



TSAS

canadian network for research on
terrorism, security and society

Working Paper Series

No. 18-03

Winter 2018

'Kidnapping for Ransom: An Analysis of Canadian Cases'

Muna Osman, and Josiah Witherspoon,

MA Candidates, NPSIA Carleton University

MunaOsman3@cmail.carleton.ca

josiahwitherspoon93@gmail.com



The Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security, and Society TSAS is supported as a national strategic initiative funded by SSHRC and Public Safety Canada, along with the following departments of the federal government:

- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- Canadian Security Intelligence Service
- Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada
- Correctional Services Canada
- Defence Research and Development Canada
- Global Affairs Canada • Security Intelligence Review Committee
- Office of the Communications Security Establishment Commissioner

TSAS also receives financial support from several Canadian universities, including the University of British Columbia and the University of Waterloo. Views expressed in this manuscript are those of the author(s) alone.

For more information, contact the Director of the Network, Lorne Dawson, Department of Sociology and Legal Studies, University of Waterloo (ldawson@uwaterloo.ca) or Elizabeth Ford Project Manager of TSAS ec2ford@uwaterloo.ca.



Kidnapping for Ransom: Why are Canadians targeted?

Introduction

Since 2001, thirty Canadian nationals have been kidnapped and held for ransom by terrorist groups while traveling or working abroad. This paper explores two questions relevant to policymakers and analysts assigned to kidnapping for ransom (KFR) files: why are Canadians targeted in kidnapping operations by terrorist groups; and what options are available to the Government of Canada moving forward? This paper will focus on six KFR operations carried out by Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Taliban, and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) between 2001 and 2017. The selection of these groups is based on our ability to attribute well-documented KFR cases to them. The paper will therefore consist of an analysis of the terrorist groups themselves, and six KFR cases attributed to these groups that involve Canadian nationals. In comparing the terrorist entities and the respective KFR cases, commonalities and differences will be highlighted, as well as relevant trends and oddities. This two-part analysis is intended to produce findings that will assist in answering the aforementioned research questions.

Defining KFR:

According to the Canadian Incident Database (CIDB) and Global Terrorism Database (GTD) codebooks, KFR is defined as an “act whose primary objective is to take control of hostages for the purpose of achieving a political objective through concessions or through disruption of normal operations”¹. KFR is thus distinguished from “barricade incidents”, as the latter does not involve the relocation of hostages. In operational terms, KFR is a lucrative form of terrorist financing. The United Nations (UN) estimates that terrorist groups have acquired approximately \$120 million in ransom payments between 2004 and 2012.²

¹ The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), Global Terrorism Database, “GTD Codebook,” June 2017, www.start.umd.edu/gtd/downloads/Codebook.pdf.

² “At UN meeting, prevention cited as key factor in fight against terrorism-Related kidnapping.” UN News Center, United Nations, November 24, 2014, www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=49434#.WaTW7JOGOt8



General Trends: 2001-2017

Twenty-five KFR incidents involving thirty Canadian nationals have occurred between 2001 and 2017, and from these cases, trends can be identified. Firstly, there are clear geographic hotspots where KFR incidents occur. According to the GTD, these hotspots include South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa. While South America was a previous hotspot, KFR activity decreased after 2001 and heavily increased within Southeast Asia in 2008 and again in 2013.³ Moreover, seven of the twenty-five KFR cases within this timeframe occurred in Iraq between 2004 and 2005 (following the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime), and another seven cases occurred within Libya, Somalia, Niger, Sudan, South Sudan and Cameroon collectively.⁴ Secondly, most captives between 2001 and 2017 were not killed by their captors; 50% were released, and in some cases this was the result of "humanitarian gestures".⁵ Thirdly, a total of four KFR cases were motivated by a suspicion that the victim was conducting espionage against the perpetrator group.⁶ Lastly, two victims were ex-patriots who returned to Iraq after 2003 with a hope to capitalize on a new political and economic climate by establishing an import-export business.⁷

The Taliban

The first terrorist organization this paper will explore is the Taliban. Founded in 1994, the Taliban is a transnational militant group that adheres to a conservative form of

³ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), *Global Terrorism Database*, 2016, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd>

⁴ Iraq cases include: Fadi Fadel (2004); Mohammed Rifat (2004); Naji al-Kuwaiti (2004); Scott Taylor (2004); Fairuz Yamulky (2004); Zair Meelwali (2005); James Loney & Harmeet Sooden (2005). "Canadians Held Hostage | Series | Toronto Star." *The Star*, 2016, www.thestar.com/news/canada/held-hostage.html.

⁵ Five of the thirty Canadians were killed or died in captivity. Fifteen of the thirty Canadians were released. The Taliban after releasing Colin Rutherford alleged their actions were a "humanitarian gesture" and a symbol of good will. "Canadians Held Hostage | Series | Toronto Star," *The Star*, 2016, www.thestar.com/news/canada/held-hostage.html.

⁶ Canadian victims who were targeted as suspected spies include: Ken Hechtman (2001, Afghanistan-Pakistan border); Scott Taylor (2004, Iraq); Fadi Fadel (2004, Iraq); Colin Rutherford (2010, Afghanistan). *Ibid.*

⁷ The two Canadians who returned to Iraq to establish an import-export business were Naji al-Kuwaiti and Zair Meelwali. "Canadians Held Hostage | Series | Toronto Star."



Islam called Deobandism.⁸ Its main objective is to expel all foreign militaries from Afghanistan and reintroduce the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan; ostensibly achieved by overthrowing the central government.⁹

Since the death of Mullah Mansour in March 2016, the group has been led by Mullah Haibatullah Akhunzada, and it operates both in Afghanistan and Pakistan.¹⁰ Mullah Akhunzada aims to reunify the organization following declarations of autonomy from the Quetta Shura or Council of Leaders by several groups between 2008 and 2009.¹¹ However, most of these autonomous groups appear to regularly consult and coordinate their operations with the Quetta Shura.¹² The Taliban experienced further internal discord following the appointment of Mullah Mansour in 2015 as Mansour lacked both the religious legitimacy of his predecessors, including Mullah Omar.¹³

The Taliban's activities include: ambushes, suicide bombings, assassinations and kidnappings, levied at foreign security forces, the Afghan government, private citizens and civil society.¹⁴ In order to impose discipline within its ranks, the Taliban began dispensing core codes of conduct called *layehas* from 2006 onward.¹⁵ *Layehas* since 2009 have consistently prohibited the practice of KFR, implying that "senior leadership is aware of the negative reactions felt by local communities regarding kidnappings."¹⁶

⁸ Deobandism seeks to adhere to the practices of the Prophet Muhammed and preaches that Muslims have become over attached to material things, too Westernized, and have thus digressed from the customs of the Prophet. "Deobandi Islam," Global Security, last modified May 24, 2016, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/intro/islam-deobandi.htm>.

⁹ "Taliban," *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism*, February 17, 2017, <http://janes.ihs.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/Janes/Display/1320754>.

¹⁰ Shereena Qazi, "Afghan Taliban: Haibatullah Akhunzada named new Leader," *Al Jazeera*, May 25, 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/05/afghan-taliban-haibatullah-akhunzada-leader-160525045301080.html>

¹¹ "Taliban."

¹² "Taliban."

¹³ Mullah Mansour also allegedly released messages posing as Mullah Omar following his death as it had at the time not been confirmed. Qazi.

¹⁴ "Taliban."

¹⁵ Kate Clark, "The Layeha," *Afghanistan Analysts Network* (2011): 1, <http://www.afghanvoice.org.uk/avfm1/pdfs/LayehaMain.pdf>.

¹⁶ Thomas H. Johnson and Matthew C. DuPee, "Analysing the New Taliban Code of Conduct (Layeha): An Assessment of Changing Perspectives and Strategies of the Afghan Taliban," *Central Asian Survey* 31(2012): 82.



And yet the number of KFRs have continued to rise, particularly during and after the breakup of the Quetta Shura. Private civilians continue to represent the bulk of the Taliban's targets, with 270 cases of KFR spanning 2001 to 2017, compared to only four cases of kidnapped Canadian nationals over the same period.¹⁷ These cases include Ken Hechtman (2001), Beverley Giesbrecht (2008), Colin Rutherford (2010), and Joshua Boyle (2010). From 2008 onwards there was a visible surge in the incidence of KFR, likely related to the group's fragmentation, which peaked in 2015 when Mullah Omar's death was officially confirmed.¹⁸ The Taliban also has a close relationship with the Haqqani Network, an autonomous branch of the Taliban founded in the late 1970s.¹⁹ According to the GTD, the Haqqani Network is responsible for at least 10 cases of KFR between 2008 and 2016, including the Joshua Boyle case in 2010.²⁰ The Taliban has in the past relied on Qatar's intermediation both in KFR cases and peace talks with the Afghan and U.S. government.²¹

¹⁷ *Global Terrorism Database*,

https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=&end_yearonly=&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&asmSelect0=&country=4&country=153&asmSelect1=&perpetrator=652&perpetrator=20529&attack=6&dtp2=all&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=

¹⁸ *Global Terrorism Database*,

https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=&end_yearonly=&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&asmSelect0=&country=4&country=153&asmSelect1=&perpetrator=652&perpetrator=20529&attack=6&dtp2=all&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=

¹⁹ "Haqqani Network," *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism*, March 7, 2014, <https://janes-ihs-com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/Janes/Display/jwita130-jwit>

²⁰ *Global Terrorism Database*,

https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=2000&end_yearonly=2016&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&country=4&country=153&perpetrator=20525&attack=6&dtp2=all&success=yes&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=

²¹ "Taliban."



The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)

Founded in 1991 by Abudurajek Janjalani,²² the ASG is an Islamist separatist organization located in the Philippines.²³ It seeks to establish an Islamic state for the Moro people, a Filipino Muslim minority located in the Mindanao region.²⁴ The ASG emerged as a splinter group of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and performed bombings and assassinations throughout the 1990's in order to gain recognition.²⁵ During its early stages, the ASG was heavily influenced and assisted by Al-Qaeda, in the form of funding and training.²⁶ However, following the death of Janjalani in 1998, the ASG fractured into two factions and no longer received this assistance.²⁷ This fragmentation resulted in deteriorated discipline within the ASG, and evidently transformed the organization. The ASG became desperate, and engaged in KFR primarily for the purpose of obtaining large sums of money that would sustain the group's survival.²⁸ In its KFR activities, the ASG targets mostly fishing ships, oil tankers, ferries, yachts (categorized as 'maritime' in the GTD Codebook), and private citizens, including foreign nationals.²⁹

The ASG was limited in its KFR activities between 2001 and 2006,³⁰ despite a successful KFR operation in 2000 that targeted twenty-one people from a Malaysian resort.³¹ The ASG's low KFR activity between 2001 and 2006 is likely due to robust counter-terrorism (CT) efforts by U.S. forces and the Armed Forces of Philippines

²² "Abu Sayyaf Group," National Counterterrorism Center, n.d. Web. 24 June 2017.

<http://www.nctc.gov/site/groups/asg.html>.

²³ Billye G. Hutchison, "Abu Sayyaf," *The Counterproliferation Papers: Future Warfare Series No. 49* (Sept. 2009). USAF Counterproliferation Center, May 25, 2017, www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA518942.

²⁴ Daniel Cassman, "Abu Sayyaf Group." *Abu Sayyaf Group | Mapping Militant Organizations*, web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/152#note3

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Cassman.

²⁷ Cassman.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). (2016). *Global Terrorism Database [Data file]*. Retrieved from <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd>

³¹ Affairs, GMA News and Public. "Abu Sayyaf kidnappings, bombings and other attacks." *GMA News Online*, www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/content/154797/abu-sayyaf-kidnappings-bombings-and-other-attacks/story/.



Operation Enduring Freedom, which heavily damaged the already fragile ASG network.³² However, ASG's KFR activities later spiked at two points after 2006.

The first spike occurred between 2007 and 2008 inclusive.³³ This uptick is perhaps the result of the diminished operational tempo of Joint Special Operations Task Force – Philippines (JSOTF-P) in mid-2007.³⁴ From 2007 onward, the ASG primarily engaged in KFR activities and increased its targeting of foreign nationals, specifically tourists and foreign workers.³⁵ The ASG launched several KFR operations between 2013 and 2016, and reached a high of twenty-five cases in 2014.³⁶ This surge may be attributed to Isnilon Hapilon's pledge of allegiance to the Islamic State in 2014,³⁷ an increase in tourism to the Philippines, and the withdrawal of specialized U.S. CT forces in the region.³⁸ Additionally, the increase in KFR activity between 2013 and 2016 may be due to the lack of Filipino military experience in CT.³⁹

According to the GTD, the ASG has been involved in 139 KFR incidents between 2001 and 2016.⁴⁰ Two of the 139 cases involved Canadian nationals, and the ASG has kidnapped a total of three Canadians within this timeframe. They are: Pierre Belanger (2001), Robert Hall (2015), and John Ridsdel (2015).⁴¹

Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)

Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is the third terrorist group engaged in KFR that this paper will focus on. Our paper concentrates on Al-Qaeda affiliate AQIM,

³² Cassman.

³³ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). (2016). Global Terrorism Database [Data file]. Retrieved from <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd>

³⁴ Linda Robinson, et al. US Special Operations Forces in the Philippines 2001-2014. RAND Corporation, 2016.

³⁵ Cassman.

³⁶ In 2015 alone, the ASG was linked to the kidnappings of a Norwegian, a Korean, two Canadians, and two Malaysians. "Kidnapping risk on the rise in the Philippines | GRI," Global Risk Insights, April 9, 2016, globalriskinsights.com/2016/04/kidnapping-risk-philippines/

³⁷ Global Terrorism Index, 2016, pp. 76

³⁸ "Philippine Statistics Authority," Philippine Statistics Authority, June 8, 2017, psa.gov.ph/tourism-satellite-accounts-press-releases

³⁹ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). (2016). Global Terrorism Database. Retrieved from <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd>

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.



rather than the core organization, as the latter has engaged less in KFR as a tactic than its affiliates.⁴² Similar to the Taliban, AQIM is a transnational militant Islamist group whose objectives are to overthrow the central governments in Mali, Niger, Algeria, Libya, and Mauritania, and govern these states according to Sharia law.⁴³ AQIM was formerly known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), which was founded in Algeria in 1998.⁴⁴ In 2006, the GSPC merged with Al Qaeda to form AQIM as a result of the “monetary and strategic advantages it conferred on each organization.”⁴⁵ The organization is led by Emir Abdel Malek Droukdel in Algeria and supported by a *shura* or council of elders. Similar to the Taliban, AQIM is divided into *kataibs*, or battalions, which are each led by local emirs functioning independently from the larger organization, but sharing identical primary objectives.⁴⁶ According to Jane’s, northeastern Mali represents a key theatre for KFR as “the majority of Western hostages seized were held in this area.”⁴⁷

Beginning in 2008, the number of KFR incidents spiked across all countries where AQIM was operating,⁴⁸ with French and Spanish nationals as favored targets.⁴⁹ Significantly, there were several discrepancies between the GTD and other sources consulted on the number of KFR cases perpetrated by AQIM, particularly those

⁴² AQIM and former affiliate Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) have used KFR more extensively than the core Al-Qaeda (AQ) organization. However, core AQ leader Ayman Zawahiri has encouraged the practice of KFR since 2011, “Zawahiri called on Muslims to “capture citizens of the countries that wage wars against Muslims” in order to force the release of captive Al-Qaeda militants around the world.” “Al-Qaeda,” *Jane’s World Insurgency and Terrorism*, July 21, 2017, <https://janes-ihs-com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/WorldInsurgencyTerrorism/Display/1320791#1979-1989>

⁴³ “Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb,” *Jane’s World Insurgency and Terrorism*, October 22, 2014, <https://janes-ihs-com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/Janes/Display/1320774>

⁴⁴ “Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.”

⁴⁵ “At the time of their alliance, the GSPC had established itself as one of the wealthiest terror groups with coffers of “tens of millions of dollars”. “Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb,” *Mapping Militant Organizations*, *Stanford University*, July 1, 2016, <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/65>

⁴⁶ “Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.”

⁴⁷ “Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.”

⁴⁸ This includes Niger, Mali, Algeria, Mauritania, and Libya.

⁴⁹ This is likely due to the number of French and Spanish aid groups operating in North Africa. “Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.”



involving foreign nationals. The GTD tends to provide a modest number of KFR cases⁵⁰ attributed to AQIM, while other sources suggest that between 2003 and 2011 there were 63 Westerners kidnapped by the group.⁵¹ Notably, AQIM is responsible for only one KFR case involving Canadian nationals; that of diplomats Robert Fowler and Louis Guay. Of the three groups this paper focuses on, AQIM is the only group which has successfully kidnapped two high profile Canadian nationals. Conversely, AQIM is responsible for a single KFR case involving Canadian nationals. This, along with conflicting GTD data makes it difficult to definitively assert that foreign nationals including Canadian nationals are AQIM's preferred targets. Sources also diverge on whether KFR previously and/or currently serves as AQIM's primary source of funding, with estimates of total payments ranging from 50 million to over 70 million USD.⁵² European governments, not including Britain, allegedly represent the most common payers when their foreign nationals have been kidnapped in the past.⁵³ AQIM, like the Taliban, has made use of intermediaries in their KFR cases, including Mustafa Ould Limam Chafi, who also allegedly took part in the negotiation for Robert Fowler and Louis Guay's release in 2009.⁵⁴

Chosen Cases

Of the six cases chosen for this paper, three were carried out by the Taliban, two by ASG and one by AQIM. Our dataset was curated based on the ability to directly attribute KFR cases involving Canadian nationals to terror organizations. In addition, our dataset concentrates on terrorist organizations which have extensively engaged in

⁵⁰ An advanced GTD search found only 10 cases of KFR between 2001-2017.

⁵¹ Ricardo Rene Laremont, "Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: Terrorism and Counterterrorism in the Sahel," *African Security* 4(2011): 254.

⁵² According to Jane's "Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb", total funds reached 50 million. Vivienne Walt, "Terrorist Hostage Situations: Rescue or Ransom?" *TIME*, October 12, 2010, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2024420,00.html>.

⁵³ Walt.

⁵⁴ Wolfram Lacher, "Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region," *Carnegie Europe*, September 13, 2012, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/2012/09/13/organized-crime-and-conflict-in-sahel-sahara-region-pub-49360>



KFR as a tactic as they ostensibly represent a greater threat to Canadian nationals and other foreign nationals. Of 25 KFR cases with Canadian victims, the Taliban was responsible for the largest number of cases (4), followed by the ASG (3).⁵⁵ As mentioned, AQIM has only been linked to a single case of KFR with a Canadian target. Nevertheless, this case was included in our dataset because: it involved the kidnapping of two high-profile Canadians, AQIM has targeted a considerable number of Western nationals, and the case could offer valuable insight on the question of why Canadians are targeted by terror organizations. The remaining cases were excluded from our dataset because the groups responsible were not representative enough of our data pool or because the groups have since been disbanded and no longer constitute an explicit threat to Canadians. This includes the well-known case of Amanda Lindhout who was kidnapped by Hizbul al-Islam in 2008, along with Australian photojournalist Nigel Brennan, and their translator in Somalia.⁵⁶ Hizbul al-Islam was responsible for a single case of KFR involving a Canadian national and disbanded in 2013. Thus, the case was not representative of our data pool nor is the group still an active threat.⁵⁷

On November 25, 2001, Ken Hechtman, a freelance journalist, was kidnapped by the Taliban after he was caught illegally crossing the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.⁵⁸ Hechtman was accused of espionage and subsequently held captive for approximately six days with no ransom demands. He was eventually released on December 1, 2001 after the Canadian government pressured Pakistani officials to secure his release and proved that he was innocent of committing espionage.⁵⁹ This was one of the shortest cases of KFR of a foreign national carried out by the Taliban, potentially due to the robust campaign led by the Canadian government to secure Hechtman's release.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Canadians Held Hostage | Series | Toronto Star.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ "Hizbul Islam," Mapping Militant Organizations, *Stanford University*, June 20, 2016, <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/113>

⁵⁸ Jonathan Steele, "From Rookie Reporter to Taliban Prisoner," *The Guardian*, December 3, 2001, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/dec/03/afghanistan.jonathansteele>

⁵⁹ "Canadian Journalist Released by the Taliban," *CBC News*, December 2, 2001, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/canadian-journalist-released-by-taliban-1.294570>

⁶⁰ Ibid.



Colin Rutherford, a Canadian who travelled as a tourist to Afghanistan, was kidnapped and also accused of espionage by the Taliban on November 4, 2010.⁶¹ Unlike Hechtman, however, Rutherford was held for nearly six years with no ransom demands before being released in January 2016. There is no evidence to suggest that the Canadian government led as vigorous a campaign for Rutherford as they did Hechtman. Rutherford's release was ultimately secured by Supreme Leader Mullah Mansour, who allegedly ordered his release on the grounds of "humanitarian sympathy and sublime Islamic ethics."⁶² However, there has been speculation that this was intended to be a symbol of openness to negotiation, given that peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban had also begun in 2016.⁶³

Joshua Boyle, another Canadian who traveled to Afghanistan as a tourist, was kidnapped sometime in October 2012 along with his pregnant American wife, Caitlyn Coleman.⁶⁴ Unlike the other two cases, the Haqqani network was collaborating with the Taliban in kidnapping and holding Boyle and Coleman captive.⁶⁵ Moreover, in this case there was a ransom demand to release Haqqani network members being held by the Afghan government that had been sentenced to death.⁶⁶ Boyle, Coleman and their two children raised in captivity, were rescued by Pakistani troops on October 11, 2017 after receiving actionable intelligence from US officials that the family was being held in Pakistan.⁶⁷ CIA Director Mike Pompeo stated that Boyle and his family had been held

⁶¹ "Canadian Colin Rutherford Freed after 5 Years in Taliban Captivity," *CBC News*, January 12, 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/taliban-captive-colin-rutherford-canadian-released-1.3398868>

⁶² "Canadian Colin Rutherford Freed after 5 Years in Taliban Captivity."

⁶³ John Paul Tasker, "Taliban Release of Colin Rutherford Could be Linked to Peace Talks," *CBC News*, January 13, 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/colin-rutherford-released-afghanistan-taliban-1.3399377>

⁶⁴ Catherine Morris, "Canada's Forgotten Child Hostages," *CBC News*, May 16, 2017, <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2017/05/16/canadas-forgotten-child-hostages.html>

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Tasker.

⁶⁷ A CIA drone reportedly captured footage of a woman believed to be Caitlan Coleman and her children in a militant camp before the Boyle family was moved by their captors across the Afghan border into Pakistan. Adam Goldman and Eric Schmitt, "If Pakistan failed to free Boyle family SEAL Team 6 would have, U.S. officials say," *The Star*, October 17, 2017, <https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2017/10/17/navy-seals-were-in-position-to-move-in-if-pakistan-failed-to-free-hostages.html>



inside Pakistan for five years prior to October 11, 2017.⁶⁸ The US has been critical of Pakistan's failure to enforce effective CT measures against the Haqqani network that operates within their border, and details of the Pakistani rescue operation have been disputed by Boyle and Coleman since their return to North America as well as by Pakistani authorities.⁶⁹

Pierre Belanger, who had been living in the Philippines for approximately 10 years before his kidnapping, was kidnapped by the ASG on November 4, 2001 in Zamboanga, Philippines.⁷⁰ Shortly after being captured, Belanger's brother received a call from an individual claiming to be an ASG member. The caller demanded \$160,000 for Belanger's release.⁷¹ Belanger was held captive until December 23, 2001, when he was rescued by Philippine special-forces working with Canadian authorities.⁷² The raid that rescued Belanger also killed two of his captors.⁷³

Robert Fowler and Louis Guay were captured by AQIM in December 2008 while on a UN diplomatic mission to Niger.⁷⁴ Fowler and Guay were ideal targets of AQIM given their occupations in the UN⁷⁵ and mission to negotiate a peace deal between the Tuareg rebels and Niger government.⁷⁶ Fowler and Guay were held captive for 130 days

⁶⁸ Reuters, and David Brunnstrom and Jonathan Landay. "Boyle family was held inside Pakistan for five years, contrary to reports: CIA chief," *National Post*, October 19, 2017, <http://nationalpost.com/news/world/boyle-family-was-held-inside-pakistan-for-five-years-contrary-to-reports-cia-chief>.

⁶⁹ Alex McKeen, "What we know about the rescue of Canadian Joshua Boyle, his wife and their three children in Pakistan," *Thestar.com*, October 12, 2017, <https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2017/10/12/what-we-know-about-the-rescue-of-canadian-joshua-boyle-his-wife-and-their-three-children-in-pakistan.html>.

⁷⁰ "Canadians Held Hostage | Series | Toronto Star," *The Star*, 2016, accwww.thestar.com/news/canada/held-hostage.html.

⁷¹ CIDB - Canadian Incident DataBase, extremism.ca/details.aspx?EID=14527

⁷² Reports, From Times Wire. "Police Rescue Canadian from Kidnapping Gang." *Los Angeles Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, December 24, 2001, articles.latimes.com/2001/dec/24/news/mn-17741.

⁷³ "Canadians Held Hostage | Series | Toronto Star."

⁷⁴ *Ibid*.

⁷⁵ AQIM has targeted the UN several times prior to the kidnapping of Fowler and Guay. Mark Leon Goldberg, "How the UN Became an Al Qaeda Target," *UN Dispatch*, September 1, 2011, www.undispatch.com/how-the-un-became-an-al-qaeda-target/.

⁷⁶ The Tuareg rebels have aided in some of AQIM's criminal activities including the smuggling of drugs but have also been the victims of AQIM attacks. "2 Canadian diplomats freed after 4-Month hostage ordeal in Africa." *CBC News*, *CBC/Radio Canada*, April 22, 2009, www.cbc.ca/news/world/2-canadian-diplomats-freed-after-4-month-hostage-ordeal-in-africa-1.838759



by AQIM, and released on April 22, 2009.⁷⁷ It is alleged that their release followed an exchange of four AQIM terrorists from a Mali prison and a payment of \$1.1 million USD, a deal in which the Canadian government claims no involvement.⁷⁸ Importantly, Fowler's wife was not receiving clear updates regarding Fowler's status throughout the ordeal, only learning that Fowler was still alive from top UN officials after visiting UN headquarters in New York.⁷⁹

John Ridsdel and Robert Hall were kidnapped by the ASG on September 21, 2015 from the Holiday Ocean View Samal Resort in the Philippines.⁸⁰ In addition to Ridsdel and Hall, two other foreign nationals were also kidnapped: Kjartan Sekkingstad, and Hall's girlfriend Teresita Flor. The ASG demanded an exorbitant ransom and threatened to kill the captives if it was not paid by the specified deadline, during which time newly elected Prime Minister Justin Trudeau reiterated Canada's no-ransom policy. The ordeal came to a close when Ridsdel was beheaded on April 25, 2016 and Hall was beheaded on June 13, 2016, with Flor and Sekkingstad released on June 24, 2016 following a ransom payment.⁸¹

Why Are Canadians Targeted?

Our research suggests that, overall, Canadians are not targeted because of their nationality, but rather because they find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time. This includes three of our six cases: Belanger, Ridsdel and Hall, and Boyle. Additionally, Canadian nationals' occupations – in these cases comprising a journalist, author, pilot, mechanic, aid worker, businessperson, diplomat and lawyer – seem to influence the risk

⁷⁷ "Canadians Held Hostage | Series | Toronto Star," *The Star*, 2016, www.thestar.com/news/canada/held-hostage.html

⁷⁸ "The secret Mali deal to release two Canadians," *The Globe and Mail*, March 26, 2017, <https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/the-secret-mali-deal-to-release-two-canadians/article4248750/?ref=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.theglobeandmail.com&>

⁷⁹ Freeze, Colin. "Freed diplomat castigates Ottawa for official veil of silence." *The Globe and Mail*, March 26, 2017, www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/freed-diplomat-castigates-ottawa-for-official-veil-of-silence/article4182714/

⁸⁰ "Canadians Held Hostage | Series | Toronto Star." *The Star*, 2016, www.thestar.com/news/canada/held-hostage.html

⁸¹ "Canadians Held Hostage | Series | Toronto Star."



of them being targeted, rather than their nationality.⁸² For example, as UN workers, Fowler and Guay were high value targets to AQIM because of their occupation, rather than their Canadian nationality. Canadians who find themselves in high-risk areas may also be targeted because the terrorist group believes they are foreign spies, as in two of our six cases: Hechtman and Rutherford, both separately captured separately by the Taliban. Ultimately, in comparison to kidnapped nationals from other Western states, the threat level for Canadians is considerably lower, particularly in regard to the three groups explored in this paper.

No-Ransom Policy: The Merits and Shortcomings

Canada, like the United States and the United Kingdom, has a strict no-ransom policy. Such a policy aims to deter terror groups from attempting to exert pressure on these states by kidnapping their nationals, and to make nationals from these states less attractive targets. Our research indicates that Canadians are largely not targeted for their nationality, which begs the question of whether a Canadian no-ransom policy is necessary? This section outlines important considerations related to the merits and shortcomings of Canada's no-ransom policy. The first of which is the lack of robust evidence indicative of an effective and successful no-ransom policy. Between 2001 and 2017, thirty Canadian nationals have been kidnapped for ransom.⁸³ Furthermore, American and Briton nationals have all been kidnapped despite the fact that their countries have openly declared their no-ransom policies. This suggests that terror groups engage in KFR operations against foreign nationals because: they are confident of their ability to force most states to pay ransoms in exchange for their nationals, or the KFR

⁸² In order of occupation listed: journalist (Mellissa Fung, Amanda Lindhout, Ken Hechtman, Scott Taylor), author (Robert Young Pelton), pilot and mechanic (Gilles Pregent, Jay Riddell), aid worker (Fadi Fadel, James Loney, Harmeet Singh Sooden, Stephanie Jodoin, Steven Dennis, Qurat-Ul-Ain Sadozai, Sister Gilberte Bussiere, Laura Archer), businessmen/women (Naji al-Kuwaiti, Fairuz Yamulky, Zaid Meerwali, Gernot Wober), diplomat (Robert Fowler, Louis Guay), lawyer (Carl Campeau).

⁸³ Canadians Held Hostage | Series | Toronto Star," *The Star*, 2016, www.thestar.com/news/canada/held-hostage.html.



operations are for political purposes and the groups aim to “create a climate of fear” regardless of any financial gain.⁸⁴

A study from the Combatting Terrorism Centre found that “there is no strong empirical support of nationality-specific targeting among the larger universe of jihadist groups.”⁸⁵ Consequently, if indeed terror groups are broadly targeting foreign nationals in spite of whether their state governments are likely pay the ransom, then Canada’s no-ransom policy has no major effect on the incidence of KFR operations against Canadians. Additionally, employers and insurance companies have proved willing to pay ransom demands to secure the safe release of foreign nationals which can further encourage terror organizations seeking financial gain to target foreign nationals.⁸⁶ The cases of Robert Fowler, Louis Guay, and U.S. Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl also illustrate terror organizations can successfully leverage their captives to exert pressures on states with strict no-ransom policies.⁸⁷ As Canada and its allies have reportedly failed to consistently uphold their no-ransom policies, these policies lose their deterrence effect on terrorist organizations engaging in the practice of KFR. Furthermore, while Canadians on average appear to be less attractive targets than their Western counterparts, it is difficult to prove causality between this phenomenon and Canada’s no-ransom policy.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ James J.F. Forest, “Global Trends in Kidnapping By Terrorist Groups,” *Global Change, Security and Security* (2012): 322.

⁸⁵ Ashifa Kassam, “Should governments pay ransoms? For families of hostages, it’s complicated,” *The Guardian*, June 17, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/17/governments-pay-ransoms-hostages-kidnappers-terrorists-complicated-canada-us>

⁸⁶ Kassam.

⁸⁷ “The secret Mali deal to release two Canadians,” *The Globe and Mail*, March 26, 2017, <https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/the-secret-mali-deal-to-release-two-canadians/article4248750/?ref=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.theglobeandmail.com&>. Jeremy Diamond, “House report accuses Obama of violating law in Bergdahl exchange,” *CNN*, December 10, 2015, <https://www.cnn.com/2015/12/09/politics/taliban-5-bowe-bergdahl-congress-report/index.html>

⁸⁸ “The United States had the most hostages taken since 2001, with 225, followed by Italy with 148, France with 143, and the United Kingdom with 137.” Peter Bergen, “American hostages more likely to die than others from the West,” *CNN*, January 8, 2017, <https://www.cnn.com/2017/01/08/opinions/us-hostages-worse-off-bergen-mellon/index.html>



Over the last two decades, five Canadian nationals have been killed or died in captivity after being kidnapped.⁸⁹ Empirical evidence suggests that ransom payments are linked to higher rates of hostages' survival or their release.⁹⁰ The families of former hostages have argued that Canada should not negotiate ransoms with terror organizations, but they also contend that its no-ransom policy makes it difficult for families to privately negotiate with terror groups for the release of their relative.⁹¹ The logic behind Canada's no-ransom policy was that ransom payments ultimately sustain the terror organizations Canada and its allies seek to defeat, making ransom payments counterproductive for larger counterterrorism efforts.⁹² Canada's policy holds merit for trying to combat a form of terrorist financing, but faces a shortcoming for further incumbering families who seek to personally negotiate the safe release of their relative.

It is virtually impossible to protect all Canadians from KFR as Canadians frequently travel to KFR regional hotspots, such as MENA and Southeast Asia, and the state cannot easily track all Canadians travelling to these hotspots or simply going overseas. In addition, kidnappings can also go unreported; approximately 60 to 70% of kidnappings of American nationals have gone unreported.⁹³ But Canada's no-ransom policy at minimum offers a somewhat cohesive government-wide policy response to the practice of KFR.

A no-ransom policy can be misinterpreted as a refusal to negotiate with the terror groups or criminal organizations holding Canadian nationals captives. However, the

⁸⁹ "Canadians Held Hostage | Series | Toronto Star," *The Star*, 2016, www.thestar.com/news/canada/held-hostage.html.

⁹⁰ Rukini Callimachi, "Before Killing James Foley, ISIS Demanded Ransom from U.S.," *New York Times*, August 20, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/21/world/middleeast/isis-pressed-for-ransom-before-killing-james-foley.html>

⁹¹ Amanda Lindhout, "I owe my life to those who paid my ransom. But should Ottawa pay ransoms? No," *National Post*, April 29, 2016, <http://nationalpost.com/news/canada/i-owe-my-life-to-the-people-who-paid-my-ransom-but-should-our-government-pay-ransoms-no-i-dont-think-so>

⁹² Peter Zimonjic, "Trudeau says Canada 'does not and will not pay ransom to terrorists,'" *CBC News*, April 26, 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trudeau-kananaskis-cabinet-retreat-1.3553768>

⁹³ "Terrorist Financing: Kidnapping, Antiquities Trafficking, and Private Donations" Hearing before the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Non-proliferation, and Trade of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 114th Congress 1st Session, November 27, 2015, <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA18/20151117/104202/HHRG-114-FA18-Transcript-20151117.pdf>



negotiation process does not always necessitate a state's offer and the receipt of concessions. In four KFR cases, Canadian nationals were safely released through government negotiations with either the host countries or the terrorist organizations.⁹⁴ Opening dialogue channels with captors can offer an opportunity to express grievances which may appease captors enough to release their hostages. It can offer valuable opportunities for collecting intelligence, on such things as the terror group's durability, membership, resources. It can help establish who the main interlocutors are as well.⁹⁵ This information can in turn be used to guide decision-making on how to better secure the release of kidnapped nationals or to stall groups while rescue operations are mounted. Four of thirty kidnapped Canadians were rescued either by coalition forces, state forces, or a local force, which indicates the value of local actors in KFR cases.⁹⁶ It is important to note, that based on empirical evidence rescue operations can lead to the deaths of hostages. But in the case of Canadian kidnapped nationals, all rescue operations have been successful.⁹⁷ Hence Canada's no-ransom policy holds value depending on which tools or strategies are used in conjunction with the policy.

Strategies: International and Domestic

KFR has appeared on the G7 and G20 agendas since 2013. Further, in 2016 Prime Minister Trudeau initiated a campaign within the G20 to pressure G7 leaders to stop the practice of paying kidnappers.⁹⁸ The G20 summit in 2017 reportedly produced a communique on what leaders have been able to agree upon as a satisfactory response to

⁹⁴ Canadians Held Hostage | Series | Toronto Star," *The Star*, 2016, www.thestar.com/news/canada/held-hostage.html.

⁹⁵ Todd Sandler and Daniel G. Arce, "Terrorist Signalling and the Value of Intelligence," *British Journal of Political Science* 37(2007): 575.

⁹⁶ Canadians Held Hostage | Series | Toronto Star," *The Star*, 2016, www.thestar.com/news/canada/held-hostage.html.

⁹⁷ Zoe Flood, "Two French hostages killed by al-Qaeda kidnappers during failed rescue attempt," *The Telegraph*, January 9, 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/niger/8248977/Two-French-hostages-killed-by-al-Qaeda-kidnappers-during-failed-rescue-attempt.html>

⁹⁸ Levon Sevunts, "Trudeau 'encouraged' by G7 pledges on Ransom Payments," *Radio Canada International*, May 27, 2016, <http://www.rcinet.ca/en/2016/05/27/justin-trudeau-g7-pledges-no-ransom-payments/>



KFR of their nationals.⁹⁹ However, neither the G7 nor G20 have been able to secure consistent and comprehensive pledges from their member states not to pay ransoms to terrorist organizations.¹⁰⁰ The UN also adopted Resolution 2133 in 2014, which essentially reaffirms the commitment of member states to preventing kidnappings and securing the release of hostages without any payment or acquiescence to the terrorist group involved.¹⁰¹

The US has explored the value of unilateral or multilateral sanctions against states which pay ransoms to terrorist groups, as per UN resolution 2133, or classifying such states as “ineligible for bilateral free trade agreements.”¹⁰² These proposals would incentivize states to abide by the UN resolution, and carry stronger penalties compared to the international reprimands states currently face. Additionally, the US has broached the possibility that ransom payments could fall under the jurisdiction of money-laundering concerns and whether identical penalties could be levied against offending states.¹⁰³ Neither of these strategies have been implemented, but they have the potential to counter KFR as a source of terrorist financing and as such should be considered by the Canadian government.

International programs and partnerships currently exist that Canada may be able to join, or provide resources for, in order to mitigate the incidence of KFR. In 2010, Mali introduced the Special Program for Peace, Security, and Development in Northern Mali (PSPSDN), which seeks to set up 11 “secure zones for development and governance”¹⁰⁴ and reinstitute the presence of government forces in northern Mali.¹⁰⁵ The European Union has supported the PSPSDN for the purpose of peace and security

⁹⁹ Mia Rabson, “G20 leaders Debate Whether to Stop Flowing money to Kidnappers for Ransom,” *CBC*, July 7, 2017, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/g20-trudeau-ransome-deal-1.4195333>

¹⁰⁰ Andy Blatchford, “Trudeau Stresses to G7 leaders the Need to Reject Paying Ransom,” *The Star*, May 26, 2016, <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2016/05/26/trudeau-stresses-to-g7-leaders-the-need-to-reject-paying-ransom.html>

¹⁰¹ “Security Council Adopts 2133 (2014) Calling Upon States to Keep Ransom Payments, Political Concessions from Benefitting Terrorist,” *United Nations*, January 27, 2014, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2014/sc11262.doc.htm>

¹⁰² “Terrorist Financing: Kidnapping, Antiquities Trafficking, and Private Donations.”

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Laremont, 259.

¹⁰⁵ Laremont, 259-260.



in the country. Further, France along with its military campaign in Mali, has implemented counterterrorism programs that also support the PSPSDN.¹⁰⁶ The United States created their own Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Program in 2005, which finances CT programs in Morocco, Senegal, Algeria, Tunisia, Mali, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Chad.¹⁰⁷ Each of these programs work toward restoring peace in Northern Africa, while weakening and destroying terrorist groups operating in the region, including AQIM.

Canada has the option of supporting these programs as well. Ultimately, however, any strategy that Canada takes abroad must be conducted alongside or in co-operation with existing multilateral counterterrorism strategies. Each of the three groups explored in this paper exhibit tensions which can be exploited through multifaceted strategies. In addition, in none of the regions where these groups operate, except for South Asia, does Canada possess any sort of initiative. An initiative in this context refers to a state “possessing credible and operational intelligence on a terror group which is in an area where this state’s resources can be easily mobilized.”¹⁰⁸ Thus, Canada must rely on its allies and the countries in which KFR incidents occur for these initiatives. Past KFR cases illustrate the consequences of states acting without initiatives to secure their nationals. For example, in 2010 Michel Germaneau was killed by AQIM in response to a raid two days prior by French troops, and in 2011 two French aid workers were killed after a failed rescue attempt by French and Mauritanian special forces.¹⁰⁹

Domestically, the Government of Canada could consider a US-style approach to KFR situations. A fusion cell, also known as a specialized hostage recovery team, could potentially improve cooperation between government departments in the hopes of resolving hostage situations. In Canada, such a team would be led by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and would include officials from consulates, Global Affairs

¹⁰⁶ Laremont, 260.

¹⁰⁷ Laremont, 261.

¹⁰⁸ Richard Clutterbuck, “Negotiating with Terrorists,” *Terrorism and Violence* 4(1992): 276-277.

¹⁰⁹ Bruce Crumley, “French Questions Raids that Led to a Hostage’s Death,” *Time*, July 6, 2010, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2006463,00.html>



Canada, the Department of National Defense and other Government of Canada departments working together to recover hostages abroad. A fusion cell could also provide a direct line of communication between the Government of Canada and family members of the KFR victims.¹¹⁰ It is important to note that the RCMP has been interested in this effort since 2005, according to top officials, but such a program has not been implemented. This is likely due to a lack of resources and its low prioritization given the minimal number of cases. Nonetheless, from a political perspective, the Government of Canada could control public relations in a manner that suits their favor much more if they were to offer more assistance and information to the families of the victim.

Conclusion

This paper demonstrates that within our selected timeframe, Canadians have not been targeted in kidnapping operations by terrorist groups abroad because of their nationality. Rather, Canadians have been targeted for a variety of other reasons, including: their occupation, being suspected spies, and being in the wrong place and at the wrong time. Interestingly, Canadians may be less attractive KFR targets due to Canada's strict no-ransom policy and commitment to it. However, as both American and British nationals have also been targeted by terrorist groups for KFR, despite the United States and the United Kingdom's own firm no-ransom policies, this explanation is not wholly satisfactory.

While many counter-KFR options and strategies for the Government of Canada exist, implementing them is complex and the priority is low due to the minimal number of KFR cases involving Canadians. Nonetheless, we propose Canada should continue pursuing the aforementioned multilateral and domestic strategies for combating KFR.

This paper attempts to add value to this understudied topic, at least with reference to Canada. KFR cases attract professionals within the security and intelligence field. Their

¹¹⁰ Lisa Laventure, "Canada does not seem to get it!: Government urged to revise hostage policy in wake of deaths." *CBC News, CBC/Radio Canada*, December 1, 2016, www.cbc.ca/news/politics/kept-in-the-dark-two-1.3875552



experience and insider-perspectives would further enhance the academic study of this issue, providing helpful insights in turn for the organizations involved in countering KFR activity.