

**This is a special excerpt, Chapter 7,  
“A Confrontation to Task Group 83.3”**

from the

**The Chess Players,  
A Novel of the Cold War at Sea**

**by Francis J. Partel, Jr.**

Navy Log Books,  
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**Chapters 1 and 2 can be downloaded free of  
charge at Page 4 of the website,**

**[www.TheChessPlayers.com](http://www.TheChessPlayers.com)**

**I am indebted to and thank David D. Jackson  
for giving me the opportunity to acquaint you  
with my novel.**

*FJP February 3, 2011  
Vero Beach, FL*

# **The Chess Players**

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*A Novel of the Cold War at Sea*

by

Francis J. Partel, Jr.



NAVY LOG BOOKS

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This is a work of historical fiction and as such is based on certain events and situations with regard to military history. It is also a work of imagination. All of the characters are fictitious, and any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

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### **Author's Note and Acknowledgment**

It was not possible for me to write this novel without the help of six exceptional people.

In the summer of 2007 I sought out my neighbors on Martha's Vineyard to help me explain the behavior of the painter, Caravaggio. Richard Schwartz and Jacqueline Olds are husband and wife and psychiatrists at Harvard Medical School. Retroactively diagnosing a psychological disorder for someone who lived four centuries earlier is fraught with caveats, but I think my hypothesis, as expressed by my character, Laetitia Martin, is highly plausible and a contribution to art history. Although this book is fiction, Caravaggio's assessment is based heavily on Desmond Seward's highly respected biography, *Caravaggio, a Passionate Life*, and to the best of my knowledge, it is the first time a psychological explanation for Caravaggio's behavior has appeared in print. A careful reading of Seward's well-documented work by those informed by modern psychiatry will, in my opinion, find ample evidence to support the conclusion that Caravaggio was afflicted with bipolar disorder.

Joseph "Skip" Hanzel, CAPT. USN, (Ret.) is a member of the U.S. Naval Academy, Class of 1962, and responded to my request for help which I made via the Groton Sub-Vets. He has had extensive experience in diesel electric and nuclear submarines. Skip brought to my attention the collision of the Soviet submarine, K-22, with *USS Voge*, DE-1047, (subsequently redesignated a frigate, (FF-1047) which occurred while he served on the staff of Submarine Group Eight, and is the basis for the incident in Chapter 13. He also brought to my attention the non-fatal, but harrowing incident experienced by *USS Chopper* SS-342 off Key West which I used, in part, in the first chapter with B-130, a Russian, Foxtrot class, diesel electric submarine. Skip was right with me, and when I told him what I needed to tell a good story, he responded each and every time with plausible material to make the subsurface story authentic.

R.G. “Gil” Guilbault, RADM, USN, (Ret.) has read every word that I have ever written and has freely critiqued my work in technical terms and in literary terms. I have always taken his technical advice, and when I have ignored his literary advice, I have lived to regret it. If a friend is someone who will tell you the truth with tenderness, Gil is indeed a wonderful friend.

Steve Feinberg and I became fast friends over the course of writing this novel. He is also a neighbor on Martha’s Vineyard, and we began our acquaintance over a decade ago swapping stories about the military on a bus to Logan Airport. Thinking Steve merely had an interest in military stories, I asked him to read my first novel, *A Wound in the Mind*, and to give me his thoughts which he did during a tropical storm at his studio on the Vineyard. Little did I know at the time that Steve was a writer in Hollywood, and he has shared with me some of the keenest insights that I have ever encountered about characters, about characters as children, all holding hands, nurtured by writers, and about plots. Steve has tolerantly endured some of the most naïve questions posed about writing and has patiently worked with me to comprehend his answers and understand their wisdom.

Over the years since my retirement, my former administrative assistant, Linda Reese, has repeatedly come to my rescue with regard to the confounding mysteries of word processors. Her skills and wonderful attitude are reflected throughout the pages of this book.

Lastly, along with Desmond Seward’s book noted above, I was informed by *Blind Man’s Bluff: The Untold Story of American Submarine Espionage* by Sherry Sontag and Christopher Drew, and by Kay Redfield Jamison’s book, *Touched with Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament*.

The errors of commission or omission in this story are entirely my own.

FJP Jr.

July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010, Martha’s Vineyard

**Foreword**

In the days since 911 it is nostalgic to consider the Cold War as the good old days. They weren't. The time was like the present when there existed an omnipresent anxiety about what outrageous event of man's inhumanity to man will happen next.

Victory in Europe over the Axis powers had not even occurred, when, on several occasions, Soviet fighters fired upon American and British reconnaissance planes attempting to photo-map Eastern Europe. The Cold War was a protracted conflict lasting roughly four and a half decades and there are few, if any, who held senior positions with sufficient visibility to have first-hand knowledge of the war from beginning, to middle, to end. For most of us, it was a tense period in our lives with an ebb and flow that we grew to accept. It was either a too-close-up experience for some of us or a distant matter of newspaper stories about incidents and limited wars, some very large, like the Berlin airlift, the Cuban missile crisis, Korea, and Vietnam, and others which threatened to escalate rapidly beyond control like the downing of Gary Powers' U-2 flight over Russia and the seizure of *USS Pueblo*.

Those involved at the time knew that each and every incident, no matter how small, had the potential to bring on nuclear holocaust. Looking back, given the broad distribution of strategic, and especially tactical nuclear weapons, it is a wonder that holocaust did not occur. As intense as the Cold War often was, there were mature, grown men on both sides who accepted that there were limits to the conflict and maintained control and prevented the destruction of Western Civilization and perhaps life as we know it on earth.

Booksellers will refer to this novel as a work of historical fiction--a problematic phrase which appears to license the capricious intermingling of facts and fiction. I prefer the phrase "journalistic fiction" which was used first by a former editor of a national news magazine to describe my first novel and suggests a higher degree of historical integrity. *The*

*Chess Players* is written in that vein. At the theater level it is a historically accurate naval story. At the tactical level, I have fictionalized actual incidents that occurred from 1967 to 1976, and I have put them together in a story as if they occurred over a five month period during 1967 in the waters, and at the time, when *USS Essex* and her task group operated in the Eastern Atlantic and in the Mediterranean Sea.

During this period the United States Navy and NATO were highly concerned with the Soviet submarine threat and invested heavily in and regularly conducted anti-submarine warfare exercises. ASW is the asymmetric analogue at sea to counter-guerilla warfare on land.

As a result of the *Walker* incident and others which I have fictionalized in this story and identified in the Afterword, in 1968 the US Navy proposed to the Russians jointly developing an agreement for incidents at sea. In 1972 a formal agreement was signed by both navies to minimize the risk of collision, to avoid interfering in naval formations, to advise when submarines are operating near by, to avoid threatening actions that might provoke a miscalculated response, and among other things restricting the use of opposing ships and aircraft as training targets. The agreement is renewed every three years and is presently in force between the Russian Federation and the United States today.

The reader will find an appendix with a primer for reading naval messages which I have used extensively to tell the story. Where it is convenient and economical for the reader, I have eliminated the message header and represented the body copy of these fictional messages. The text of these messages could be further parsed with naval jargon to shorten them, but I have tried to strike a balance for the lay reader and yet give them an authentic feel for those who are familiar with them.

A glossary of naval terms, but not necessarily nautical terms, used in this novel is also included in the appendix.

# Book I

## The Northern Run



### Chapter 7. A Confrontation to Task Group 83.3

Although the Norwegians proved to be excellent hosts, a gloom rested over the officers of the American navy. It was neither caused by the weather, which was fair as forecasted, nor by the Norwegians, but it was occasioned by the Israelis. *USS Liberty*, a lightly armed, electronic intelligence ship, had been repeatedly and savagely attacked on June 8<sup>th</sup> by the Israeli air force and PT boats from the Israeli navy while she steamed in international waters off the Egyptian and Israeli coast.

The viciousness of the attack extended to deliberately machine-gunning the crew as they sought to get into life rafts. When the final casualties were known, which required *Liberty* to make for a dry dock in Malta where the dead below the waterline could be decently removed, 34 men were killed and 171 were wounded. Nearly two thirds of the crew became casualties in what was represented to be a case of mistaken identity.

Just as quickly, a news blackout was slapped over the whole incident, but not before it was widely known, shockingly known, that armed US Navy aircraft enroute to defend *Liberty* were recalled on the direct orders of the Secretary of Defense. Just as quickly, the matter was classified top secret which cast a great sense of suspicion and mistrust over the entire incident.

For all of these reasons an extremely sour mood prevailed among the officers who did not accept the explanation of



mistaken identity and seethed that armed strike and fighter aircraft from *Saratoga* were airborne and on their way to defend the ship and her crew and were recalled, abandoning their fellow countrymen to their fate. On a personal level these were disturbing concerns for themselves as they wondered just how likely they were to be abandoned if they were involved in a similar incident.

Ironically this was occurring just as TG 83.3 was entering the most dangerous period of the deployment. All of the NATO officers knew that the closer they got to Mother Russia, the more vulnerable they became as they were progressively outnumbered in any conflict. Their mission though lawful, could be taken as provocative, and their safety rested in the Russian Bear's sense of tolerance and restraint.

There was another dimension to the *Liberty* incident that pertained to the US naval officers. Throughout the fleet there were quiet and increasing questions about American political leadership and the prosecution of the war in Southeast Asia. The *Liberty* incident added to them, and morale in the US Navy officer corps palpably sank a notch.

Before leaving Bergen, Cannon wrote another aerogram letter and got it in the mail to Tish.

*June 11<sup>th</sup>,  
USS Essex, Bergen, Norway*

*Dear Tish,*

*The weather is indeed better in Bergen. We have had a few days of sunshine with infrequent light showers. The Bergenites have been lining up for three days to come aboard the ship and tour the flight deck and hangar deck. The ship seems very popular with teenage girls, and there are a lot of enlisted men who are eager to see that they get a first class tour.*

*Went into the city center the other night and had a wonderful seafood dinner with our legal officer, Max*

*Gorin, at the Augustin Hotel. Picked up the latest copy of the International Edition of the Herald Tribune and read the fables being released by The White House on the Liberty attack by the Israelis. Really admire Johnson for his skill in getting civil rights legislation through, but when it comes to international affairs, despite the Kennedy holdovers, this administration doesn't seem to have a clue. Max went to Berkeley and doesn't agree with me, and thinks the Johnson Administration is handling it very well. I think the Russians will view our response as weak and these elite ships as vulnerable and will somehow exploit this at some critical moment in the future.*

*Sorry, but I'm pretty bummed out over the Liberty attack—21 dead, 100 wounded, 80 to 90 unaccounted for. I'll try to snap out it for the rest of this letter. I doubt if anyone in Liberty ever believed they would be abandoned the way they were. Shameful.*

*There's been an interesting and unconfirmed rumor that a Russian Foxtrot class submarine penetrated a Norwegian fjord several months ago, and the Norwegians destroyed it. We have standing orders to do that, too, if a submarine penetrated the Hudson River or the Chesapeake Bay. But no one seems to be able to verify this, and is made further confusing by a second rumor of a submarine accident this winter near Stavanger. The rumors suggest a more aggressive Russian submarine force, but they are just rumors even though they do not seem to want to go away.*

*Did I say your first two letters arrived? I love mail and your letters are very welcome, and I hope to receive many more of them from you to be replaced only by the opportunity to see you, and speak with you, and hold you, and deal out an inexhaustible supply of precious kisses. The Italian portion of your trip with Daniella sounds very luxurious and very privileged. Buona fortuna. (That's the finito of my Italian.)*

*Speaking of Italians, your bad boy painter is an in-*

teresting subject. The original bad boy except he could paint. Sounds like the role model for some of these actors in Hollywood who have publicists hard at work developing a bad boy image for them.

If I am not mistaken, Spanish rule over parts of Italy was not positive. There's usually some kind of a positive dimension to conquests, but it's hard to identify much that the Italians can thank the Spanish for. The macho, strutting style that the English identify with the Italians came directly from the Spanish. If I recollect, the Italians were always the villains in Jacobean literature.

We get underway in two days for the Arctic Circle, and I'll become a Blue Nose after crossing it. This is one of those maritime traditions that sailors around the world note and celebrate like crossing the equator. However I think we will be a little too busy to celebrate very much.

London-- carefree days together! That would be jolly good, however I hope we don't overbuild expectations about London, and about each other that can not be met.

Ah, yes—the salutation. “Love, second class,” that's a cute finesse, Cutie. But I think it will have to do until we earn our bonafides. I am trying to manage my expectations and perhaps in London, the salutation will change.

*Love, second class (Oy!)*

*Robbie*

SAU Alfa, comprised of *Stickell* and *Van Voorhis*, left Oslo after four days of shore leave and headed directly for the Kattegat, a vulgar name given by Dutch sailors in the 16<sup>th</sup> century to this particular strait that persevered meaning, Cat's Ass. They were heading down the Kattegat to pass through Copenhagen during daylight on the following morning. There they would enter the Baltic Sea where over 5000 aircraft wrecks rested on the sea floor--most of them casualties of

WWII.

Five Warsaw Pact countries, including Russia, and nine countries in total, fronted the Baltic. It is the world's largest brackish sea and is fed by two major rivers from each side of the Finnish peninsula and several other significant rivers. It is also relatively shallow and the shallow and brackish characteristics make for poor sonar conditions. Neither is it ideal for submarine operations, because, in addition, to its shallowness, about half of the sea freezes over in winter. The engineers at Bell Laboratories in New Jersey were intensely curious to know how effectively the towed-array sonar system that they designed worked in these conditions.

Waiting for them in the western Baltic Sea at noon on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June was *Prozorlivy*. The Russian naming convention was to give their destroyers adjectival names. *Prozorlivy*, a Kildin class destroyer, means "shrill" in English, and she was assigned to the Baltic Fleet based in Kaliningrad. She was obviously an upgrade from the trawler who had been shadowing SAU Alfa. As *Van Voorhis* streamed out her TASS and immediately began sending data back to Fort Monmouth, *Prozorlivy* took up station on her port quarter at a distance of 1000 yards. She was roughly equal to *Stickell* in size and displaced about one and a half times the weight of a Dealey class destroyer escort.

SAU Alfa's intended track would take her nearly to the Gulf of Finland, the maritime route to Leningrad, to a point midway between Estonia and Finland, and passing not far from the Warsaw Pact naval installations at Gdansk, Riga and Tallinn before returning down the Swedish coast. SAU Alfa intended to leave the islands of Bornholm and Gotland to port on each passage, and in all, they expected to travel nearly 1200 nautical miles crossing the various contours of the sea bottom gathering data and electronic intelligence before rejoining the task group on the way to Rotterdam.

At 10 knots, the optimal speed for their mission, they expected to steam in the Baltic for at least five days. If the Mediterranean was NATO's lake, the Baltic belonged to the Warsaw Pact.

SAU Alfa's commanding officer was acutely aware that they were steaming far from the nearest friendly port in Bremen, West Germany, although the neutral Swedish shore might offer a port of refuge in an emergency. The eastern shore had to be considered hostile if some unforeseen circumstance they needed to seek refuge there. It would indubitably lead to the compromise of confidential information, codes, cipher equipment, and other pieces of state of the art gear or weapons such as the TASS or their torpedoes. Undaunted, they proceeded northbound up the eastern shore, making several criss-cross legs collecting data on ambient sonar conditions and capturing electro-magnetic emissions from communications and radars emanating from the Soviet states.

After *Essex*'s sortie from Stavanger and Bergen, Task Group 83.3 reformed at 1200 hours off the Norwegian coast and immediately launched four S2F aircraft, an E1B, the ship's COD, and two helicopters. One section of S2s proceeded north in front of the surface ships and the other section proceeded 200 miles to the west and began to sew an extensive field of sonobuoys in the Norwegian trench where Soviet submarines bound for the Mediterranean were expected to transit.

Norwegian P2V Neptunes were similarly covering the northern coastal shelf in the vicinity of Hammerfest while US Navy P2V patrol craft were flying missions from Iceland. SOSUS intelligence identified an older Whiskey class, two Foxtrot class submarines and a cruise-missile equipped Whiskey Long Bin proceeding through the GIUK gap on southerly courses presumably bound for the Mediterranean.

After completing the launch the task group picked up a northerly course and increased speed to 20 knots. This wasn't an ideal speed for sonar effectiveness, but CTG 83.3 had orders to show the flag and conduct exercises 1200 nautical miles to the north in international waters, off the Kola Peninsula, in the Barents Sea.

Steaming south towards them at 25 knots was the de-

stroyer, *Derzky*, the new minder, who would intercept TG 83.3 in about six hours.

Cannon had been on sea and anchor detail since 0700 as *Essex* sortied down the Byfjorden to the open sea with *Ajax*, *Bayern*, and *de Zeven Provinciën*. He changed from his dress blues into working khakis, had a quick lunch in the ward-room, and hurried off to the Operations office to read the message traffic. He kept up with matters daily in the Middle-East which confirmed an Israeli rout of the Arab forces, and he was now interested in knowing the position of the Israeli forces as the ceasefire arranged by the UN took effect.

He taped a physical map with political boundaries to the bulkhead opposite Pebbles' desk. The Israeli forces held the Golan Heights--peaks ranging up to 3500 feet elevation, to the north, part of Syria--and a significant piece of the eastern Sinai desert extending to the Suez Canal belonging to Egypt. They also controlled Gaza and the West Bank of Jerusalem which Cannon figured made them occupiers of an area with 600,000 Palestinians.

Next he used a piece of string and the scale on the map to measure the distances between the capitals of the belligerents and was surprised at the results. Amman, Jordan lay a mere 45 miles to the east of Jerusalem, about the distance between Boston and Manchester, NH. Damascus, to the north was slightly more than the distance between New York and Hartford at 140 miles. And Suez, to the southwest was 200 miles away. The whole war zone covered an area less than the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

As Cannon absorbed the picture on the map, he was not able to fathom all of the implications of the war, but he knew they were multiple and complex, and he knew the struggle to secure peace in the Middle-East had only just begun.

Next his curiosity took him back to the *Liberty* incident, and he asked the yeoman to bring him the confidential and secret messages dating back to June 8<sup>th</sup>, the day she was attacked. But he searched through the three inches of loosely stacked messages without success. "Brown, I don't see any of the *Liberty* messages in here."

“No, sir. We don’t have ‘em.”

“What do you mean, we don’t have them?”

“No, sir,” replied Brown. “The communicators came down an’ took all copies back and burned ‘em. Got a receipt for our logs right here, sir.”

“What the fuck...”

“Said everything was classified top secret, sir.”

“Top secret? What fucking” he emphasized the *ing*, “happy horseshit!” It was a rare but understandable breach in Cannon’s professionalism. Profanity was a sure sign of his anger, and if he weren’t in the presence of enlisted men, he would not have prevented himself from using a long string of salty expletives.

He was livid but retained his composure. He wanted to reconstruct the event and try to determine for himself what happened and what the possible Israeli motives were. He was now more than certain that the mistaken-identity excuse was nothing more than a phony whitewash, and he was even angrier that his government, and specifically the White House, colluded in this explanation.

Cannon possessed more than a fair share of idealism and the behavior of the national leadership left him with ambivalent feelings of betrayal and rebelliousness—neither disposition was healthy for him, nor for any other serving officer in the United States Navy, who were sworn to go in harm’s way if ordered by their President.

Pebbles carried a troubled look on his face as he entered the office, “Hello, Bob,” but before Cannon could respond, Pebbles asked, “What’s this?” pointing to the map on the bulkhead, “What’s this about?”

“Oh, just checking out the facts on the ground and the physical geography. I call it the ‘now what’ chart?”

“Oh, I thought I had missed something.”

“The poor fucking Jews have just won one of the most decisive victories in military history,” he was still angry, “and near as I can tell, they haven’t done a fucking thing to assure peace for themselves with the Arabs.” Again he empha-

sized the *ing*.

“Why is that, ensign? Can you tell me like an officer and a gentleman?” But Cannon remained angry, and now he turned defiant.

“Fuck-yes I can, commander.” Pebbles caught the intensity and the sourness of his mood, and ignored Cannon’s behavior, and paused before responding.

“Golly, Bobbie, what did you have for lunch? Swallow some anchovies, or something?” That brought a laugh from Cannon. He hated anchovies; “hairy critters” he once mentioned to Pebbles. Pebbles skillful use of humor changed his mood.

“Sorry, sir. This whole *Liberty* thing has me very” he paused deliberately feigning that he was searching for words, “um, shall we say...‘upset.’ There is nothing good about it. I feel that we were asked to betray our fellow navy men. I feel our government betrayed us. I feel we are colluding in a phony whitewash, and I guarantee you, the Russian chess players are already figuring out how to exploit us over this.” Pebbles had the same feelings, but he had not considered further-reaching ramifications. In fact, no one else had either, including the admiral. Only Cannon presumed to see a cold war issue in the incident.

“The Russians?”

“Unh-huh. They will note that she lacked the means to defend herself, that she steamed independently without escort, that she was abandoned rather than defended. Compromised in the interest of presumably some ulterior reason. It would have been far better if we had driven off her attackers. Downed a Mirage or two, or sunk a couple of PT boats. A few sidewinders sure as hell would have cleared up any misidentification issue with the Israelis.” The last few words he spoke sarcastically and sneeringly. “I’ll wager a month of ensign pay that the Russians will exploit the way we reacted to this. They’ll make us pay. We will pay for this again!” He paused before resuming and introduced a new aspect. “Might have been better for the Israelis, too. If it is perceived by the Arabs that we are weak, or that somehow we have a



bias in favor of Israel, and, or... if it compromises our position as honest broker in the Middle-East.”

“Bob, you have a brilliant strategic mind and a first rate education, but I think we need to get back to the business of anti-submarine warfare and the possibility of a special incident. We’re now on the northern run. Do you follow me?”

“Yes, sir” and that was the end of it for awhile. Cannon excused himself and took a coffee break in the wardroom. He needed to cool down, and he knew it, and he had high hopes for a letter from Tish. He also was trying to protect himself if he didn’t get one, but that turned out to be an unwarranted anxiety. He removed the letter from the “C” box, grabbed a black cup of coffee, added a pinch of salt, and sat down on one of the green loveseats in the wardroom lounge and read Tish’s latest letter.

*June 10<sup>th</sup>*

*Dear Robbie,*

*Eureka! A letter from you. I was beginning to think perhaps the earth was flat and you and your task group had fallen off the far side. Or you had run off with a Norwegian mermaid. Or that you had simply forgotten me.*

*I feel I should be teasing you again. Not too many kisses today, Robbie, you might run out. Or, nothing too personal, I might get to know you.*

*I’m going to propose that we write something personal and autobiographical, a paragraph or two, in every letter. I’ll start by picking up on something you said on our beach late at night. You said something like, “What is it with the denial-of-your-beauty thing, the good-genes thing,” and I blew you off, because it’s been an issue for me, and I wasn’t ready to discuss it with you, although you are the very first male to ask me directly about it. Quite disarming, it was.*

*I was younger by a year than my classmates to start*

*with, and then, as they say, I was physically a “late-bloomer.” And when you are a tallish, teenage girl, late-bloomer has a special significance. It means you that you don’t exactly have the developing shape of a woman. I was pretty skinny, and when I was at Farmington, behind my back, I was known as “Shapeless Martin.” Even the first year students called me Shapeless, and it hurt a lot. Some of my teachers knew this, and they thought they were being very kind when they would tell me I had a pretty face. Of, course it would be inappropriate to refer to a girl’s body, but by emphasizing anything but my body, I became very sensitive about how I looked. “Laetitia, you have a very lovely face, or a pretty face, or you have lovely hair. Or you are such an excellent student, etc.” When we had socials or dances I was invariably on the blind date list. I never really had a boyfriend until the summer after my sophomore year at Vassar, and that didn’t last too long (damn Yalie; pre-med, too). I don’t think I really filled out until half-way through my freshman year at college. So I compensated by being an excellent student and excelling at sailing all the while I envied the really pretty girls who always had boyfriends. The girls that had the genes. I often felt left out. Later when I became physically attractive (okay, possibly beautiful), I didn’t trust the party boys who were attracted by my looks. (I think you and I know someone like that.) Now of course there’s the woman’s movement, and I’m part of it, and Gloria Steinem (who is truly beautiful) and others, are attacking gender-based roles and superficial values like beauty. All of this is just a bit topsy turvy to someone who is trying to get literally comfortable with their skin.*

*Then we come to you. Who is your former flame? None other than the absolute knock-out and my classmate, Margot Rush. That got my “genes” up, and my anxieties and I kind of wanted to label you as just another spoiled party boy with a big smile. But you, thankfully Robbie, are different, because, you are this*

*virile scholar-athlete-naval officer who started out by asking me what I think. And you listened, too. And you know things that I need to know about, including the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, and a whole lot of things which are interesting and useful, and cause me to think, and you are not another nerdy Ph.D candidate. You are like my father—dedicated, professional, well-rounded, slightly authoritarian and quite task-oriented. You could have been a surgeon. Your mind is your scalpel.*

*I'm late for the afternoon session... schnell, schnell. I literally have got to run to class. I'm feeling ever so much better having put this out there with you. Heck, I think I can even say that I know I'm cute.*

*Ciao, caro, you are special to me, but it's still:*

*Love, second class,*

*Tish*

At 1400, Essex went to Condition 1AS. Greenleaf 14 from VS-22, the Checkmates squadron, reported sonobuoys drawing. She sent a situation report via the E1B Bellhop communications relay system which solved the UHF line of sight radio communications problem when the S2s worked over the horizon, "down on the deck." She was attempting to localize and confirm the contact with MAD.

"Banknote, Banknote, Greenleaf One Four, Greenleaf One Four, over."

"This is Banknote, go ahead, over"

"This is One Four, sitrep follows. Established datum with Jezebel and Madman. Time: 1426 local. Location coordinates: 62-28.5 North, comma 1-19.4 West, at 315 Banknote 145 nautical miles, Break, how copy, over."

"Roger, One Four, we have your numbers. Designate your contact, Alfa. Interrogative course and speed, over."

"One Four, roger on Contact Alfa. Break, course 240 magnetic at four knots, over."

“Roger, One Four, information follows, wait, over.”

“Standing by” was followed with two clicks of the microphone.

Coming over PriTac were a series of signals detaching SAU Bravo to make best speed with *Bayern* in command accompanied by *Lester*.

The *Essex*’ air controller called Greenleaf 14. “Greenleaf One Four, this is Banknote, information follows. SAU Bravo detached. Delta Romeo Alfa Charlie in command. Annette in company. ETA, nineteen fifty local at twenty-seven knots. Break, remain on station until relieved on scene by Haystack. Break, Banknote will hold recovery, over.”

“Thank you. That’s very nice of Banknote,” but the ship’s controller, a Radarman Petty Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, did not get the humor. It meant that One Four would have an extended flight of six to six and a half hours, and was likely to be put in a holding pattern until the following recovery cycle resulting in a flight of over eight hours. To add a further note of gallows humor, the ship’s controller was given a note from the carrier air traffic control center.

“One Four, Banknote requests that upon relief that you buster.” One Four’s pilot answered.

“Roger that, One Four will be *certain to buster*,” meaning to return to the ship at maximum speed.

The flag subsequently changed the formation course to 290 degrees true and increased speed to 25 knots in an effort to reduce flight time to datum. By the time the VS-32 relief launched for datum, the distance would be halved. Shortly thereafter *Derzky* picked up the formation’s course change with her ECM gear and altered her course to maintain constant bearing, decreasing range, and intercept them.

Cannon arrived on the bridge promptly at 1545 to relieve the watch. As Stansky directed, he assumed the conn, recomputed and reconfirmed the Foxtrot Corpen given to the flag by the preceding watch. The signal for Foxtrot Corpen was already in the air and employed the BrevTac method of signaling with flashing light, and the Foxtrot flag was flying at the dip. Captain Meehan arrived on the bridge and took

his seat in the Captain's chair on the port side.

This is a peculiarity of aircraft carriers. The Captain's chair was placed on the port side of the bridge where the flight deck could be observed rather than on the starboard side which was the convention for all other ships. The starboard side is the traditional location for good reason. Under the rules of the road, in a crossing situation, a ship holding another to starboard has the burden of avoiding the privileged ship. To ensure unobstructed visibility to starboard, the chair is placed on the starboard side of the bridge. In short, no captain ever wanted to be found at fault by being struck on his starboard side.

With the departure of SAU Bravo, Cannon observed that the screen was now reduced to five ships and would drop to four during flight quarters when *Hartley* assumed plane guard station astern *Essex* as she was doing now. Two helicopters dipped their sonars on each wing to augment the screen for *de Zeven Provinciën* and *Essex*. In addition to *Hartley*, the remaining screening ships in company were the destroyer escorts, *Courtney*, and *Willis*, the destroyer leader, *Farragut*, and the screen commander's ship, *Ajax*.

Four S2s, an E1B airborne early warning aircraft with a huge radome, affectionately referred to as a "Willie Fudd", and two SH3 Sea King helicopters were scheduled to launch. The recovery cycle was completed without Greenleaf 14. The mail-carrying, morale-builder, the C1 COD, came aboard returning from her earlier flight to Bergen with a load of mail, movies and spare parts.

Haystack 15 from the Norseman squadron, VS-32, was the designated relief for Greenleaf 14, the on-scene commander. Haystack 15 passed over *Bayern* and *Hartley* and gave a friendly waggle of her wings as she flew outbound towards datum, her Cyclone engines making a reassuring roar as she passed over the ships.

Contact Alfa's course took her directly down the center of the Norwegian trench. It was not clear whether she knew that she had been detected by aircraft, but she was running at a reasonable trade-off between speed over the ground and

noise emission as she tried to maintain stealth.

Over one hundred fifty Whiskey class boats were built based on captured German designs and several were adapted to carry ship-to-ship missiles. The latter were few in number and were especially noisy after their modification for carrying missiles in large tubes behind the sail area. Greenleaf believed they had a Whiskey Long Bin missile boat beneath them, but *Essex*' ASCAC could not confirm it, however SOSUS did.

Greenleaf kept placing sonobuoys in front of Contact Alfa and occasionally made a MAD run to update her position. The sea state and Alfa's noisiness made it relatively easy to remain in contact with her.

"Greenleaf One Four, Haystack One Five, inbound to you."

"Roger One Five, nice to hear your voice." The plane commander continued to express his personality over the radio. After briefing his relief, Haystack 15, stood relieved, climbed to 5000 feet and bustered for Banknote. As she gained altitude Greenleaf received the range and bearing from *Essex*' TACAN and called in her position. The plane was by now about 90 nautical miles from *Essex* and on her 290 degree radial. If One Four were given a ready deck she could be aboard in 30 minutes, however as her plane commander feared, she was directed to loiter at marshal at 3500 feet until the 2000 recovery.

*Bayern* reached datum at 1940 hours, slowed to 10 knots, and immediately began actively pinging Contact Alfa with her sonar. She lit her blue Grimes masthead light indicating that she had a hot sonar contact. *Lester* was not far behind, flashing her orange Grimes light, and the two ships took up a dual-ship attack pattern.

Any thoughts that Contact Alfa had that she was undetected vanished with the first ping of *Bayern*'s sonar, and it was disturbing to the crew to know, that were it wartime, she was likely to be momentarily destroyed.

Delta Romeo Alfa Charlie and Annette passed contact information back and forth over SAU Common, a frequency set

up for all air and sea units to use for prosecuting the search and attack.

Haystack 15 followed the maneuvering signals and combat information from the ships by monitoring their frequency, and they observed the action down on the sea from the air. Under hot war conditions Haystack had the weapons to destroy the submarine, but during the Cold War and the propagandawar, because ships had longer staying power than aircraft, ships were brought in to monitor and track Russian submarines.

*Bayern*, the West German frigate pressed the *faux* attack with all of the tenaciousness of a Pinscher Doberman. Captain von Kaltenborn was relentless, and he not only wanted to track Contact Alfa, but he wanted to exhaust her batteries and bring her to the surface. Each ship took turns passing over Contact Alfa in simulated attack runs and each time they presented up-doppler pings to Contact Alfa followed by down-doppler pings, to be followed by up-doppler pings from the second ship as she approached and passed over and the cycle repeated. Finally the Whiskey Log Bin surfaced for oxygen at 0120 hours.

It is not pitch black dark in the northern hemisphere despite the time of day at this latitude in June. This is the time of year for “white nights.” Nevertheless, the S2 on station with the two destroyer types, Haystack One One, immediately dove on her in the dim light and illuminated her with a one million candle power searchlight and took pictures while the two ships circled the Russian submarine in a slow turn.

The crews of the three navies were topside and stared at each other and occasionally exchanged unflattering and vulgar hand gestures, unnecessarily amplified with Russian, German, and English expletives, as they are universally understood. Morale was high in SAU Bravo.

Thirty minutes later *Bayern* filed her final sitrep with the commander of Task Group 83.3 and received from CTG 83.3 a reply in return, “Bravo Zulu”—a signal that dated back at least as far as Admiral Nelson’s signal book.

CTG 83.3 subsequently recalled SAU Bravo, repositioned

the S2 and changed the formation course to 035 degrees true at 25 knots heading for the northwestern coast of Norway. Task Group 83.3 was behind schedule, and they had a Russian minder with them again.

*Derzky* took station at what the Soviets appeared to have claimed as their own station—060 degrees relative to *Essex* at 3000 yards. Shortly she would learn, and the watch at the Northern Fleet Headquarters in Polarnyy would learn, that Contact Alfa had surfaced and reported her position as compromised by NATO carrier-based air and surface units.

The wind was coming out of the north at five knots and was ideal for refueling. CTG 83.3 took the opportunity to replenish the destroyers on the morning of June 13<sup>th</sup>, as Romeo Corpen would be generally to the northeast and keep the task group close to being on track for the Arctic Circle in the Barents Sea. It would cost them 15 knots as refueling speed was ten knots and would put them behind their intended DR by 60 to 75 nautical miles, but to have the destroyers topped off before arriving off the Russian coast was a desirable precaution.

The order of refueling was communicated and the Royal Navy's Leander class frigate, *Ajax*, was scheduled to be first alongside *Essex*' starboard side. The Dutch light cruiser carried sufficient stocks of fuel and did not require refueling.

By the morning of Flag Day, June 14<sup>th</sup>, the task group position was 90 miles west of Hammerfest and above the Arctic Circle. The weather was deteriorating as a large weather system moved in from the west covering large portions of the Scandinavian Peninsula and the Barents and Baltic Seas where units of 83.3 were operating. There was a high-glare, milky-white seamless atmosphere that obscured the horizon for as far as the eye could see and produced difficult flying conditions. The sameness of the atmosphere brought on a kind of boredom and induced a degree of monotony that the men on watch had to fight off to retain their vigilance.

Virtually all flying was governed by instrument meteorological rules and carrier landings were made under positive



control using the ship's SPN-6 approach-control radar—a high-data-rate, X-band radar. Flight operations continued around the clock putting up at least four S2s, an E1B, and two to four helicopters per cycle. The C1 resumed logistical flights into various bases in Norway. Over the day TG 83.3 shifted course to the west as they proceeded around Norway through the day and white night to a position 015 degrees, 150 nautical miles from Murmansk on the Kola Peninsula.

The same weather system was moving over SAU Bravo, now located north of Gdansk, as she worked her way towards the Gulf of Riga along the eastern side of the Baltic. Her TASS recorded little more than baseline ambient conditions which pleased the engineers and scientists in New Jersey but wasn't particularly interesting to the sonarmen in *Van Voorhis*.

The ECM gear on both ships captured electro-magnetic radiation from sites that were well-known to NATO, but the signal intelligence being obtained by an NSA Beachjumper team in *Stickell* captured voice traffic that pertained to their presence. This would be taken back and translated from Estonian, German, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish or Russian and analyzed for insight into the Warsaw Pact's maritime defense plans for the Baltic.

SAU A used BrevTac signaling exclusively to keep *Prozorlivy* off balance, and it became an item of interest between the signalmen and the radarmen to see how long it took *Prozorlivy* to react and return to station. Over the course of a couple of days, from her station on *Van Voorhis*' port quarter, *Prozorlivy* was able to see and crack the simple BrevTac signals and responded more quickly.

*June 14<sup>th</sup>, Flag Day*  
*USS Essex, entering the Barents Sea*

*Dear Tish,*

*I just realized that today is Flag Day, my father's*

*birthday, and I have forgotten to send him an aerogram. I feel guilty that I have failed to anticipate his birthday.*

*I learned a lot from my father. He's a metallurgist and an engineer. He is always looking to do things better, cheaper, faster—more with less—is his mantra. How with his great curiosity he would love to study the processes and systems on this ship.*

*Your letter is provocative. These touchy feely things are not my forte. I want to be aware of them, but I have not been anxious to talk about them. I'd rather talk about whether Red China should be allowed to join the United Nations, to quote a cliché. You are forcing me to choose to resist or to grow; to define my life, as you would say, by the choices that I make.*

*Since you have raised beauty as an issue, I'll speak to that, too, but honestly, Tish, I don't have the time for deep, well-considered introspection while I'm deployed with the fleet and can't accept your request to do this with every letter. Am I being a coward?*

*I guess somewhere along the line I'll have to say more about my relationship with Margot. Margot did not drop the relationship; I have to accept that I did. Little by little I killed it. I didn't intentionally kill it, but subconsciously I was killing it. It died because of my inattention and insecurity about her beauty, and I just didn't act and behave in a way to maintain aliveness in the relationship, and ultimately Margot gave up trying. Her beauty intimidated me. She was just too good looking, and I just didn't think that I was good enough for her, and when she started to become famous and good looking and wealthy, too, I just couldn't manage my insecurities. At first I blamed it on her fame, and on her contracts and shooting schedules, and yes, she got very busy, and was less available, but the truth is I just couldn't manage it, and I backed away.*

*Now you and I have begun something with an unknown destiny. I am both attracted by your beauty—I think I have told you that beauty and brains are lethal*

to me—and I am intimidated by it. When I excuse my effort because of your relationship with Quartie, it isn't Quartie, it's your beauty that frightens me.

There's a really funny paradox here between us. You don't trust boys who come on to you because of your looks, and I'm afraid that really beautiful women like you can play with me and my feelings for awhile, and then toss me aside when they find something better. And as an ensign making \$227 a month and at sea for half his life, there's a lot more out there that is better.

Yeats', "A Prayer for My Daughter," has always stuck with me on this issue. He comes at it from a slightly different way. He would like his daughter to be beautiful but that her beauty should not be so that it makes her insensitive and careless about the feelings of others.

In courtesy I'd have her chiefly learned; / Hearts  
are not had as a gift but hearts are earned / By  
those that are not entirely beautiful;

The second line kind of sums up my wishes and my insecurities. (By the way, I have always thought that this particular poem of Yeats read well if you spake it in Beowulfian, middle-English, too.)

Since you are drawing things out of me, I want you to know that I love the courage and bravery of your last letter. You are a good example for me, and I'm even more attracted to you than ever. What comes next is written with a "holded breath."

Love, Robbie

The morning of the 15<sup>th</sup> of June began with the same white, translucent light and obscured the opportunity for the mid-watch teams in 83.3 to see the midnight sun. A certain listlessness was brought on by the combination of extended daylight and inclement weather above the Arctic Circle. This was soon to change.

The following message from the Commander, US Naval

Anti-Submarine Forces, Atlantic, was immediately hand-carried as soon as it was decoded to the Captain, Bridge, CIC, Operations, and CVSG-54.

OPERATIONAL IMMEDIATE

150151Z JUN67

FM COMASWFORLANT

TO CTG 83.3

CTE 83.3.1

INFO CINCLANTFLT

CINCUSNAVEUR

SUBJ UNUSUAL SUBMARINE ACTIVITY

S-E-C-R-E-T

1. NOVEMBER CLASS HIGH SPEED RUN  
EXITING WHITE SEA KOLA PENINSULA  
HIGHLY UNUSUAL
2. KILO-21, LOCATION 68-44 N 41-01 E, CUS  
325T, SPD 25-30KTS 150642ZJUN67
3. DESIG C-11
4. UNODIR FORWARD SITREPS TO ADDRESSEES  
FROM CAC WHEN RECEIVED. ADVISE YOUR  
ZZ ASAP. GOOD LUCK.

K-21 was southeast of *Essex* over 200 miles away. CTG 83.3 relayed the message to *Bayern* and *Lester* for information, and prepared a situation report for the Commander of US Naval Anti-Submarine Warfare Forces, Atlantic Fleet.

PRIORITY

150211Z JUN67  
FM CTG 83.3  
TO COMASWFORLANT  
INFO CINCLANTFLT  
CINCUSNAVEUR  
USS STICKELL DD-888  
USS VAN VOORHIS DE-1028  
SUBJ YOUR 150151Z JUN67  
S-E-C-R-E-T

1. MY ZZ 71-22.28 N 34-44.33 E  
150700ZJUN67
2. C-11 LOCATION BEARS 145T AT 203NM.  
ALL UNITS OF 83.3 ARE COLD AT THIS  
TIME
3. GREENLEAF ZERO EIGHT VS-22 ADDING  
JEZEBEL BARRIER ACROSS THREAT  
BEARING 100NM FROM ZZ
4. SAU B FIS BAYERN D-183 USS LESTER DE-  
1022 DETACHED TO POSIT 145T ZZ 35NM
5. ALL SURFACE AND AIR UNITS RESTRICTED  
TO OPERATE NO CLOSER THAN 50NM TO  
KOLA PENINSULA

November class nuclear submarines were well-known to NATO forces, and they had been tracked at submersed speeds up to 35 knots. They were irremediably noisy owing to their nuclear reactor design and the construction of their

reactor cooling pumps. There was little doubt that they would detect her, but there was speculation about her course and speed. Her speed might be accounted for by a desire to transit quickly to the Mediterranean or it might be nothing more than a high speed sea trial after refitting and repairs. But the fact that the course was on a direct line of bearing to intercept TG 83.3 was provoking curiosity. At 30 knots K-21 would require slightly more than six hours to close them.

Cannon was standing the 04-08 watch on the bridge when the operational immediate message was distributed, and he became fully aware of its contents. Greenleaf 08, operating in the search sector where K-21 might pass, reacted by dropping additional sonobuoys across the line of bearing between *Essex* and K-21.

He picked up the manual wind computer, set it for the apparent wind and the ships course and speed, and calculated Foxtrot Corpen to be 015 at 20 knots, and communicated that to Flag Plot.

“Trapper, Trapper this is Echo Oscar, Echo Oscar,” *de Zeven Provinciën*, the task group anti-air warfare control ship, “radar contact: 185 at 195, heading 020, speed 225, climbing. Time 0710 local. Break, designated Bogey 6, possible flight of two. Break, Delta Romeo break, Golf Hotel, break King Tiger, over.”

“Delta Romeo, roger, out.”

“Golf Hotel, roger, out.”

“Echo Oscar, this is King Tiger. Confirming your radar contact, Bogey 6, at 180, range 190 nautical, altitude eight. Confirm possible flight of two. Possible one plus wingman, section take off, break over.”

“Echo Oscar, roger, out.”

“Echo Oscar, this is Golf Hotel, break, Bogey 6 echo charlie mike, identified as Badger, elint version. Wingman likely reconnaissance version, break over.”

“Echo Oscar, copies, out.”

“Echo Oscar this is Delta Romeo, my echo charlie mike, confirms Bogey 6 is a flight of two, One Queer Badger, One

reconnaissance Badger, negative radar contact at this time, break over.” The task group picked up two jet bombers similar to the retired, USAF B-47 that had been configured for electronic intelligence and reconnaissance.

It is typical to have long range ECM contact before gaining radar contact. ECM requires receiving emitted signals while radar requires sending out enough electro-magnetic energy to bounce back and produce a return. Their use of radio telephone procedure was precise and typical of surface ships. Pilots and air controllers used what might called a slang version.

They were tracking the sixth unidentified aircraft since midnight, or possibly two aircraft making up a merged plot on their air search radars, climbing out of Murmansk, and the AAW control ship was asking the other missile ships to acknowledge.

“Bridge, Combat, Echo Oscar, our Dutch cruiser, has a bogey coming out of Olenya air base at one eight five, one ninety five.”

Roger, thank you, Combat, please keep us advised.

“Combat, aye.”

“Echo Oscar this is Delta Romeo, radar contact Bogey 6, out.” A minute later *Ajax* confirmed radar contact. All four anti-air missile ships were now tracking both Badgers as they gained altitude and climbed out to the north northeast.

“Bridge, Combat, the bogey is designated Bogey 6, Two Badgers, one’s an elint the other a reconnaissance version turning back over the mainland.”

“Roger, keep us advised.”

The Badgers began a slow ascending turn to the right which circled them back towards the Kola Peninsula as they climbed for altitude. They were undoubtedly climbing to get to lighter air. At 20,000 feet their fuel consumption improved significantly. The Queer Badger, that is, the one configured for electronic intelligence, undoubtedly knew they were being tracked and just as predictably she was recording 83.3’s radar signatures and communications. The reconnaissance

aircraft was equipped with high quality cameras and infrared cameras. They continued to orbit in a circle leveling out at 28,000 feet and cruising at 400 knots.

TG 83.3 still did not have contact with Kilo 21, the November class nuclear attack submarine.

Cannon swung his binoculars over to observe *Derzky* and thought he saw a moment of white water behind her stern as if she changed speed. Then Captain Meehan joined them on the bridge and Lt. Stansky saluted him as Cannon spoke to Combat.

“Combat, Bridge,”

“Combat, aye, sir.”

“Combat, it looks like *Derzky* has begun to drift and may have changed speed.”

“That’s correct, sir. We’ll have a course and speed on her as soon as possible.” Shortly thereafter, CIC came back.

“Bridge, Combat, *Derzky* is on course 015 at fifteen knots, sir.” *Sonuvabitch*, thought Cannon, *the bastards are anticipating Fox Corpen*. Cannon looked at Stansky and the Captain. “I have a hunch this is the prelude to a special incident, sir.”

“What do you mean, Cannon?” inquired Captain Meehan.

“Just a hunch, sir. Lot of moving parts. Too much coincidence. Kilo-21, Bogey 6, elint and recce birds, and now *Derzky* is positioning for something on Fox Corpen. We need to react, but not over-react, sir.”

“Why don’t you give your boss a jingle?”

“Yes, sir.” Cannon picked up the phone and dialed Commander Pebbles’ phone in the Operations department.

“Good morning, Commander Pebbles, here.”

“Sir, Bob Cannon, sir. Sir, you might want to go to CIC now, sir. I think the chess players are putting their pieces in place. Sorry I can’t talk; I’m on watch, but things look like a special incident will be in our very near future.”

“Think this might be it, Bob?”

“Sir, I think it’s worth your time in CIC. I’ll come to CIC as soon as I’m relieved here. You might call the captain too, sir. He suggested that I call you.”



“Okay, young fella. Good bye.” Cannon looked at the ship’s clock and read the time as 0725. *Derzky* had now pulled to within a thousand yards of the port bow of *Courtney* DE-1021, call sign Utah Lake, and slowed to formation speed and turned back to formation course which was still heading east.

Cannon wondered if he had been unduly alarmed, he even speculated that he might be momentarily paranoid. Meaney’s admonition, “Never trust the Russians” ran through his mind. *Never trust the Russians. I could take it too far. Then again, maybe not.* The captain’s phone, mounted on the bulkhead right next to his chair, rang. It was Pebbles. Captain Meehan spoke briefly and hung up and called the admiral in Flag Plot.

“Good morning, Admiral,”

“Good morning, Hal. What do you make of this activity?”

“Some of the boys think we may be seeing the prelude to something bigger,”

“I think so, too.” Shortly thereafter the admiral himself put out an advisory message in clear voice over PriTac scrambler.

“All Trapper units, all Trapper units, this is Shimmer himself, be alert for unusual activity; repeat be alert for unusual activity. Thank you, out.” The admiral was brief and didn’t ask for a roger. He wanted the circuit clear for action.

SAU Alfa was operating in the Baltic about a thousand air miles to the south of *Essex*. She left the Gulf of Riga to starboard and the City of Riga lay 125 miles away to the southeast. Her course would take her no closer than 30 nautical miles to the Estonian shore. Bell Labs continued to confirm that her TASS was performing well, and they received excellent telemetry. Her minder clung to *Van Voorhis*’ port quarter at one thousand yards like a bulldog.

At 0733 it looked to a *Stickell* radarman on the surface search radar that *Prozorlivy* had strayed off station. She was now at 900 yards. Over the CI net, the combat information net from CIC to CIC, *Stickell* called *Van Voorhis*.

“Twin Grove, this is Red Cross. Interrogative, is our minder on station, over.”

“This is Twin Grove, negative, looks like she changed speed. Let’s track her, over.”

“Roger.” Both groups of radar men began to shrug off the drowsiness of the 04-08 watch and began to lay down radar ranges and bearings on their dead reckoning tracers.

“Twin Grove, Red Cross, we have her CBDR, CPA 0800, steering 10 degrees to the right of you, speed 11. Do you concur?”

“Twin Grove, roger, concur, out.”

“Twin Grove, Red Cross, rig for collision,” came over Pri-Tac, the bridge to bridge UHF radio circuit, “Rig for collision, over.”

“Twin Grove, wilco, out.” The CIC Watch Officer called the *Stickell’s* CO on the bridge and advised him that *Prozorlivy* had changed course and speed. She was on a collision course at 11 knots, and if she remained on course she would collide with *Van Voorhis* at 0800. *Stickell’s* captain immediately got a message out.

FLASH

1507051Z JUN67

FM CO STICKELL DD-888

TO CTG 83.3

INFO CTE 83.3.1

SUBJ POSSIBLE SPECIAL INCIDENT

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

1. PROZORLIVY CHANGED COURSE BY 10 DEGREES TOWARDS TWIN GROVE INCREASED SPEED TO 11-12 KTS AT 150730Z
2. SHE BEARS 260 RELATIVE TWIN GROVE AT 600 YARDS TIME 150742Z CBDR / CPA

150800Z

3. SPECIAL INCIDENT TEAMS CALLED AWAY ON BOTH UNITS TWIN GROVE RIGGING FOR COLLISION.
4. MY LATEST POSIT 58-14.52 N 20-41.91 E APPROX 310T ZZ 126 NM TO STOCKHOLM MUNI AIRPORT 150745Z

Admiral Simms immediately ordered the message forwarded to CINCUSNAVEUR, CINCLANTFLT, and CINCASWFORLANT. Then he put out the following request:

FLASH

150755Z JUN67

FM CTG 83.3

TO CINCLANTFLT

COMASWFORLANT

INFO CINCUSNAVEUR

USS STICKELL

USS VAN VOORHIS

SUBJ COMBAT AIR PATROL IMMEDIATE REQUEST

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

REF MY LAST

1. REQUEST IMMEDIATE COMBAT AIR PATROL AND AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING AIRCRAFT TO SUPPORT CO SAU ALFA USS STICKELL DD-888 CALL SIGN RED CROSS ACCOMPANIED BY

USS VAN VOORHIS DE-1028 EXPERIMENTAL  
TASS SHIP CALL SIGN TWIN GROVE BOTH  
UNITS UP UHF FREQ BUTTON 8

2. PLEASE ADVISE ASAP

And a third message went out to *Stickell* and *Van Voorhis*

OPERATIONAL IMMEDIATE

150758Z JUN 67

FM CTG 83.3

TO USS STICKELL

INFO CINCUSNAVEUR

CINCASWFORLANT

CINCLANTFLT

USS VAN VOORHIS

SUBJ STEAM TO MIDDLE OF BALTIC

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

1. CHANGE COURSE IMMEDIATELY TO THE WEST TO OPEN FROM HOSTILE SHORE TO PROVIDE MORE AIRSPACE BETWEEN YOU AND HOSTILE SHORE. INCREASE TO BEST SPEED FOR TWIN GROVE WITH STREAMED TASS.
2. PROVIDE SITREPS DIRECT TO FULL ADDRESSEE LIST AS OPERATIONALLY EXPEDIENT. ENSURE BUTTON 8 UHF IS UP FOR CONTROL OF COMBAT AIR PATROL.

3. CARRY OUT YOUR MISSION AND SHOW THE  
FLAG WITH PRIDE. YOU ARE NOT ALONE.  
GOOD LUCK.

Admiral Simms' last paragraph was written in accordance with a long tradition of words of encouragement and support from flag officers to the junior officers operating in the line. They were often code words to counter-balance words of caution that may have been over-done and to remind the men who manned the ships and the aircraft that the US Navy was first, last, and foremost a fighting force.

Near RAF Geilenkirchen, Germany was a nearby field at Wildenrath. Royal Air Force Number 19 Squadron had the duty to provide ready combat air patrol on the tarmac, and their English Electric Lightnings were armed with 30mm cannon and were shortly rolling down the runway. On the climb-out they contacted the German early warning aircraft who in turn advised them that USAF KC-135 tanker support was available in the air to support the Lightnings.

At MACH 2 the section of Number 19 Squadron Lightnings had a chance to reach SAU Alfa shortly after 0800 though there were significant concerns that aircraft streaking out of West Germany heading northeast towards the northern Baltic would provoke an aggressive reaction from the Warsaw Pact. Accordingly the aircraft were instructed to loiter high over the island of Bornholm in Danish airspace under the control of the early warning aircraft, but nevertheless at a height and distance where Warsaw Pact air search radars could paint them and serve as a show of force. Meanwhile the AEW aircraft positioned herself closer to Gotland in order to track and document the action of the ships on the surface with her side-looking radar.

Back in *Essex* there was now no doubt in the minds of the Flag Staff nor the ship's company that a coordinated incident was underway, but no one knew to what lengths the Soviets were planning to go.

“Trapper this is Echo Oscar, Bogey 6 turned inbound heading 355 at 180. Speed 400 knots, angels 29, time 150735Z, Shimmer over.”

“This is Shimmer, we copy, out.”

“Shimmer this is Echo Oscar, Bogey 6 estimated time overhead at 0802Z, Request permission to track with fire control radar, over.”

“Echo Oscar, roger your bogey dope. Permission granted to use fire control radars in accordance with op-order rules of engagement, out.” Depending on the missile system TG 83.3’s missile ships would begin to illuminate without locking on to the Badgers between 150 to 125 miles out. Tracking by missile control radar in addition to long range air search radar was understood to be a serious warning, but it was short of a hostile act which was unmistakably signaled when such radars were switched to lock-on mode. Bogey 6 undoubtedly picked up the missile-control radars. She proceeded fearlessly towards 83.3 but it was now the pilots of Bogey 6 that trusted in NATO’s restraint.

“Bridge, Combat, Echo Oscar has just reported Bogey 6 inbound. Expected time overhead at 0802.” Cannon responded to the 1MC.

“Bridge, aye, that’s right overhead at launch with the recovery planes descending from the stack.” Again Cannon looked at Stansky and Captain Meehan and they both nodded. “Anything on Kilo 21 yet?”

“Negative, sir.”

Cannon’s relief arrived promptly at 0745 for the 08 -12 watch. Cannon gave his relief a quick summary.

“We are in the midst of multiple unfolding actions. We have *Derzky* on *Courtney*’s beam looking like she is poised to shoulder when we come to Fox Corpen. The signal is not in the air yet. We have two Badger’s inbound and will be overhead at just after 0800 when we launch and recover. There’s a November Class nuke loose about 160 miles away bearing one three zero, and *Van Voorhis* and *Stickell* are expecting harassment in the Baltic north of Riga and east of Stockholm about 30 miles from the Estonian shore. And I have the

conn.”

“Christ, has the shit hit the fan?”

“Not quite, but when Ivan heard we were bored standing watches on this cruise, he offered us an antidote.”

“He didn’t have to put on a three ring act. I relieve you, sir,” and he saluted.

“Ensign Klein has the conn. I stand relieved.” Cannon returned the salute and went immediately to CIC, the ship’s nerve center.

The weather was deteriorating and occasional showers fell which affected visibility as they came and went. The ship had not operated under visual flight rules since it left the American coast.

Inside CIC Cannon quietly searched the plexiglass status boards which the radarmen maintained with colored grease pencils. Each board had a man behind it wearing sound-powered phones who had mastered the art of writing backwards in a clear hand. The air plot showed the track of *Bogey 6*. The surface board displayed the SOSUS location for *Kilo-21*, the sonobuoy field, and the aircraft in the sector. A third board represented the task group’s formation and assigned units and call signs. *Derzky*’s track was prominently displayed. Finally there was a status board covering *Essex*’ air plan and listed by side number all aircraft airborne and those scheduled for the next launch and their missions.

But his main reason for being in CIC was because it was the one place where all tactical information was received, and where it was received first, and where he could observe the raw input and evaluate it for himself. As his eyes adjusted to the light he could see *Pebbles* sitting on a stool in the back row.

When *Pebbles* saw Cannon, he handed him a small penlight and a SOSUS message. After proceeding towards TG 83.3 for two hours, *Kilo-21* was now returning to port at 15 knots. *Pebbles* leaned towards him and whispered to Cannon, “I think she was intended to be a feint or to see if they could saturate us with multiple threats and overwhelm us with activity. That may be *Derzky*’s role, too.”

“Possibly, she isn’t doing much, yet. I was looking for her to interfere with the formation.” Cannon rechecked the status board and noted that he missed Kilo 21’s change in speed and direction when he scanned the boards on his arrival. Pebbles went on.

“But they are learning something or confirming something today. They must know by our reaction that we had information that Kilo 21 was there.”

“The Jezebel barrier?”

“When we were allies in the big war, we put hydrophones on the ocean floor at the entrance to key harbors. They know we are refining passive acoustic technology, and after the Cuban missile crisis they knew we had information on their subs when they got to the East Coast. They just don’t know how extensive our network is or how effective our hydrophones are. By the way, neither do I, but the Russians are working on it. Let’s see what the Badgers do.”

In the Baltic Sea, Red Cross ordered SAU Alfa to increase speed to 15 knots and turned to course 315T which put SAU Alfa on a course moving away from the Estonian shore to gain airspace in international territory if the RAF combat air patrol needed it to maneuver. It also put Twin Grove on a course to cross *Prozorlivy*’s bow. *Prozorlivy* increased her speed to 17 knots. Red Cross increased speed to 25 knots with a cloud of black smoke from her stack and white water behind her stern and commenced a wide left hand turn crossing Twin Grove’s bow and *Prozorlivy*’s bow. She circled behind both ships and took up a position off the port quarter of Twin Grove and just abaft *Prozorlivy*’s starboard beam. Her position was one where she might insert herself between the two ships. *Prozorlivy* responded by increasing speed to 20 knots and gained on *Van Voorhis*. When she was forward of *Van Voorhis*’ beam she turned right and began to close her rapidly.

The radarmen in both American ships recomputed the closest point of approach which indicated a collision in several minutes on *Van Voorhis*’ port side as *Prozorlivy* stalked



her and maneuvered to create a constant bearing to *Van Voorhis* with decreasing range. The Commanding Officer of *Stickell* became increasingly concerned for damage to the TASS gear as well as to *Van Voorhis*.

He maneuvered *Stickell* to avoid the TASS and drew his ship up to *Van Voorhis*' quarter as he watched the situation in front of him. He felt oddly helpless. If he moved on *Prozorlivy* pre-emptively, he would violate international law, but if he waited until the situation became clearly one of self-defense, *Van Voorhis* might take damage compromising her seaworthiness, her TASS or worse, injury to her crew.

"Twin Grove this is Red Cross. Red Cross is setting General Quarters. Recommend same, over."

"Twin Grove, roger, out." The OOD turned to his commanding officer sitting in the Captain's chair on the starboard side.

"Go ahead. Make it so."

"General Quarters, General Quarters, set Condition Zebra throughout the ship. General Quarters, General Quarters." The claxon whooped away. The GQ Boatswain Mate reached his battle station in the pilot house and repeated the call over the 1 MC. "General Quarters, General Quarters. Set Condition Zebra throughout the ship. General Quarters, General Quarters."

A mad rush of men began in both ships as the men scrambled to their battle stations. Their hearts were beating high as adrenaline coursed through their veins, and the veterans were at the very least slightly anxious, and many of the less-experienced men were all-out scared. Nevertheless a certain orderliness prevailed. Men and officers needing to go forward went up the starboard side of the ship and men needing to go aft went down the port side. The men rolled down the sleeves of their shirts and buttoned their shirt collars as they ran, and they tucked their pant legs in their socks when they reached their battle stations.

Very shortly the scrambling stopped and those who needed helmets and life jackets donned them while the fire-fighting crews broke out the fire hoses, extinguishers,

breathing apparatuses, and damage control parties brought their tools to their battle stations. Sound-powered communications among the various circuits and teams were established, and every hatch was secured and dogged ensuring watertight integrity throughout the ship. The forced air and air-conditioning systems were shut down and the temperature in the compartments began to slowly climb and abetted the men's perspiration which began to flow vigorously as they anxiously ran to their battle stations. For a few moments there was nothing to do but wait.

*Prozorlvy* approached to within 100 yards of *Van Voorhis* and then picked up a parallel course. Whether the assurances received by the State Department after the *Walker* incident mattered was not clear, but the Russian steamed with *Van Voorhis*, close aboard, for 30 minutes, menacing *Van Voorhis*, before retaking her position at 1000 yards.

In *Stickell* and *Van Voorhis* they considered this a trial run, a test of sorts by *Prozorlvy* to see how SAU A and TG 83.3 would react.

In the Barents Sea, *Essex* and ships in company were beginning their turn to Foxtrot Corpen when the Queer Badger began an easy descent towards *Essex* and switched on her X-band jamming equipment tuned for *Essex* SPN-6 approach control radar. The radar screen in the air traffic control center was immediately covered with clutter obscuring the friendly aircraft blips just as the instrument recovery was beginning in poor weather under positive radar control.

The minders had done their job and knew exactly when *Essex* commenced flight operations and when her aircraft descended from marshal to final approach under IFR conditions and were most vulnerable to jamming. They also knew the exact frequency of the SPN-6 radar.

Immediately the petty officers in the approach control center tuned the radar to new frequencies to eliminate the snow, but the Queer Badger responded by identifying each new frequency and jamming it anew putting *Essex*' aircraft at extreme risk until Bogey 6 passed overhead and could not

direct a beam at *Essex*. *Essex* rolled out of her turn and settled on Foxtrot Corpen as the Queer Badger released several canisters of 3 centimeter chaff to continue jamming the SPN-6.

The chaff was made of very light, twisted aluminum wire and cut to a length designed to reflect X-band radar energy while floating slowly to earth. Several minutes later the chaff littered the flight deck and now posed a risk of being ingested in the aircraft engines as the aircraft were launched and recovered.

The pilots coolly brought their planes aboard although the visibility was never more than 300 yards. The SPN-6 radar screens were affected for several minutes but by skillfully tuning the radar the controllers could minimize the effect of jamming, and they could with difficulty work through it.

The Russians were mischief-making in the extreme. The former university student of real politik was being tempered by the hard and bitter peace, as President Kennedy, described the Cold War. Cannon took it all in, all the while saying to himself, *never trust the Russians. Meaney was right. Never trust the fucking bastards.*

The Queer Badger climbed back to altitude while the photo bird, which had remained high, now descended and rolled in for a picture shoot. As the Queer Badger came around to a reciprocal heading, the Flag called *de Zeven Provincien*.

“Echo Oscar, this is Shimmer. Echo Oscar is authorized to lock-on, repeat lock-on Bogey 6 if Bogey 6 recommences jamming, over.” The admiral, himself a former carrier pilot, had enough of Soviet shenanigans.

“This is Echo Oscar, roger.” Echo Oscar’s radarmen in her ECM compartment focused on the SPN-6 frequency. However Bogey 6 knew the recovery was complete and switched to the SPS-29 long range air search radar. Instantly they picked up Bogey 6’s jamming equipment as she proceeded towards *Essex* on a second jamming run. Over the combat information net between CICs, *de Zeven Provincien* sought confirmation of jamming. “Banknote this is Echo Oscar, interrogative your

gadget?” Banknote responded in the clear to avoid any mistakes.

“This is Banknote, my long range air search radar is being jammed. Snow and clutter obscuring my friendly blips, over.”

“Echo Oscar, roger out.” The Dutch ship switched her missile control radar to lock-on mode and waited. Approximately twenty seconds later Echo Oscar received a call from *Essex*.

“Echo Oscar, this is Banknote, jamming terminated. My gadget clear, repeat my gadget clear, over.” There were a few cheers in *Essex*’s CATCC and CIC, but for those who understood the potential gravity of the situation, there was a general sigh of relief.

Message delivered; message received. It was a typical Cold War stand off. Nobody in their right mind wanted a shooting war between the principals in the Cold War.

Cannon left CIC for a late breakfast in the wardroom. He checked the “C” box for mail and found two letters—one from Tish and one from his mother. He read the letter from Tish first.

*June 12<sup>th</sup>,*

*Dear Robbie,*

*Just a brief note today, Caro.*

*I’m now trying to get into the anti-hero’s private life. As I mentioned the translation issues make it difficult to develop an accurate profile of C’s personality. Still I believe there is a scholarly contribution in making an effort to explain his behavior in contemporary psychological terms and exploring the notion that it influenced his art or was reflected in his art. Given that we know that his self-portrait appears in several paintings, and that he painted no less than 12 decapitations, one senses fertile ground here. It might even be fertile abnormal*

ground.

*Professor Davis has introduced me to a psychiatrist at Physicians & Surgeons who knows other psychiatrists who sort of have an avocation doing this. So Dr. Kreuter says she would be happy to work with me on the subject, and now I'm rereading everything with new awareness of Caravaggio and motivation to be as accurate and as insightful about gathering relevant information.*

*Here's a strange piece in the oddity of C's personality. Mancini, who published in 1956, tells the following anecdote, indubitably hearsay evidence, as lawyers would say, as an example of the strangeness of C's behavior.*

*Soon after C is taken into his patron's household, that is, Cardinal del Monte's household in Rome, he is visited by his brother, Giovan Battista, a friar monk. When he arrives Caravaggio refuses to see him and denies that Giovan Battista is his brother or that he has any siblings. The friar is understandably baffled and crushed by his older brother's denial who is just beginning to acquire fame as a painter. The Cardinal sympathetically suggests that he return in three days. When Giovan Battista returns to del Monte's palazzo, C agrees to see him. Among other things the friar monk offers a fairly traditional prayer for an ageing bachelor—a prayer for C to marry, and if and when he marries, to be blessed with children. But Caravaggio does not respond and shows him out without even saying goodbye or bidding his brother farewell.*

*What explains this behavior? He denies his brother? He denies his siblings? If you have any ideas, you, who accurately labeled him the anti-hero painter, please offer them. By the way, I'm thinking of stealing that as the title of my thesis—"Caravaggio, the Anti-Hero Painter of the Reformation."*

*You, Caro, have been very cryptic about Essex and her mission. I worry about you up in the Arctic Circle*

*near the Russians. Please take care of yourself. I want to see you alive in London, Robbie. I miss you greatly. One more silly time—*

*Love, second class,*

*Tish*

As usual he reread her letter, as always, scrutinizing the subtext, but he found it straight-forward. Next he read his mother's letter which contained a lot of incidental family matters about his younger sister who was just graduating from college and thinking seriously about marrying a boy that Cannon had never met.

Both of his sisters were attractive and had "good genes," as Tish would say, and they always seemed to have boys chasing them. And they would perpetually tease their older brother about his "love life" or lack thereof and his penchant for quiet scholarship rather than an active social life. It got pretty rough on the few occasions when the girls and Dutch Van Vechten ganged up on him. This undoubtedly accounted, to some degree, for the issue that Cannon had with women. They were only somewhat mollified when Margot Rush turned out to be a successful model. Until that time she was just a very tall, bony girl who wore no make up, dressed stylishly with a bohemian flair and wrote poetry.

The thought of his little sister marrying got Cannon thinking briefly about marriage and Tish, but he dismissed it as an implausible idea. *Tish would never wait for me to leave active duty... go to law school or business school... settle into a proper civilian career.* His mother's letter ended by reminding him that his father's birthday was coming up on June 14<sup>th</sup>.



*Essex, de Zeven Provinciën, and SH3 helicopters from Helasron 5, 1967*



A Grumman S-2F Tracker Coming Aboard *USS Essex* CVS-9, 1967. The tail markings suggest this might be a bird from VS-22, The Checkmates



## About the Author

Francis J. Partel, Jr., better known as Frank, was educated at Columbia College and on Yankee Station with the United States Navy in the Gulf of Tonkin during 1968.

He received his commission as an Ensign after attending US Naval Officer's Candidate School, Newport, RI, and served in aircraft carriers on active duty from October 1965 until December 1968.

Prior to college he graduated from Northfield Mount Hermon School, and after active duty he completed his MBA at Columbia University on the GI Bill. He grew up in Hoboken, NJ, and lived most of his adult life in lower Fairfield County, CT. He was a business executive by profession and was a senior executive with Citicorp, American Express, and Chase Manhattan Bank in New York City before retiring from US Bancorp in Minneapolis. For five years he taught as an Adjunct Associate Professor in the MBA program at Stern School of Business, New York University. Mr. Partel is also co-holder of US Patent 7,624,068. He is married and splits the year living in Bryn Mawr, PA, Vero Beach, FL, and Chappaquiddick Island, Martha's Vineyard.

Mr. Partel integrates thorough research and historical accuracy with fictitious story-telling to create his own unique genre of literature which has been referred to as *journalistic fiction*.

His first piece fiction, *A Wound in the Mind, The Court-Martial of Lance Corporal Cachora, USMC*, was published in 2009. *The Chess Players* is his first full-length novel.