trouble. The whole net-work?”

“Yes. The whole network is down, Marcel. Are you beginning to realize the ramifications?”

“Yes, sir! Do we have communications?”

“Landline and cellular went down. The trunk lines that feed them are down at the Fairhope hub. The internet backbones are attempting to reroute around that area. The radio broadcasts in and around Fairhope are down, also.” With a mumble he states, “Now, I can’t listen to my Big Band music.”

“What about satellite?”

“I haven’t checked it yet. What do you have in mind, Marcel?”

“I’ve got to contact J.D. in Maryland. That’s my young nephew who works at the N.S.A. He might have a handle on this.”

“Give him a call, Marcel. I hope the sat-phones still work.” “We’re far enough away, Robert. They should be okay.”

### **The Call ---**

J.D.’s phone responds with this ringtone: “Ain’t no money in the gubmint. Ain’t no sugar in the House....”

J.D. answers his phone, “What’s up Juice (Marcel’s Delta Force moniker)?”

“That’s Uncle Juice to you, Squirrel Hopper.”

“Ha! You don’t really expect me to call you Uncle, do you?”

“Well, I’ll let you slide this time, Little One. It’s time to get serious.”

“I can hear that in your voice. I see it on my stress analysis monitor, too.”

“Turn that off, will you?”

“Okay, okay....” He reaches over and flips a switch with a click. “It’s off now. This is a clear line, also.”

“Good. That was my next question. What do you have on the board for infrastructure attacks?”

“Listen to me, Juice. There’s more than you can imagine.

The whole complex is abuzz with activity. Every department has been called into Langley to muster results on these events. In fact, there is a situation at the Sonny Callahan Airport in Fairhope. Have you anything on that one?”

“4-Romeo-4? No, we haven’t received anything on that yet. What’s up?”

“We believe a terrorist sleeper-cell has constructed and used a portable E.M.P. device. They weren’t totally successful, thank God.”

“Fill me in.”

“We’ve got F.A.A. and N.T.S.B. investigators en route to check on an incident involving an electronics failure at and around that airport. It nearly created a fatal incident for a twin engine aircraft. Though there were no ground employees at the pilot-controlled airport, a nearby teenager witnessed the incident.”

After the young agent describes the situation in more detail, J.D. adds, “We don’t have enough personnel to investigate all of the incidents as quickly as we need the details. Are you interested?”

“I was interested before I called you. My boss was analyzing incident patterns. He is quite concerned about the state of covert activities in the country. Especially the hack-attacks of the infrastructure. When the power and communications shut down, it didn’t take much to push him into asking questions and demanding answers.”

“Yeah, Juice. I’m getting that distinct pressure here, too.” “We just have satellite phones right now. I have one rigged to a computer. Email me the Callahan report. I’ll get right on it with my perspective.”

“Oh goody. I smell a spy thriller coming up!” J.D. responds excitedly.

“Get back to reverse engineering those malicious codes, kiddo. We’ll need them to attack these cells.”

“Right, double-Oh!”

“Zzzzsht...” J.D. hears ‘dead-air.’ Marcel has already disconnected and headed to the computer for the report. He’s not one to hesitate.

### **Debriefing ---**

“Robert, J.D. sent this report. There’s been an incident involving the Sonny Callahan Airport in Fairhope. A Beechcraft King Air 100 almost crashed due to an E.M.P. device being activated in the area. It was an unsuccessful attempt. The effects were temporary.”

“Hmmm. That immediately brings to mind that young man from Daphne. You know the one I’m thinking about, don’t you?”

“Yeah. Al Masoud. That’s his name, right?”

“That’s the one I’m thinking about, Marcel. Go check him out.”

“On it, boss.”

Marcel Jeanfreaux, in his early 60s but fit from his active lifestyle, was born a swamp-stomping tike in southeastern Louisiana. He was raised in the wild, amidst alligators, beavers, nutria, minks, and other wildlife. He is a natural navigator and investigator. He can smell trouble long before he approaches it. He left the life of hunting, fishing and trawling to join the United States Marine Corps during the Vietnam conflict. Having worked with dynamite, nitroglycerine and blasting caps to remove tree stumps by blowing them out of their roots, it was proper to assign him to advanced ballistics and armament duties. His accomplishments in routing VC troops from underground emplacements became legendary.

As his skills and talents improved, he became involved with engineers in designing advanced weapons systems like smart bombs and M.O.A.B.s (mother of all bombs). He had an attitude to go along with his skills. But..., that is another story.

“Matthew, this is Marcel Jeanfreaux.” He’s talking with Detective Matthew James with the Daphne Police Department.

“Hey, Marcel. Long time, brother. What’s up?”

“I’m doing some prep-work on a terrorist from your hood.”

“Al Masoud, right?”

“That’s the one. Is he still a student at U.S.A.; and are there any activity reports on him lately?”

“He’s been seen in and around the county with a character by the name of Habib. Habib is a foreign national supposedly visiting Masoud and attending the University of South Alabama, with Masoud, on a student visa.”

“Gotcha. Well, it’s more than a lesson plan that is going down, Matthew. It appears that they have formed a sleeper cell in your backyard. Did you hear about the Callahan Airport incident?”

“Yeah. Baldwin Power said that their equipment was functioning properly at the time of the black out; but I suspected a possible electromagnetic pulse device. Is that what you sense?”

“Bingo, Matthew. It had to be faulty. All of the electronics in the area would have fried permanently if it had functioned correctly. I need all that you can give me on Masoud and this Habib. Can you meet me away from the department?”

“Yeah, name it.”

“I’m going to contact Sgt. John Bigheart of the Fairhope P.D.’s investigations division.”

“I know John.”

“Good. Let’s meet at Market by the Bay, the Daphne restaurant.”

“Marcel, it’s near midnight. They’re closed.”

“I have a key. The owner and I used to trawl together in Louisiana. We go way back.” Marcel smiles at the memories.

“See you there in twenty minutes?”

“Sounds good, Matthew. If there’s a delay, I’ll call you on the state radio frequency. Remember your Vietnamese?”

“Đạ (pronounced ‘yaa’).”

Marcel smiles as he replies, “If I have to contact you via radio, it’ll be in Vietnamese. See you in a bit, Matthew.”

“Roger that, Marcel.”

Marcel then sends a text message to Sgt. Bigheart. “John, meet Matthew James and me at Market by the Bay in Daphne. We need to discuss Al Masoud and a co-terrorist named Habib concerning the airport incident. Call my sat-phone or contact me on the state frequency to acknowledge receipt of this. Da or nyet. Okay?”

About a minute later, Marcel’s radio crackles, “Fairhope twenty-three-ten, da.”

“Headquarters to unit, please identify yourself... Headquarters to unit, please identify yourself. It is a federal crime to use law enforcement frequencies for non-law enforcement use. Ac-knowledge!”

“Shzzzzzzzzzzzzzz...crackle... shzzzzzzzzzzzzt.”

Dead air greets the radio dispatcher. Marcel turns off the radio and heads to the restaurant. He’s working this project off the grid to maintain cover.

### **Market by the Bay ---**

Marcel pulls onto the parking lot of Uncork Fine Wines and Spirits, next door to Market by

the Bay. He sees the two un-marked police cars parked on different sides of the lot. Marcel pulls to the right rear of the lot, farthest from the lights. He walks to the rear of the restaurant and meets Matthew and John at the rear door.

“Well ain’t y’all a sight for sore eyes!” Marcel gives them each a brotherly hug and a pat on the back, while shaking their respective hands.

“Good to see ya, Marcel. Since when you’ve got the keys to this culinary heaven?” John asks.

“Vic and I go back a few trawl boards, John. We’ve shucked a few oysters and popped a few shrimp heads in our time,” he says with a big smile.

“Roger that. Wish I coulda been there,” John replies. Matthew gazes around the market, looks at the large ‘royal Red’ shrimp, the large blue crabs, the sumptuous oysters, the many varieties of filleted fish. His mouth begins to water.

They look at each other with wanton smiles then Marcel says, “Come on. This is serious stuff. People nearly got killed tonight, brother. Let’s take care of business first.”

Marcel thinks to himself, *I’ll get Vic to crank out some sandwiches later. Maybe he’ll throw in some of his famous New Orleans style roast beef poboy to take home?*

John, Matthew and Marcel sit in the back office of the sea-food annex, an equally sized building attached to the main restaurant. The smell of fresh shrimp, oysters, crabs, fish and other seafood taunts their nostrils. This is a seafood lover’s oasis. It’s the rainbow of marine tastes. It isn’t easy working with all this lovely food staring at them.

Matthew lays out the contents of a box of material, intel, on Al Masoud. The three men go through every last detail available to them. They check the background of Masoud’s parents, their occupations, their education levels and their contacts with their homeland, Iran. They inspect the school records of Al, his behavior ratings and changes, his grades and their fluctuations and the details of his visits to Afghanistan and Iran. It seems Matthew has been a busy man. He’s made fine use of Marcel’s resources at the Company and the N.S.A.

Marcel, “Matthew, there’s little info on Habib. Is he ‘deep’ or just inexperienced?”

“He’s a newbie to the local cell. A cell of two, possibly three, I might add. Masoud is important to Al Qaeda but he hasn’t earned a full cell of his own yet. Habib is eager to learn but his lack of experience is more an expression of Masoud’s level of importance.”

“That’s about right, Matthew. John, are you up on Masoud’s Fairhope experiences?”

“We’ve seen very little of him. If he’s involved in the air-port black-out, no one has reported seeing him or Habib there. How can we tie them to the incident?”

Matthew, “I contacted my resource for the rental agency in Daphne. It seems that two men, one described to look much like Masoud, rented a white van late yesterday afternoon. The van was rented for a week. So....”

“They apparently expect to have a need for the van for a few more days. I suspect they were testing their device. They anticipated that if it didn’t work right, they’d have to come back to test it again....” Marcel remarks.

“However,” John interrupts, “will they return to the Calla-han airport again, or are they going to another location for the next test?”

Marcel jumps into the conversation with, “What is their final goal? What is so important that this or any other airport must be shut down?”

The three ponder the possibilities.

Matthew, “Marcel, I know you well enough that there’s more going on. What’s up?”

“Humph. Yep. There is. I didn’t tell you this... You be sure not to tell anyone else, including your wives and your girlfriends.”

They chuckle a bit when Matthew blushes and says, “Marcel... You know I’m a happily married man.”

“Yeah; but that’s \_cause you have a pretty girl friend on the side, eh?”

John and Marcel know well that Matthew is a true-blue husband. He’d never take advantage of his work and his illusion of power to philander. But, they enjoy watching him blush. They smile at Matthew’s uncomfortable state of being.

“Aw, man! Cut that out!”

John and Marcel laugh.

“All right, enough of the fun stuff. We believe that Masoud and Habib, since there is no other known cell in the area, are responsible for the flubbed airport E.M.P. event. We’ve got to locate them and isolate them before they do any further damage. This Fairhope incident is but one of many occurring throughout the country lately. The pattern of events could lead to catastrophic consequences. Got that?”

“You bet,” Matthew snaps as though it were an order.

“I agree,” John adds.

“Let’s go. On the way out, Marcel notices some Hubig pies on the shelf next to three books piled there, “La Soulier Rouge / The Red Shoe,” by Karen Bonvillain Bull. “Mai Cher! Vic’s got a coonass author in his store.” Marcel takes an apple, cherry and a pineapple Hubig pie and leaves three dollars on the counter with a note to Vic. “We been here. Now we gone. – Squirrel Popper”

“Squirrel Popper? What’s that mean, Marcel,” Matthew asks?

“It’s a long story. Vic knows what it means.”

Before they get into their cars, Marcel admonishes them to remain quiet about this investigation. “This ain’t no laughing matter. It could get us and other brothers killed around the nation. Keep your mouth shut!”

They nod acknowledgement with somber lines on their faces as they climb into their respective vehicles.

### **Rusty red Pinto ---**

Sitting outside of the Fairhope Express Inn on S. Greeno Road, Marcel sits in his rusty red 1971 Ford Pinto. Between his real three day old beard, his dirty blue jeans and old polo shirt and the old, rusty car, there is little chance that they would attribute him to a government employee. The Pinto is one of Marcel’s favorite undercover cars. It has a modified V6 engine with full bore, heavy duty clutch and pressure plate and a four-barrel carburetor. To be polite, it’s called the “Spit and git” car.

Marcel kept a fuzzy pair of dice hanging from the rear view mirror, a bobble-head dog on the rear sun deck and a couple of beer cans rolling around the rear floorboard. Sometimes, he’d have a six-pack with two or three beers in the box. He thinks, *Yep. This here is my fav-o-right car!*

It’s 6:30 in the morning. The two suspects exit their motel rooms and walk past the Pinto.

“Whew! Man, that automobile stinks like...”

“Hush, Habib!” Al gives Habib a stern look. Habib in return follows his directive and quiets himself.

The Pinto wrecks of beer. Marcel anticipated that they might check the car on their way to

the van. He poured a couple of beers on the passenger seat and the floorboard and threw the cans in the back of the car. He thinks, *No hurt. No holler. I'm just another redneck who parties too hardy.*

While he lay there pretending to be asleep, he listened as they entered the van and drove away.

Communications were restored during the night. He phoned John. "They're exiting from the parking lot, heading south on S. Greeno Road."

"Roger." John is in an old brown and white 1979 Chevrolet pickup that looked like it's seen a bale of hay or two. He pulls from the Wendy's headed south on U.S. Highway 98 (S. Greeno Road). He is about 2-3 blocks behind them.

#### **6:45 A.M. ---**

"They're pulling into the Punta Clara Self Storage facility at County Road 32 and Greeno." John passes their location and continues south for a few blocks before pulling into a business parking lot. He awaits further instructions.

Matthew, in a green 1997 Malibu with a dented right rear quarter panel (fender), pulled onto a driveway on County Road 32, behind the storage building. From that point, using a pair of binoculars, he could observe which storage unit they would open.

#### **6:50 A.M. ---**

"Unit 32-S. That's 32-south side," Matthew breathes into the microphone on the tactical frequency.

Marcel clicks his mic button three times to acknowledge the transmission.

John clicks his button once.

Masoud climbs into the van, starts it then backs it to the storage unit. He stops just short of the door of the unit. The driver then exits the vehicle and returns to the storage compartment.

A minute later, Matthew reports, "Pushing a heavy device on an adjustable cart. They've butted up to the van. They're sliding the equipment into the van.

One click then three clicks are heard on the radio. John and Marcel start their engines in preparation for the take-down.

The two suspects push the cart back into the storage unit and close the door. They climb into the van and start the motor.

#### **6:55 A.M. – 2500 feet above ground ---**

"Ms. Pelligrini, if you look out your window, you'll see that we are now over Baldwin County, Alabama. We're flying at an altitude of 2500 feet. Currently, there is a fair sky with little or no winds. We expect a smooth landing at our destination."

"How's my friend back there?" she asks an attendant in the rear of the airplane.

"He's doing fine, Ms. Pelligrini."

"Good. I didn't know if he'd get air sick or not."

#### **On the ground in Fairhope ---**

"They're pulling out towards Greeno."

Three clicks and one click for acknowledgement.

“Which direction,” Marcel inquires? “North or south?” “East. They’re going back to 4-Romeo-4.”

Marcel quickly looks at his iPad. He’s running a flight scheduling app. He enters 4R4. Then he shouts into the mic, “7 A.M. flight from Dallas. Hold one!”

He quickly searches the F.A.A. flight log for SkyExec Delta Robert Lima 5-2-7 Nora. His mouth drops open.

“Son of a... Stop the van! Stop that van,” Marcel shouts into the tactical mic.

Simultaneously, John and Matthew flip their switches and throw their visors in the down position, revealing the strobe lights flashing red and blue while the Whalen siren/klaxon wails it’s noisy, 120 decibel, attention-getting tune.

As soon as Masoud and Habib hear the sirens, Masoud guns the motor of the van. Regardless of the threat to life and limb, he swerves right from County Road 32 onto the asphalt roadway leading to H. L. Sonny Callahan Airport, 4-Romeo-4. The van leans dangerously to the left from the centrifugal force; but it maintains control as Masoud barks an order in Arabic to Habib. Habib, jumps to the rear of the van and is seen through the rear door windows manipulating the device.

Matthew is the first car behind the van. With every attempt to pass the van, Masoud veers into that direction to block the green Malibu. John is not far behind, driving the brown and white Chevy pickup.

### **6:59 A.M. – Learjet 85 ---**

“I’ve place the ‘Buckle Seat Belts’ sign in the lit position. Prepare for landing,” the captain announces over the intercom.

4-Romeo-4, this is SkyExec Delta Romeo Lima 5-2-7 November. We’re one half mile out approaching runway 19, over.

4-Romeo-4, this is SkyExec Delta Romeo Lima 5-2-7 November. We’re one half mile out approaching runway 19, over.

The two pilots know that this is a pilot-controlled airport with no tower; but they like to keep any flights in the area in-formed of their location to avoid possible issues.

### **7:00 A.M. – On the ground at the Sonny Callahan Airport -**

“Alla Akbar,” shouts Habib while he throws the switch. “Zzzzzt. Zzzzzt. Pop. Pop. Pop.”

Captain Renton Palmier immediately responds to the loss of electronics on the Learjet 85. The aircraft is 500 yards from the runway. They have no communications, instrumentation or other electronic controls. Albert Bourgeois, the second seat (co-pilot) barks, “What is the cause, Captain?”

“Shunt the power to auxiliary, Albert.” “Roger.”

The jet is 200 feet from the tarmac.

Immediately, Matthew’s motor shuts down. His lights and siren go dark and quiet. The same happens to John’s unit. The only control they have is to fight the steering without the power steering unit.

Marcel pulls up alongside and passes the two officers. He waves and smiles as he goes by them.

“What the heck,” Matthews shouts in astonishment?

Marcel to himself, *They still haven't figured it out. This old Pinto doesn't have computer chips. Computers weren't installed in cars until 1978. Hehee!*

He floors the gas pedal, pulls to the passenger side of the van, matches his left front fender with the right rear quarter panel of the van and gives the van a nudge hard enough to make it lose traction on the rear tires. Masoud, not familiar with tactical driving, loses control. The van overturns several times. It comes to rest on the driver's side.

### **7:00:35 A.M. – Learjet 85 ---**

The captain is still fighting the electrical loss, “Switch to battery backup!”

“Roger, Capitain.”

The executive jet is about to touch down.

### **On the tarmac ---**

Marcel slams on his brakes, jumps out of the Pinto, runs to the rear of the van, opens the doors and yanks wires from the electronic equipment.

Masoud reaches under his shirt for God knows what.

“Pow, pow! Pow, pow!” The loud cracks resound within the metal van as Marcel snaps off two rounds into each of the terrorists. Quickly he exits the vehicle and searches for the air-craft.

### **7:01 A.M. ---**

SkyExec is seen touching down onto a rural runway near the residential area in the southern part of Fairhope.

### **Learjet 85 ---**

“Mon Dieu! Merci beaucoup, mon Dieu! (My God! Thank you very much, my God!) Renton is grateful for the return of the power. Albert crosses himself without hesitation.

### **On the tarmac ---**

As the jet lands safely and makes a calm taxi back to the passenger buildings for embarkation, Marcel runs back to Matthew and John, who have already exited their vehicles with shocked looks upon their faces.

“How the heck did you keep going, Marcel?”

“Matthew, my Pinto is too old for today's technology. No computer chips. Why do you think we lost the war in Vietnam, besides the political reasons, brother?”

“Ha... Hahahahaaa!” John, Matthew and Marcel begin to laugh. Long, hard belly-laughs. After a minute or two, they settle down.

John, “Marcel, who or what was the target on that plane?”

Marcel gives him a great big ear-to-ear smile and responds... with raised eyebrows; but he doesn't tell them.”

Before Marcel could turn to walk away, they were belly-laughing again. Have you met a

detective who didn't like a good mystery?

### **Ono Island ---**

"Good work, Marcel. At least we have one less threat to deal with today. I appreciate your efforts," Robert responds proudly to his right hand man. "You better contact your re-source at N.S.A. He's been waiting for your call."

"Thanks, Robert. It wasn't just me. Detective Matthew James of the Daphne P.D. and Sergeant John Bigheart of the Fairhope Police were instrumental in assisting, sir."

"You're right. It's a shame we can't publicly acknowledge their efforts."

"Well, yes we can, sir."

Robert, stumped, looks at Marcel.

Marcel smiles and fills him in on his idea.

"Ha ha ha ha ha!" They laugh at the idea; but they agree that it is perfect for the situation.

### **Punta Clara Polo Game ---**

Every year the Point Clear Polo Tournament draws crowds from all over the United States. It is a charitable activity. All winnings (except those of side bets) go towards worthy causes. This year's event benefits the Swine Flu Foundation.

After the game ends and the awards ceremony is completed, there is a special presentation: "Ladies and gentlemen, that is, gentle men and those of you of the fairer sex. We are happy to present this year's celebrity guest. She is none other than the main female star of the television series, 'Norfolk NCIS.' Of course, that is a dead-pan give-away of our star and guest, Ms. Paula Pelligrini.

"Ms. Pelligrini brings with her another special star." "John, why are we at this uppity-up gathering?"

"Beats me, Matthew, Marcel said we had to be here. So here we are."

"Ms. Pelligrini, if you would?" The master of ceremonies points the actress towards the microphone.

"Thank you, Dr. Rutherford! It is an honor to be here. I must add, that if it weren't for your local police departments, you would be short two guests."

Matthew, "Oh, oh. You're kidding me?" he asks John. "No. I believe... let's let her finish."

"Please allow me to present two of Baldwin County's finest officers, Detective Matthew James of the Daphne Police Department and Sergeant John Bigheart of the Fairhope Police Department. These two officers bravely stopped two criminals from ruining our trip to your fair city and your most worthy event.

The two officers step up to the stage, make a short bow and waive to acknowledge the crowd then step off the stage.

"Our airplane had some mechanical problems while landing at your Callahan Airport..."

"Oh my. She doesn't know, eh, Matthew?" "Apparently not."

"... and, when we opened the cargo door, we discovered that our next guest was perfectly safe."

John and Matthew look at each other.

Two of the horse trainers lead a 700 pound pig onto the stage. The beautiful pig, with large black and white patches, balanced like artwork, adorned the porker. It wobbled onto the stage.

Matthew and John look at each other, almost with as much shock as that shown when their

vehicles stopped that eventful day.

“This is my prize pig that I’m putting up for auction to help the Swine Flu Foundation in conquering that dreaded disease.” “Mr. Auctioneer, please take your place and begin the bidding, would you?” Ms. Pelligrini walks over to the side of the stage to take her seat.

David Corn takes the position behind the microphone and begins.

“Today’s bidding will start at \$1000.00. Do I have one thousand dollars?”

“One thousand,” a gentleman in a white sear-sucker suit raises his hands.

“Do I have one thousand five hundred? One-five, one-five...”

“One thousand five hundred dollars,” the man in the blue polo jersey and blue short pants shouts.

“I have one thousand five hundred. Do I have two thousand, two, two...”

The lady in the pink summer dress with white gloves and large, white floppy sun hat declares, “Two thousand!”

“I have two, two, do I have three?”

Matthew shouts out, “What’s the name of the pig?”

A quick hush falls over the crowd. They have never had anyone stop the rapidity of the auctioneer in their entire history.

The auctioneer, Mr. Corn looks momentarily shocked; but he turns ever so politely over to Ms. Pelligrini.

She walks up to the microphone and announces...: “His name is Al A. Awkbard.”

With the question answered, the auctioneer continues with the bidding.

Matthew, “Who was the target? Paula Pelligrini or Al. A. Awkbard?”

John, “Pelligrini. She exemplifies federal law enforcement on that popular television series.”

“Nah. It’s got to be the pig. Al A. Awkbard is a play on Alla Akbar. Don’t you see that?”

“It’s Pelligrini.” “The pig.”

Matthew and John begin to snicker. The snickers turned into chuckles. As they were walking away, you know what returned....

They belly-laughed all the way to their cars.