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**Interviews of Former Special Agent of the FBI
Richard S. Hahn (1967 – 1999)
Interviewed by Brian R. Hollstein
On March 20, 2008, April 3, 2008, and
April 15, 2008**

Edited for spelling, repetitions, etc. by Sandra Robinette on June 26, 2008. Final edit with Mr. Hahn's corrections made by Sandra Robinette on September 3, 2008.

Brian R. Hollstein: I'll start the recording now. My name is Brian R. Hollstein. Today's date is the 20th of March, 2008. I'm speaking to Richard S. Hahn of Seal Beach, California. He was in the Bureau from 1967 to 1999. Rick, if you'll give me a date of birth and that'll probably do it and then I'll just check the signal level here.

Richard S. Hahn: Yes. Date of birth is January 18, 1949.

Hollstein: Okay. Good. I think we're alright. A little background on things and then some warnings here as such.

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So, let's start off. Rick, maybe what would be best would be to have you tell us quickly about your life before the Bureau, then when you entered the Bureau; what offices you were in and the general case work that you did, up until you retired. And then we'll go back and talk in detail about, you know, certain elements of your career. Would that be okay? Where did you start off life?

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Hahn: Actually, there's not much of a beginning before the Bureau. I kind of grew up in the Bureau. I became a clerical employee at age 18; it was a couple months after my 18th birthday. I had been aware that the Bureau did hire clerical employees; I had a church member who was a Special Agent in Chicago, a guy by the name of Courtney Garrish ...

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: And when I graduated from high school, I wasn't sure that I was going to go to college. I wasn't sure what I was going to do and knowing that these jobs were available, I applied. I talked to Courtney and I applied and ended up as a clerical employee. And over the course of the next six years, of course, I recognized that I needed to go to college to make anything of myself and so I put myself through college nights. I also did my military time as a Reservist actually, but I was active for six months right in the middle of the year so I lost a year there. And in 1973, I graduated from DePaul University and became an Agent in the fall of that year.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm. DePaul is in Chicago?

Hahn: Yes. DePaul University is in Chicago.

Hollstein: Uh-huh. So you did your clerical time there in Chicago, then?

Hahn: Exactly. Did my clerical time in Chicago. Courtney Garrish was good enough to look after me and said, "You probably don't want to go to Washington, DC. We'll see if we can't work something out." And sure enough they gave me a position there in Chicago.

So, when I became an Agent, they sent me first to Little Rock. I was only there for about ten months. I felt very much like a fish out of water, being a city kid.

Hollstein: (Chuckling)

Hahn: (Chuckling) And then they sent me to New York. It was an eye-opener. Chicago, certainly, at that time, was a pasture town compared to New York City. Given the times, and let me kind of point that out. I became a clerical employee in 1967 when the radical chic was very big with young people, in particular. Of course, there were demonstrations against the war and whatnot. I became very much interested in the politics of the New Left, the radical activities, the Weathermen, when they first went underground, the Black Panthers. That sort of thing was all part and parcel of that time.

And, as it turned out, once I got to New York, I was only there for a few months, when a group called the FALN blew up a restaurant at midday in New York City, Fraunces Tavern, just off Wall Street, killing four, wounding about 60 people. They formed a new squad in New York. I got involved in that. I spent three years doing that. Then someone in FBI HQ wanted someone that knew those cases to go to San Juan so I went to San Juan for three years. Learned Spanish and went there; became the guy who responded to all the bombings in San Juan. Then the Bureau sent me back to Chicago. I was there for seven years, still working primarily Domestic Terrorism, some International Terrorism.

And, by that time, I had gotten a pretty good reputation with the people in the FBI Laboratory that worked on the bombing cases, they analyzed the debris sent in from various cases and whatnot. Had a standing invitation to come back there when they had an opening. So I took them up on that and that was 1987 and spent six years in the FBI Laboratory till 1993. Went all over the world in response to bombings, worked a number of very interesting cases. And then, at that point I was 45 years old. I was looking at the last, at the end of my career and I looked around for a place that I could settle outside of Washington, DC, and I ended up competing for, and getting the Long Beach Resident Agency, where I became the SSRA.

Hollstein: Uh-huh.

Hahn: There's my career. So that's the long version.

Hollstein: (Laughing) That's a long version of the short version, right? Great! Well, you were in the thick of things all the way through?

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Hahn: Even when I was going out, getting ready to go out the door at the FBI Laboratory when the World Trade Center bombing occurred in 1993, and myself and a guy named Dave Williams ran that crime scene. We organized all the different agencies that responded and, you know, made sure that the guys that were working the crime scene had the equipment they needed and kept organized, and kept the evidence flowing in and making sure it was well-documented and whatnot. And because of that, in 1995, even though I was no longer in the lab, when Oklahoma City had the bombing at the Murrah Federal Building ...

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: They called on me and Dave Williams again to come in and handle that.

Hollstein: Wow! Well, we're going to need more than an hour, I think, to talk about all of this (laughing). That's a lot of action.

Let's go back to Chicago and your clerical time and just give me a little feel for what Chicago was like between '67 and '74, and what type of work you did as a clerk there.

Hahn: Well, of course, I started out as an Indices Clerk, filing three by five cards. In those days, of course, nobody had computers and so the way that the Bureau operated was titles of cases were indexed onto three by five cards. You know, like if it were Hollstein, it would be Hollstein comma Brian ...

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: And if it was theft of 500 pounds of premium meat then you'd have Meat comma Premium indexed also and the date of the theft. And so you had two or three different subject matter things that you'd index. And, of course, the way that all that worked was the Agents would index the cases themselves and the Squad Clerk would then type up the index cards and they'd all flow to the Indices where they were filed. And that's how mail was directed as it came in and out, as it came into various offices.

Hollstein: So one particular, one case could generate eight, ten, twenty cards even.

Hahn: Oh absolutely.

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Hollstein: Yeah.

Hahn: Absolutely. And, of course, making sure that these things were filed, I mean, you had to know your ABCs, obviously (chuckling). Making sure that they were filed and the volume of paper in an office like Chicago, I mean, the Indices section there was about fifteen people just daily, opening up the mail and figuring out where it was supposed to go inside the office.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: And then I became the Security Patrol Clerk, as they called it in those days, which was the night shifts. I worked in the Code Vault, sending encrypted messages. And in those days it was ... actually, we started out using the, basically, the *enigma* machine. They used, [what was] called the Afsam Seven, which was the old enigma machine from World War II, was the encryption system.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: Which was interesting. And just making sure the mail got out; trash got picked up, just taking care of odds and ends. And during the night shift, they would assign a supervisor on a rotating basis to handle calls at night, both the four to midnight and the midnight to eight shift. So the clerical employees were the ones that really knew where everything was; knew where the keys were; knew, you know, where cars were; knew what phone numbers were to respond to emergencies, things like that.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: And so we would kind of usher the supervisors or the Agents through the various things that had to be done on the evening shift.

Hollstein: Did it tend to be guys that were going to college?

Hahn: Pretty much all guys, some gals, but pretty much all guys going to college for the Security Patrol Clerk duties.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

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Hahn: And then about three years into it they opened up what they called an Investigative Clerk Program. And those were, the job was to work an eight to five shift but to go out and serve subpoenas for the FBI; check police records and things like that, the legwork type of things.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: So I became one of those and that's how I spent the last three years of my clerical six years, going out serving subpoenas at the phone company; checking records at the police departments, that sort of thing.

Hollstein: What was it like, you mentioned that this was the time of all the New Left activities and here you were a young man in the Bureau? It was a very different life in the Bureau than it was being a Black Panther or a Weatherman, or what have you.

Hahn: You know, particularly, you know, being eighteen, nineteen, twenty years old, being on campus, attending campuses. I started out attending a junior college there in Chicago and then, subsequently, I actually spent a semester at University of Illinois Circle Campus. Not only did I have one foot, kind of, in this very young movement of students and there was a lot of pressure on campus to be a participant in demonstrations and things like that ...

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: ... and then one foot in the FBI, where I was seeing how the FBI was responding to this. What I thought was really fascinating, and what kept me in the FBI, at that point in time, was the fact that I could talk to the Agents that were working those sorts of things and get intelligent responses as to what they thought about the war and what they thought about the demonstrations. And why certain people were considered to be much too inflammatory in the environment or in the society.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: Everything from Black Panthers to Weathermen, like I said, just seeing how all that worked out and understanding it from both perspectives or, primarily from the law enforcement perspective ...

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: ... as to how irresponsible these people were. And then knowing, also, that a lot of the demonstrations were full of kids that were doing it for the thrill of it, not because they really had any serious beliefs; not because they understood what they were doing. So it was kind of fascinating and when you looked at the leadership of Bernadine Dohrn and whatnot, who, you know, was the founder of the Weathermen ...

Hollstein: Right.

Hahn: ... you just really, it left me really questioning whether, you know, the society could hold itself together.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm. Yeah. It's easy looking back on it, and we say well, it didn't come apart. But you didn't know at the time. Not at all. Yeah.

Hahn: And the other thing is I think a lot of, I kind of had an inside track because in those days there were two or three television stations, you know, ABC, NBC, CBS. You got the nightly news on in a 60 minute format, usually 30 minutes of international news and 30 minutes of local news. Most people had no idea the size of these demonstrations. Most people had no idea of how vitriolic some of the speeches being made by these people were. And most people had no idea how much stuff was going on simultaneously in different places in the country. Whereas, from my perspective, I could see a lot more of this ...

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: ... than was on the six o'clock news. And so I understood completely why the government was very worried about the, you know, the state of the society. It made it quite understandable why the Nixon Administration, for example, was so paranoid about the society truly being torn asunder. So. Fascinating.

Hollstein: Yeah. It was good times to be in our line of work; but certainly not good times for the country. Those were real problems.

So you finished up at DePaul. What did you major in there in college?

Hahn: Actually, I majored in English Literature.

Hollstein: Oh, good for you!

Hahn: It was one of my weak areas and I thought well, I probably should shore up something that I'm weak in. So that's what I did.

Hollstein: Well, I've had English and French as my majors and English Lit. And I took it because I like to read. (Laughing) And I learned to live by my wits after that because being an English Literature major, as you well know, is not particularly useful in the job market.

You joined as an Agent, then, in ... ?

Hahn: Seventy-three.

Hollstein: Seventy-three. Okay. And went to training school like everybody else. Anything of note at training school that struck you? Was it a surprise? Any of it a surprise after having been a clerk for that number of years?

Hahn: No. Not at all. And I found training school relatively easy. I mean, I had a leg up, obviously, understanding all the paperwork; knowing the vernacular used in the Bureau, that sort of thing. So those aspects of things were pretty easy. But I think one of the funny things is that some of my classmates, I think, kind of thought I was a hippie or something. I mean, at the time, I played guitar. I still play guitar, actually, and, you know, would ... I was, you know, maybe not so much into the jock stuff that a lot of the guys were in to.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: We had two females in the class which had only been going on for about a year and a half or two years, having females in the class. I befriended both of them and encouraged them to, you know, do what was necessary. And, of course, the girls had to do the same physical things that the boys did.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

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Hahn: I actually got one of the gals out on the road and ran her day after day so that she could make the run on time. And there were just some guys that just kind of resented who I was and thought maybe I didn't belong there (chuckling).

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: 'Cause I just wasn't jock-ey enough. And I found that interesting. I mean, I didn't let it really bother me but it just struck me as odd.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm. Well, there's a lot of military ...

Hahn: Yeah. There were.

Hollstein: ... guys. You know, it's funny, I left the Army and joined the Bureau and before I went down for training school I had myself out, because I had gotten out of shape. I was in a staff job in the Army and I was out running and doing all my push-ups and pull-ups and trying to get ready, you know, for some pretty tough physical activity only to discover that it wasn't (chuckling). They had assumed that we had all of our physical stuff in the military and when I went through in '67 it was a piece of cake, physically. It's kind of interesting. Now, as time has gone by, you hear about the training of the New Agents and it's a very different, much more military training.

Hahn: Hmm.

Hollstein: Anyway, so after training, off you went to Little Rock.

Hahn: Yes.

Hollstein: And what did you do in Little Rock?

Hahn: Well, you know, they had me doing a little bit of everything, as is typical. It was still very much like Hoover's FBI which was take somebody who has relatives in Florida and who grew up in Texas and, you know, you take the map and you figure out where they'll be 500 light years away from home ...

Hollstein: (Laughing)

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Hahn: ... and so they sent me to Little Rock where I knew no one. I mean, the culture shock, though, was what got me. For the first time in my life I saw people plowing with horses. I saw people address black people as niggers, which just completely shocked me.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: Particularly coming from Chicago and having gone through things like, you know, the time of the assassination of Martin Luther King and whatnot. It just completely shocked me that there was still that in parts of society.

They had me working Theft of Government Property and TFIS and going out and doing recruiting work.

Hollstein: Excuse me. People might not know what TFIS is? Theft from Interstate Shipment?

Hahn: Theft from Interstate Shipment.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: Truck thefts basically.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: And had me out on the road doing a lot of recruitment; talking to high schools and whatnot recruiting clerical employees, which the Bureau is, at Washington is always in need of or was, at least, in those days.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: And I saw some interesting things. I [was], literally, going down, up and down a two-lane highway looking for a particular person's farm. Came across an old man walking down the road and I rolled down my window and I said, "Excuse me, can you tell me where the Hanson farm is?" And he scratched his chin and says, "Well, you go a look and a half down this road and when you get there you turn to your left and," you know, he goes on with the directions and then says, ...

Hollstein: (Laughing)

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Hahn: ... “you got that?” And I go, “Well, just one question. What’s a look and a half?” And he laughed and he says, “That’s where you go as far as you can see and then half again.”

Hollstein: (Laughing) New word.

Hahn: Strange things. I literally went to an applicant’s residence that was, it looked like the Beverly Hillbillies cabin. And it was in a clearing, in the woods. In fact, when I wanted to go there, I went to the Post Office in the little town, in Arkansas, to get the directions from the Postmaster. The Postmaster said, “There’s no way you’re going to find it. It’s one o’clock. Why don’t you wait till two o’clock, when schools out, and one of the children from that family, will hook up with you and take you there.” And, of course, I argued a little bit but the Postmaster was insistent.

So, I had lunch and she, in the meantime, called over to the school and arranged for me to just go to the principal’s office at two o’clock or 2:30. I did that and picked up about a ten-year-old young lad and stuck him in the car with me. And we’re driving down this gravel road and it’s tree-lined on both sides and he says, “Turn here.” And I go, “Turn where?” And he says, “Here, between the trees.” (Chuckling) Literally drove about, oh, half a mile down through the trees, where there was no road, and came to a clearing and here was this log cabin with a tin roof on it. And, literally, a woman cooking or washing clothes, actually, over an open fire in a big black iron kettle. It was the darndest thing I’d ever seen in my life.

Hollstein: Yeah.

Hahn: And her daughter was a high school senior and had applied for a job in Washington. The lady had no idea where Washington was, or what the FBI really did. It was just amazing, just amazing.

Hollstein: Yeah. Well, imagine that kid arriving in Washington. Wow!

Hahn: Exactly. Precisely.

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Hollstein: Well, they went through a lot of young people because it was a disciplined job. And there were a lot that they got out of places like that. And I would imagine there'd be tremendous turnover. You know.

Hahn: Well, exactly. It was not unusual for somebody to be there a month and then go home. And, of course, the Bureau in those days, they wanted you to stay a year. I think that the deal was that if you didn't stay a year that they wouldn't necessarily give you a good recommendation. They'd say that you didn't fulfill your contract.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: So a lot of kids did hang in there and do a year. But, as you say, a big turnover rate in either case.

Hollstein: Yeah. Yeah. Did you do any civil rights work during that time period? In Little Rock?

Hahn: I did not.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: There was some of that going on in the office. Of course, Little Rock, of course, is where desegregation was ruled on.

Hollstein: Right.

Hahn: In about, what, 1958?

Hollstein: Somewhere around there, yeah. There was a lot of troubles back in then. But things really hadn't quieted down that much anyway, though, if people were willing to talk as you were saying they did.

Hahn: Well, you know, the signs on bathroom doors had been painted over but had not been removed. The signs that said white's only ...

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: ... black's only.

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Hollstein: Yeah. I remember that in Tampa when we were down there.

Hahn: Right.

Hollstein: In Tampa and Fort Meyers in Western Florida, there. Just a little white-wash. Just very lightly over these big black signs.

Hahn: Precisely.

Hollstein: You were in Little Rock for, you said, what ten months?

Hahn: Yeah. Well, ten months and they then shipped me off to New York.

Hollstein: And what happened in New York?

Hahn: I got there shortly just after Labor Day. You know, I'm thinking that I'm a big city kid and I'm thinking boy this is good. I'm going to New York. I like this. And if you know New York at all, you know how I-80 comes in to the city across the George Washington Bridge.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: Well, of course, I drove from Little Rock up to Chicago, visited the family for a couple of days. Got back in the car with all my worldly belongings and drove I-80 across the country to the east coast and I knew that the office was on Third Avenue at that time. It was at Third and 69th.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: Of course, I had no idea, I'm driving along, I cross the George Washington Bridge and, of course, that puts me on the Cross Bronx Expressway. I really don't know much about where I'm at except I see all these big buildings. And in Chicago if you see anything taller than about a three story building, you must be downtown.

Hollstein: Uh-huh.

Hahn: Well, I assumed that I was downtown and when I saw the Third Avenue exit I got off. So, I get off at the Cross Bronx Expressway and Third Avenue at about 190th Street. (chuckling).

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Hollstein: (Chuckling)

Hahn: And I start driving on local streets and I'm thinking this doesn't look right.

Hollstein: (Laughing)

Hahn: It is really shabby. Really, as they would say today, sketch, as the kids would say. Really shady looking. And I find a pay phone and I call the office and get a friend of mine that I knew that was in New York on the phone and explain to him what I've done. And he says, "You don't know what you're doing. Just stay on Third Avenue and come all the way down Third into Manhattan." He said, "You're not even in the right Borough." And, of course, that didn't mean anything to me either.

Hollstein: (Laughing)

Hahn: So I was driving through the South Bronx at about six PM on my way there. (Chuckling)

Hollstein: (Laughing)

Hahn: And it was quite an eye-opener.

Hollstein: Yeah. Yeah.

Hahn: And, again, it made me feel just how limited my experience really was even though I thought I was a city kid. So they put me on a squad working surveillance off one of the missions, as we did in those days. And I was doing that for about three or four months. I was living in Connecticut. I had found a townhouse up in Connecticut and commuted every day.

Hollstein: Were you part of the Stamford crowd there?

Hahn: Yes, exactly. In those days, the Bureau salary was the same no matter where you were working.

Hollstein: Right.

Hahn: And so the guys in New York, especially the new guys like myself, and those that had families, which I, fortunately, did not have, were very unhappy and very vocal about it because they just were having a hard time making ends meet.

Hollstein: Sure. Yeah. I'm from New Rochelle myself. And my wife was from, actually her father lived right around the corner from the office there. That was kind of handy. So we ended up in Larchmont, riding in. And up in Stamford became a very popular place. Was Dick Nally up there? And Greg McCrary?

Hahn: Yeah. Nally lived in the same apartment complex I did. They were townhouses actually.

Hollstein: Uh-huh.

Hahn: There was about twenty-five of them in, just at the end of a dead-end street, a little development put together by a couple local guys. I was in one of them, Nally was in another; a guy named Chuck Calhoun was in another; Charlie ...

Hollstein: Christopher?

Hahn: ... Charlie Christopher was in one.

Hollstein: (Laughing) We go back a ways! No, it's just interesting ... there were, just to get a little human interest thing in here. There were people who lived in Cherry Hill, New Jersey.

Hahn: There was. And some that actually lived inside the territory of the Philadelphia Office.

Hollstein: Yeah. Oh yeah. Well, Cherry Hill, it was much closer to go to Philadelphia than it was to New York. I mean, it was amazing what people put up with. I mean, considering the hours that we were working ...

Hahn: Right.

Hollstein: ... then, you know, to have a two hour, two and a half hour commute. I guess they got some sleep on the train.

Hahn: Right.

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Hollstein: Anyhow, going back. Mission surveillance. You're in the 'buckets'?

Hahn: Yeah. In the bucket.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: Of the Chinese Embassy actually. And, it was kind of a joke because any time that they were really looking for you they would wave out the back window of their car and that sort of thing. And if they wanted to dump you, they'd simply get on the FDR and drive into the garage of the United Nations. And, of course, you couldn't follow them into the United Nations.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: So, it was kind of silly. It was what I thought was pretty much useless work but I was doing it. Myself and a guy by the name of Neil Herman, who was also a New Agent at the time, we were paired up there doing that work.

And just a couple of months into it, in January of 1975. I'd been in New York about three months. One afternoon, we're sitting there and there are, from about two o'clock on, sirens, endless stream of sirens going from ... we were there on the west side at about 69th Street, I guess. There were sirens just going down to the tip of Manhattan, endlessly. And I don't think the car I had had an AM radio but the car that Neil Herman did have an AM radio in it and he turned on the radio and found out there had been a bombing at a restaurant down near Wall Street.

So when we finished our shift at 3:30 or four o'clock, whatever it was, we drove down there to see what had happened and sure enough, Fraunces Tavern had been bombed. Jim Ingram, who was one of the SACs in New York at the time, was there on the scene. And at about, I'd say 5:30 or six o'clock, I was standing in the crowd watching the bomb squad guys. And a couple of the FBI guys, that were bomb guys, wandering around inside this building. Mind you, the building, all the windows ... they had these large mullioned double-hung windows that had been blown out. So you've got these spaces that are probably five foot tall by three foot wide, all along the sides of the building that give you a view into the building. Of course, they've got lights running inside so that they could work in there ...

Hollstein: Sure.

Hahn: But it was just bizarre. It was like some sort of macabre pantomime. You could not hear much because the generators, that were keeping the lights were running. But you could see these guys moving around in the inside, knee-deep in kindling of chairs and ceiling, and cables and whatnot, trying to make sense of things.

And then the word spread amongst the FBI guys that were there that Jim Ingram wanted to have a conference right across the street. So we all went across the street and standing in front of a building that, at that time, was used by AT&T, he said we're going to form a new squad; we're going to solve this case and anyone that wants to volunteer for it let me know and we'll put the squad together. And literally, the next day, they started putting together a new squad. A guy by the name of Don Wofford, who had also only been in New York for a month or so had gotten the ticket on that and was assigned as the Case Agent.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: He and a guy named Lou Vizi.

Hollstein: Boy, some names are coming back to me now.

Hahn: Yeah. They threw together about thirty-five guys and Ingram made a point of trying to pair us up with the local police. And a number of police officers were invited and given desk space in the squad area; maybe a half dozen or so, but some. And we were off to the races just trying to work every possible lead that we could think of to try and solve these cases.

And, of course, prior to Fraunces, there had been two other bombings by the FALN. One of which clearly targeted a police officer. I mean, it was one of these things where there was a call made to the precinct saying that there was a dead body in a building and the officer who shows up pushes open the door and a bomb on the back side of the door explodes and blinds him in one eye. And, oddly enough, that officer was Puerto Rican himself and it was his first day on the job.

Hollstein: Oh boy!

Hahn: Yeah. But the, you know, the police had a high motivation to solve these things and, of course, now that it was a mass homicide, so did the FBI. And, as best we could, we were working together and that went on the whole three years that I was there. I worked with the cops, I went out and did interviews with them on a lot of the cases. But the bombings, from that point on, the bombings just continued and inside of a year they had twenty-four bombings that they had done.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: In two years, they had done forty ...

Hollstein: Now, many of these were in front of banks, right? What was it, Chase Bank?

Hahn: Yeah. Well, all different banks, Union Carbide, a lot of big U.S. corporations, General Motors, Union Carbide, that sort of thing.

Hollstein: Uh-huh.

Hahn: A lot of bank buildings, Chase Manhattan.

Hollstein: I remember being part of a surveillance group at that time and it was teamed with New York PD. We watched a whole series of banks, I remember, one weekend.

Hahn: Right.

Hollstein: And we're up all night. Yeah.

Hahn: Right. And that was one of the things that was done, watched the targets on dates that they thought might be significant. I mean, they tried all kinds of things. Nothing was too crazy. That was the one of the things about the squad was ... they even had a couple of guys talking to some supposed clairvoyant.

Hollstein: Hmm!

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Hahn: Some lady who had supposedly helped the New Jersey State Police solve a bunch of homicides and stuff. But that was over the next three years. It was just a continuing drum beat of bombings and an inability to solve them. We went from one suspect to another and we developed our own surveillance teams to follow these suspects around. At the same time, you had activists that were mouthing the same words that the Puerto Rican, that the FALN was mouthing in it's communiqués, i.e., they wanted the U.S. out of Puerto Rico and they wanted a free and socialist Puerto Rico. You had activists doing that. Marching, having demonstrations against different companies and whatnot, and you really had no way of parsing out whether, amongst those activists, might be your suspect.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: At the same time, you also have, first of all, the Freedom of Information Act of 1974 was passed, which limited your ability to index. You couldn't index anyone's name, or address, or any personal information about the person unless there was a prima-facie allegation of some criminal activity. So you couldn't simply, as had been done in the '60s, list the names of people that attended a demonstration.

Hollstein: I see. Uh-huh.

Hahn: And you could not disseminate information to other agencies. That was also taboo. And the Bureau, in trying to make a statement about repairing the damage that had been done by collecting of intelligence without a criminal case as a basis in the past, continuously issued memo after memo from Headquarters saying you will not this ... you will not that, you know. People that are exercising their right to assemble and freedom of speech will not be harassed. (Chuckling)

Hollstein: (Chuckling)

Hahn: No one that had worked anything close to what they used to call Domestic Security wanted any part of this anymore.

Hollstein: Sure. It was a career ruiner.

Hahn: It was a career ruiner.

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Hollstein: Or could be. Yeah.

Hahn: There were rumors that heads would roll within the FBI and, of course, by 1976, you do, in fact, have people inside the FBI being indicted, top people inside the FBI starting with, not even so much a top person but a line supervisor, the man who was the supervisor of the Weather squad there. His name escapes me off the top of my head.

Hollstein: Yeah, me too. But, yes, there was a whole bunch of them going on and then straight up through the Bureau.

Hahn: Exactly. And, ultimately, Assistant Directors were charged. So that environment certainly made it that much more difficult to try and address these cases. I mean, where would you logically look for FALN suspects in an environment where you have citizens gathering together to demonstrate in front of the UN or to hold rallies in front of Chase Bank or to hold rallies at the FBI Office, calling for the same things that the FALN had been calling for? And the answer is, of course, you'd look amongst that portion of the population. But you had no basis to do so.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm. Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: The suggestion that you would photograph or collect names or attempt to identify or target an informant against an organization like the Puerto Rican Solidarity Committee, for example, was a name that one of these organizations used. That would probably get you kicked off the squad and sent to some night shift somewhere where ...

Hollstein: It's off (chuckling) to Siberia, right?

Hahn: Exactly. Because nobody wanted this and management, not just in the Field but at FBI Headquarters, wanted nothing more to do with this. It was, as you said, a career ruiner. So it was very challenging. On the other hand, any creative idea that you could come up with, short of doing those sorts of things, short of gathering the names of people that went to demonstrations, they were willing to give it a shot.

It was interesting times. It allowed for a lot of creativity but we weren't solving any cases either.

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Hollstein: Well, I came on, well, they formed a squad under Paul Brana later on in seventy, that must have been '76, I guess, to work the FALN stuff.

Hahn: Yeah. Brana came over in January of '76 ...

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: After a year of making no progress and there, at that point, had been twenty-four bombings successfully carried out by the FALN. I think Ingram decided he had made a mistake and what he really needed was experienced guys and so he went to Brana, who spoke Spanish, and who had a reputation as a can-do guy ... and said, "Pick some guys that you want, I'm going to put you in charge of the squad." And Mike Donovan, who had been the squad supervisor, was just displaced basically.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: And that would have been when you came over.

Hollstein: Right.

Hahn: Nineteen seventy-six.

Hollstein: And there was a lot of new blood at that time, then.

Hahn: Right. Henry Garcia, you, Wayne Orell, Jim Swayze, Kalstrom, etcetera, etcetera.

Hollstein: Yeah. There was a big gang came in from Organized Crime. And they were, also we had worked with Brana on the Organized Crime Squad. So that's how he knew us, I guess. And away we went. I worked with Sean Rafferty and the two of us did a big file review and the files were enormous, at that time. We worked our way through and then we went down to San Juan for a week or so to talk to informants down there and look at their files, and nothing much came of that. You know, we didn't really get any leads out of it that were particularly useful.

Hahn: Uhm-hmm.

Hollstein: And it wasn't until, I guess, well after I left the Bureau, in fact, that things broke out in Chicago. Were you there at that time?

Hahn: Yes. November, well, I was in New York.

Hollstein: That's what I mean, you were in New York when that broke.

Hahn: Right. November of 1976 is when, actually, it's a junkie. He lives in the same building as the FALN members, and he breaks into their apartment expecting to find ... these people had supposedly bought the building ... he thought there'd be power tools and things like that that he could pawn. Well, he gets in there and instead there's radios, and wigs, and clothing, and all kinds of explosives. And so he steals all this stuff, stages it at a garage of a friend, and starts selling it on the street.

Hollstein: (Chuckling)

Hahn: Well, it isn't two days before the cops in Chicago are on to this and when they make the bust, they grab one of these guys and have him take them back to this apartment which is still empty. And the cops go in there and they find batteries and propane tanks, and watches, and documents and lo and behold, it's the FALN. And, at that point, is pretty much when, I think, New York said, "Oh, no wonder we haven't been able to solve it because it's Chicago people." (Chuckling)

Hollstein: (Chuckling)

Hahn: Brana and company were relieved of their obligations and were sent back to do Organized Crime work and the squad, again, kind of reorganized. I think Marty Crowe took it over at that point.

Hollstein: Hmm! Well, that's kind of interesting. I knew Marty up here in Connecticut. Hang on just a moment, I'll have to turn this over.

Here we are. It's Side B, of an interview of Richard S. Hahn by Brian Hollstein. Today's date is the 20th of March 2008, and we were just talking about Brana and company going back to their squad after the thing after the case broke out in Chicago.

Hahn: Right. And what, the gold mine in Chicago, the real gold to that, was in the apartment is a letter from the National Commission on Hispanic Affairs. And what you come to find out is that the Chicago subjects Carlos Torres, Oscar Lopez are members of this National Commission on Hispanic Affairs as are other people that are suspects in New York. Such as William Morales was a member of the National Commission on Hispanic affairs and some of the Chicano people a guy by the name of Ricardo Romero, for example, from the Denver area, were members of this thing. And, so we went to the Catholic Church, the Archdiocese, not the Catholic Church, the ...

Hollstein: Episcopal, yeah (chuckling) ...

Hahn: ... Archdiocese. And at first they were cooperative but after the first subpoena was served, they turned non-cooperative and the U.S. Attorney ended up having to subpoena people. And as we subpoenaed people, they refused to cooperate and, in fact, some of them refused to even take the oath for the Grand Jury.

So, while we felt like we had identified Carlos Torres and Oscar Lopez and, of course, those two and their respective wives had disappeared off the face of the planet the day that the arms factory was found in Chicago, nonetheless, it really left us kind of still in a position of not really feeling like we fully identified everyone, not really getting to the bottom of it. The Secretary to the National Commission on Hispanic Affairs, a gal by the name of Maria Cueto, refused to cooperate in New York. Her secretary, her assistant, a gal by the name of Raisa Nemikin, refused to cooperate. From the records that we did get from the Commission, we could see that there was travel by people like Oscar Lopez and Ricardo Romero on significant dates, in which there were bombings in New York, for example. And travel by them from their respective cities to New York during that period. But it just wasn't enough and the lack of cooperation wasn't ... wasn't helping us at all in terms of really solving these crimes.

Hollstein: Hmmm!

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Hahn: So, at that point in time, of course, the Bureau, in New York, there's a lot of finger pointing back and forth. This is the Chicago crew, this is a New York crew from Chicago because Chicago, by now, has had bombings also claimed by the FALN. And somebody back at FBI Headquarters that had worked in San Juan, and who had worked on the *Macheteros*, or not the *Macheteros*, the MIRA, which was a ...

Hollstein: Right.

Hahn: ... a group that was kind of a precursor to the FALN. He felt that if he could get somebody who knew the FALN cases to go to San Juan, then that's where the keys to the case would be. And he asked Don Wofford, the Case Agent, and Wofford refused. So then he asked if they would canvas the squad and, and so they did. And I, at that point, had three years in New York ... English degree ... (laughing)

Hollstein: (Laughing) Just the right guy!

Hahn: Uh, yeah. I, no other credentials. So I thought well, you know, if you'll teach me Spanish, I'll take you up on that. And so I raised my hand and they sent me to Language School for five months and then I went to San Juan. And I arrived there in January of '78.

Hollstein: Okay. Let's call a halt right there.

Hahn: Okay.

Interview of Former Special Agent of the FBI
Richard S. Hahn (1967 – 1999)
Interviewed by Brian R. Hollstein
On April 3, 2008

Brian R. Hollstein: Today's date is the third of April 2008, and let's move right on in. When we broke off last it was January of 1978, a long time ago, and you were headed off to language school and then San Juan.

You know what, the only description I've got of language school is the Bureau language school that was run in Washington during the Second World War. So maybe (chuckling) you could tell us a little bit about what the experience was of going to a language school in more modern times.

Richard S. Hahn: Well, actually that's interesting because the Bureau at the school that I went to was also at FBI Headquarters and it was run by a the teacher was a Mormon missionary by the name of John Walzer, Agent ...

Hollstein: Uh-huh.

Hahn: ... and, you know, it was a class of eight of us and we used the classroom right across from the Bonaparte Auditorium on the first floor at FBI Headquarters.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: It was not very much different. It was five months of in classroom, eight hours a day. You spoke nothing but Spanish.

Hollstein: Wow! And there's nowhere to hide ...

Hahn: Yeah.

Hollstein: ... with eight in the class!

Hahn: There was nowhere to hide. And actually it was very effective, I thought. And I wanted to learn the language. So, for me, it was great. And from there I went right into San Juan.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: I got there in January. And San Juan, of course, has always had bombings but there was an increase in bombings going on at that time. Within the first couple of months after my arrival, the ... there was a bomb that went off in the parking lot of the Federal Building and the supervisors there had me organize the crime scene processing because I had been through a training school in bombing crime scenes. And, at that point, I kind of buddied up with the police department and started working regularly with the police of Puerto Rico.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: They would call me in the middle of the night and I would jump in the car and go out to wherever the bombs had gone off. And, mind you, over the three years that I was there, there were 68 bombings.

Hollstein: Ahhh!

Hahn: I mean, every month there was at least one occasion, usually more than one occasion, when we had multiple bombs going off. And we had claims of credit, of course, by two or three different organizations. I was the only one in the office doing that work. There was one other guy in the office who was working the groups as Domestic Terrorist groups but I worked the actual bombings as criminal investigations and he worked the groups. And I, pretty much, spent my time working with the police of Puerto Rico and in their shop or going out to crime scenes with them, and exchanging evidence.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

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Hahn: Which was kind of a new concept but I did open the door and let them have any evidence and general information that we had and they, in turn, opened up their files and let me peruse things as I pleased. And they started giving me the evidence so that we could send it to FBI Headquarters. And all that was directly an outgrowth of my experience in New York where we had partnered up somewhat with the NYPD.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm. Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: But I had no trepidation at all about doing that.

Hollstein: It was probably a different crowd though from the New York PD.

Hahn: Oh yes, very much so. And, actually, I worked only with the bomb squad guys. And there was a Special Investigative Unit that was the very elite of the elite. They, ultimately, were determined to be guys that were involved in some pretty shady type of things - everything from kidnappings to ... There was an incident while I was there at Cerro Maravilla where a couple of radicals, with an undercover cop, went up to, they were going to take over a radio station on the island, in some remote part of the island. And the undercover cop apparently was enough of a provocateur where he got them engaged in a firefight with the police because he had tipped off the cops, obviously, being an undercover ...

Hollstein: Uh-huh.

Hahn: ... and the police, ultimately, took these guys captive and then executed them. And it took years for that to unravel but that ... that's the kind of things that were going on among some parts of the police department; and, fortunately, not with the bomb squad guys.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm ... no. That was a low point, the Cerro Maravilla case. That occurred while you were there then, huh?

Hahn: That's correct.

Hollstein: Yeah.

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Hahn: And it wasn't, we did open a Civil Rights investigation and a guy by the name of Pete Lanthorn, that was there at the time, had that case. But it really took several years before it unraveled. It unraveled, by the time it unraveled it was probably 1983 or so. And, at that time, the police of Puerto Rico were actually in a formal task force with San Juan Agents. And some of the cops that were involved in the Cerro Maravilla incident were, in fact, on that task force. So, you know, it became quite a mess, quite a messy thing for the FBI.

Hollstein: Sure. Sure. Going back to these bombings. Were they focused on any particular locations, or businesses, or government offices, or anything like that?

Hahn: No. Primarily at the government offices and, you know, so we'd have post offices or the Federal Building, on a couple of occasions, was bombed, and then U.S. businesses. And there were three or four different groups at first and they would leave communiqués at pretty much the same places in Old San Juan. Either they'd drop it at the offices of UPI in Old San Juan, or they'd leave it at bus stops in Old San Juan. And so I organized a surveillance, a sophisticated surveillance, because I could go out to the scene (i.e., the bombing scene) in the middle of the night, look at the evidence that was collected, and say, "Oh this is the *Macheteros*. Or this is the Commandos Revolucionarios, or whatever the case may be ...

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: And we would know, well, we're going to get a communiqué sometime today. And so I set up these surveillances but it required about forty people to do them and it was pretty much all the San Juan Office.

Hollstein: (Laughing) I was going to say, that's just about all the office. Yeah.

Hahn: Exactly. So we ran the surveillances three times and the third time there was actually a communiqué dropped right in front of the guys that were supposed to be watching it. But they missed it. I think one guy was out of the car getting coffee and the other guy was probably checking his eyelids for pin holes.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

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Hahn: But the bottom line is it went down right in front of us because the guy at UPI's offices, left the office to go out and get coffee for everyone. He came back ten minutes later and the communiqué is lying inside the grill work, inside the *rajas*, and he's certain it wasn't there when he left. So, it did go down while we were watching. However, that was the last time that the office allowed me to run that surveillance simply because it was so disruptive to other people, the good old economy of law enforcement, if you will.

Hollstein: Sure. Sure.

Hahn: Cutting into other people's work. So, I kind of left San Juan a little bit bitter over that because I felt like these groups were getting more and more bold. There was a joint bombing in October of 1979 between the FALN and the *Macheteros*. It was coordinated with six bombs on the island and four bombs in the United States, going off on the same night. And it was jointly claimed by communiqué by the FALN and the *Macheteros*, and the CRP.

And then, in December of 1979, they attacked a Navy bus without any provocation whatsoever. There was a bus that would carry Navy employees from one side of the base to the other side of the base along a public road and they traveled about a quarter mile, or so, along a public road to do this. And they set up an ambush where they blocked the bus from moving on the highway with a car that allegedly broke down. And they pulled up on the other side of the bus with a van full of guys and automatic weapons and just sprayed it, killing two and wounding eight others.

Hollstein: That was a really serious situation. The other bombings were not, if I remember correctly, not anti-personnel bombings.

Hahn: Well, that's correct.

Hollstein: In general.

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Hahn: After the FALN had done the Fraunces Tavern in 1975 and, of course, they were lambasted in the press by everyone, including the Puerto Ricans, and, as a result, I think they went back to the tactic of pretty much putting down bombs at night where they'd go off in the middle of the night in front of a building and the chances of somebody being hurt were a lot reduced.

And the only exception to that was a couple of times they either targeted police or government offices. And then, on one occasion, in August of 1978, they put down a bomb inside the employment office of Mobil Oil in New York City and walked out, leaving a ticking bomb in a room full of people. So they knew somebody was going to get hurt (**unintel**).

Hollstein: Oh boy! Yeah. Yeah. How many real organizations were there that you were aware of? And, you know, so many times these people will leave communiqués from several different organizations but they're all the same people.

Hahn: Uhm.

Hollstein: You know, just trying to look big.

Hahn: There were four separate organizations and, ultimately, they all joined together. At first they were doing their own communiqués, then they did a couple joint communiqués and, ultimately, they all fell under the umbrella of the *Macheteros*.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm. So you mentioned FALN - Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional, *Macheteros* ...

Hahn: They stayed independent of the groups, they coordinated with the groups on the island, but they stayed independent.

Hollstein: Uh-huh. And then you mentioned CRP?

Hahn: Commandos Revolucionarios del Pueblo, The Peoples Revolutionary Commandos.

Hollstein: Uh-huh.

Hahn: FARP - Fuerzas Armadas de Revolucionarios del Pueblo, which is the Armed Revolutionary Forces of the People.

Hollstein: Uh-huh.

Hahn: OVRP, which is Organización de Voluntarios de Revolucionarios del Pueblo, which is the Organization of Volunteers of the Revolution of the People.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: And then, of course, the *Macheteros*, which was actually the Puerto Rican Peoples Army ... EPB.

Hollstein: And then we had the Independence crowd, FUPI at the University, [which had] been a factor in any of this at all. That's what, Federacion Universitaria Pro Independencia.

Hahn: Right. FUPI. F-U-S-P, which was the Socialist Party. P-S-P, Puerto Rican Socialist Party, of course, these were all the political arms of the movement, if you will.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: And they were the recruiting grounds for these terrorist organizations.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm. So they would sort of enter through there and get looked over, I guess, and then recruited for more aggressive work.

Hahn: I don't know the working machinations inside of Puerto Rico but I do know that, in Chicago, for example, that university professor by the name of Jose Lopez was instrumental in recruiting one of the FALN members who subsequently cooperated. And Jose Lopez was brother of FALN leader Oscar Lopez. So it was a family affair, if you will.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: That both indoctrination and recruiting going on on one hand and then the actual operational side of a terrorist organization by a brother.

Hollstein: So, and they were loosely affiliated, then, with people like the Weathermen and various others who were active?

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Hahn: Absolutely. In fact, the Weathermen were instrumental in breaking a guy named William Morales out of prison. Morales, going back to the New York FALN, blew himself up in a bomb factory in 1978 in Queens and was prosecuted in New York City and prosecuted federally, as well as, by the State.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: And he wasn't in jail a full ten months from the time he was captured till the time he escaped. He escaped from Bellevue.

Hollstein: Is he the one that had blown his hands off?

Hahn: That's correct.

Hollstein: Yeah.

Hahn: Correct. And Morales, the FALN was assisted by the Weathermen in breaking him out of prison. And we know that, again, from Freddie Mendez, the FALN member that cooperated after 1983.

Hollstein: Hmm!

Hahn: **(unintel)** 1980.

Hollstein: A colorful crowd!

Hahn: Yeah. Moving on with my tale, I came out of San Juan somewhat frustrated because the, you know, the fact is I felt like we had found a way where we could identify some of these people. But the Bureau was unwilling to put the manpower into it that was required. I arrived in Chicago - they sent me to Chicago - and arrived there in December of 1980. There had been eleven members of the FALN captured in April of 1980, in Evanston, Illinois, and they were being prosecuted federally. So, I kind of sat in on the preparation for the trial and the trial of them, which occurred in February of '81.

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Hahn: And by May of 1981, one of the FALN members had gone to, contacted the U.S. Attorney's Office, actually a prosecutor, himself, a guy named Jeremy Margolis. And said he wanted to cooperate. And Margolis was, you know, taking a real tentative approach because he didn't want this guy just [talking] for his own benefit. He wanted a complete cooperation from the guy or nothing at all. But as it turned out, Freddie Mendez did, in fact, was, in fact, willing to cooperate fully. And I ended up being one of the key people involved in debriefing him simply because I had come out of San Juan; I understood the groups; I had the Spanish language ability. And over a period of several months, I spent pretty much every day, a part of my day, two, three, four hours in the MCC debriefing Freddie Mendez from May of 1981 till October of 1981.

Hollstein: Hmm!

Hahn: Mendez, unfortunately, had only been in the group for about six or eight months and he didn't know anyone in the organization that we didn't already know of either that was captured with him, or outstanding fugitives like William Morales. He didn't know of any location that we hadn't already found through out investigation. But what he did know was exactly how he was trained and how disciplined they were. And, while a lot of guys walked away from Mendez when they realized there was no actionable intelligence, if you will, he wasn't going to give us a new name, or a new location or anything else and a lot of guys just lost interest.

But I was bowled over by the fact that this guy's telling me how they were trained to dry-clean themselves, you know counter-surveillance type things, extensively. To use public transportation, to change their appearance while they traveled. You know, they'd go into a department store and go into the bathroom and have a reversible jacket on and put on a jacket and maybe put on a hat that they had in a bag, and put on some dark glasses and walk out. You know, get on a bus and travel south when they really wanted to go north. That sort of thing.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: And everything from how to avoid leaving fingerprints, to using code words, to using dead drops. All these spy versus spy type of things, you know.

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Hollstein: Real pros.

Hahn: Yeah, real pros. And it, you know, it's just not what anybody expected.

Hollstein: Well, where did they get this from? I mean, just reading books or is this ... ?

Hahn: No. I think, ultimately, they were trained by people like the Weathermen, who, in turn, were trained by Cuban Agents.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: The *Macheteros*. Ultimately, the leader of the *Macheteros* was determined to be a guy named Filiberto Ojeda, who is both a known G2 operative of Cuba and was the leader of the predecessor organization MIRA, that operated in the '60s doing bombings and whatnot in Puerto Rico and New York.

Hollstein: So that was Filiberto Ojeda Rios, right?

Hahn: Correct.

Hollstein: Yep. That was, his name was being circulated around ...

Hahn: That's right.

Hollstein: ... when I was down in the area.

Hahn: (**Unintel**) when the FALN first emerged and, ultimately, he was determined to be the leader of the *Macheteros* on the island.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm. Yeah. And he was a fugitive for quite a while. Wasn't he arrested later on, then?

Hahn: Well, he was arrested originally in 1969 and made bond and disappeared in Puerto Rico when he was part of MIRA. And the next time we see him is 1985. He gets arrested in San Juan as part of the *Macheteros* investigation. Actually, he shot it out with the Agents and there was an Agent wounded, a guy named Abe Alba.

Hollstein: Huhmm!

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Hahn: Took a fragment of a bullet in the eye but it was one of these things where they're in the apartment building and Ojeda Rios is at the top of a landing of or a flight of stairs two-stories high ... shooting down the stairwell ...

Hollstein: Oh boy!

Hahn: ... and the Agents are shooting up the stairwell. And somebody fired a weapon at him and he went down and they thought that they'd hit him. And they rushed up the stairs and what had happened, he was firing a fully automatic like a Mac 10 type of weapon ...

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: ... and the bullet had hit the gun and the gun had jerked up into his chest and knocked the wind out of him and he fell over (chuckling).

Hollstein: (Chuckling)

Hahn: And before he could regain his senses, you know, the Agents were upon him. But he was not really injured but, unfortunately, he had injured this one Agent in the firefight.

I'm getting a little ahead of myself here.

Hollstein: Sure. Sorry.

Hahn: Back to Chicago. I'm sitting there, at that point, and mind you the terrorism in Puerto Rico is continuing to escalate and I'm kind of vaguely aware of that. The FALN had not been heard from since their arrest in 1980, and it's now late 1981. And I am steeped with the knowledge of how FALN operates from talking to Freddie Mendez.

And Bill Dyson, one of the Agents on the squad, who was kind of a guru of domestic terrorist groups. He'd been one of the Case Agents on the Weathermen; had been the Case Agent on the FALN as an organization. He had some suspects that he had developed through his work and he wanted those suspects worked.

Hahn: So he went to the supervisor, a guy named Bob Buckley, and Buckley kind of divvied out some of these suspects, including one that he gave to me - a guy by the name of Edwin Cortes. And I sat down and looked at it and said, you know, in order to do this, the only way I could see to do this to try and make a determination whether or not Edwin Cortes is an FALN member is to do massive surveillances of him. And see if he's doing the things that Freddie Mendez says an FALN member is doing. And I knew that there was no way that the FBI was going to put those kind of resources into doing a surveillance.

It, you know, it would have to be very intensive. It would have to be very discreet and it would have to be weeks, if not months.

Hollstein: Uh-hmm. Meanwhile, there's all these cases going on.

Hahn: Right. Precisely.

Hollstein: Yeah.

Hahn: And you're in the economy of law enforcement. And there's, you know, you're competing with everything else that's out there.

Hollstein: Uh-huh.

Hahn: So I went to Dyson and talked to him and he suggested that I talk to this kind of ad hoc group of cops and state guys and whatnot that the Secret Service was regularly debriefing for intelligence purposes. By that time, you know, the FALN, in some of their last acts before the Evanston arrests, they'd gone into Carter-Mondale Headquarters in Chicago, and into George Bush Headquarters, campaign headquarters, in New York, and put everyone down on the floor at gunpoint and stole lists of the delegates to the conventions and sent threatening letters to them. Some of which included pictures of their homes and whatnot. So, Secret Service had a great deal of interest in this group.

So, a long story short, I did exactly that. I went to one of these meetings that they were having and told them basically where we were; that we had suspects and that it was my view that if we did intense surveillances that we could probably determine whether or not somebody was an FALN member.

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Hahn: And, of course, when I said surveillances it was met with a groan because these guys had all done surveillances but they'd done one car, two car, three car surveillances. Basically more of a harassment sort of thing where whoever they were following was well-aware that they were back there and, you know, were playing a little cat and mouse sort of thing.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: And I explained to them that that wasn't what I was talking about. Because the one thing that Freddie Mendez had made absolutely clear was that if an FALN member suspected or did, in fact, detect that he was under surveillance, that he would stop all activity. And he wouldn't even have to notify his fellow FALN members. He would simply, as Mendez said, "hit the surface." And stop doing anything clandestine whatsoever. Just sit there and cool down for months! And when Mendez told me that, of course, the bells that went off in my head were all the different suspects that we had worked in both New York and San Juan where we'd had two, or three, or four cars on the guy and the guy was clearly, within a day or two, aware that we were back there. And some of them we stayed with for weeks and weeks and weeks and they washed out because, after watching them for a month, you knew the guy wasn't doing anything suspicious.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: And maybe you had a bombing in the interim. And you knew darn well that the guy was at home that night; or out playing poker that night. So, you would wash them out. Of course, once Mendez told us that, you know, that their tactic was that if they even suspected that they were under surveillance they would stop their activity. And, you know, it all made sense.

Hollstein: Well, this is so very different from criminals. Because the criminal crowd, if once they see the surveillance they may not do something but then, again, they might anyway.

Hahn: Right.

Hollstein: And then, you know, then they'll wait; they'll let things cool down for a few days and then go right back to what they've been doing.

Hahn: Right. Exactly. But not these guys. These guys were much more disciplined. So I got the cops, basically, to buy into it. And most of the manpower came from the Chicago Police Department. Secret Service contributed some. State of Illinois contributed some. And I spent the time and money to buy, to rent an apartment that looked at this guy's residence so I didn't have cars sitting on the street in front of his residence. And I put together all the data I could. You know, photographs of the guy; maps of the, where he lived and where he worked, and where associates were; and photographs of associates, and family members. Made these little booklets and briefed the guys and basically said, you know, no matter what we do, we can't afford to get burned.

And we scheduled two weeks of intense surveillance and executed that in December of 1981, and by time two weeks of surveillance were done, several of the guys, those guys that had actually been there to see him do these tactics of dry-cleaning himself were absolutely convinced that this guy was up to something. Whatever it was, he didn't want to be followed.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: On one occasion that really stood out, he left work early, he left work around 11 AM, telling his employer that he was going to take his children to the doctor. It was snowing. I mean it was really snowing! There was probably two or three inches on the ground and it was expected to go six to eight inches. It was about 24 degrees out. And he goes home, walks in his house wearing this big winter parka with a hood and about fifteen minutes later comes out wearing a windbreaker! And he stands on his porch and he looks up and down the street and then he walks off and he starts walking through alleys and walking through gangways between houses and things like that. And, of course, we had to drop the surveillance.

He shows back up about two hours later, again, in this windbreaker. And he walks back up on his porch and he looks back up and down the street and then he goes in the house and never came back out that evening. And everyone said, "Wait a second!" You know.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: Twenty-four degrees, it's snowing, what's this, what's this routine about. So, given that, what we started doing after that was we analyzed all the data from those two weeks of surveillance. We started just watching him go to work every day and watching him leave work every day. Based on the two weeks surveillance that we have had, we decided that if he were doing anything it was usually going to be after work. He worked in a State office and the State guys managed to get an informant or get the supervisor to cooperate with them. So we knew if he was going to call in sick or if he was going to ask for leave or anything like that. And we started on a set of surveillances where it was run by kind of a hue and cry sort of thing.

We had four guys that would watch him leave work every day. And if, rather than going home, he did what he would do when he was running, if you will ...

Hollstein: Uh-huh.

Hahn: ... which was get a ride from a co-worker and go to public transportation, then those guys, the surveillance guys there would put out the word on the radio and our pagers would start going off. All of us would go to try and join the surveillance. So you're really only engaging four guys on a daily basis ... and only a couple hours of their day. Yet, it served as kind of an alarm system to tell us whether or not this guy was, perhaps, doing something clandestine. And that worked so well that, without getting into details of all the different surveillances we did, we kept on putting him on public transportation; watching him dry-clean himself; watching him change his appearance.

And August of 1982 we finally put him into a location, which was an apartment building on the north side of Chicago. And it was forty-one apartments in the building but we, at least, had a building to work with. And it took us several more months but, ultimately, we identified the apartment. We put a camera in the hallway so we could see him coming and going and we knew that the apartment was rented in a bogus name. We knew that he was paying for the apartment with money orders. We actually got pictures of him at the currency exchange, where he was regularly buying the money orders, walking out in his disguise ... in drag, as we came to call it.

Hollstein: (Chuckling)

Hahn: And carrying the money order ... one of the things they were trained to do was, rather than holding documents between your fingers and your thumb, they would scissors-like hold it between two fingers so that only the edges of your fingers were touching the document and you wouldn't leave a fingerprint.

Hollstein: Sure.

Hahn: And so we got him on film walking out carrying this money order in that manner.

And then in December of 1981 a really unusual thing happened. Now, mind you, from August until December, I had been working on trying to write a Title III and I'd never written one before; had no idea what I was doing. And most Title IIIs, when I talk to other people, they said, "Well, do you got an informant?" And I go, "No." And they said, "Well, do you got an undercover?" And I go, "No." (Laughing)

Hollstein: (Laughing) Right.

Hahn: "How you gonna get a Title III, kid?" (Laughing) You know, sort of thing.

A real unusual thing happened on December 19th. And that was, Cortes, that day, had left work and gone to the public transportation. And by that time, whenever that would happen, we would automatically just open up a plant that we had that was in an apartment building across the street from the safe house apartment and, you know, look down on the front door of that building and had cameras set up so that we could photograph him going in and out of the apartment building. We would activate that plant. And so, two cops, a guy named Marty Barrett and a guy named John Eschoo, were up there at the plant. They also could see, mind you, in the hallway leading up to the apartment itself through a video camera that the building had allowed us to put in. So they see Cortes show up and they see him go into the apartment and Barrett asked Eschoo to get down on the street so Eschoo did and was out there looking for Cortes to see what he did when he came back out of the building.

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Hahn: Well, Cortes was only in there for about fifteen minutes. And he came out carrying a bag, like a shopping bag, a paper bag, with the top rolled down, and he was carrying it up against his chest like it was a few dozen eggs.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: And he came down on the street and walked over and got into a car that had another individual in the car. And it had New York license plates. And Eschoo managed to get the plate number and he wasn't sure if it was like N Y, N Y T, or N Y 1 or N X 1. But he had, you know, three alpha characters and three numbers. And he got all the numbers right. And the car just disappeared. And that was the 19th of December.

Well, unfortunately, I was still fooling around trying to write my Title III on December 31st ten days later, eleven days later, when five bombs went off in New York City and three police officers were severely injured - all FALN bombs. And we immediately thought, "Oh my gosh! We saw them move the dynamite." And I think, to this day, that that's probably what happened.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: The car, we'd given New York the license plate for the car, and they had, it was just amongst the other leads that they had going on, so they didn't really pay attention. But when the bombs went off, they dug that out and determined that it was, in fact, registered to a bogus identity. And the bogus identity also had a driver's license in New York, and when they got the driver's license photo it ended up being a guy by the name of Luis Rosado, who had been an FALN suspect for years.

And, of course, when the bombs went off we also made a big push to get the Title III and did, in fact, get the Title III and penetrated the safe house with microphones and, ultimately, with a camera inside the safe house.

But I'm going to have to save that part of the story for another time, Brian, because I gotta go.

Hollstein: (Laughing) Okay. I'm hanging on every word.

Interview of Former Special Agent of the FBI
Richard S. Hahn (1967 – 1999)
Interviewed by Brian R. Hollstein
On April 15, 2008

Brian R. Hollstein: I'm speaking to Richard S. Hahn, who is in California. Today's date is April 15, 2008.

And Rick, when we were last talking, you had tracked down Luis Rosado from a license that he had, I guess. He was an old-time FALN suspect.

Richard S. Hahn: Right.

Hollstein: And installations had been made, mikes and a camera, in their safe house. That was Chicago, right?

Hahn: Well, Rosado was in New York ...

Hollstein: Oh, in New York, okay.

Hahn: ... but in Chicago we had located the safe house and that's where we actually got onto Rosado. Where one of the suspects in Chicago had taken materials out of that safe house and delivered them to a car with New York tags. We caught the tag and it ended up being Luis Rosado.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: Using an alias. And so both New York and Chicago were off and running. A guy named Jeremy Margolis, who was the U.S. Attorney in Chicago, who had prosecuted the FALN the first time around, was right up to his eyeballs in the investigation ... the ongoing investigation had led to the safe house in Chicago. And when we did locate a safe house, he was the guy who engineered the Title III application and affidavit. That basically, I think I said this before but it bears repeating, it was one-of-a-kind because there was no undercover and no informants, nothing like that.

Hahn: It was a comparison between observations we had made through surveillances with the statements of Freddie Mendez, one FALN member who had cooperated about how they were trained to operate. And then, of course, what safe houses and other things we had found when they were arrested in Evanston, Illinois, in 1980.

Hollstein: Uh-huh. Can I break in just a moment, please?

Hahn: Sure.

Hollstein: Some of the people who may be reading this aren't familiar with the term Title III.

Hahn: Oh, okay.

Hollstein: Would you explain that and then, maybe, just a little bit about how you go about working one of those things, doing it.

Hahn: A Title III is the law, or at least it was the law at the time, that allowed, under Federal Government, to apply for placing of microphones without any consenting party.

Hollstein: Uhn-hmm.

Hahn: It's a wiretap law basically. So you could tap a phone, or you could put in microphones. And, in our case, although the federal law doesn't allow for it, we did go ahead and apply for putting cameras also or a camera in the safe house. And these things are, they're very cumbersome in that the courts allow you this sort of an intrusion but you have to number one, live monitor it. Any time that you are going to be listening, you have to have a live person there. You can't just turn on a recorder and let it run.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: That person has to minimize conversations to make sure that they're not talking about the baseball game or the wedding shower that's coming up ...

Hollstein: Or talking with their lawyer, right?

Hahn: Or talking with their lawyer.

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Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: Exactly. So you need a lot of manpower. And then the reporting requirements to the court are every five days you have to tell the court what you've heard and every 30 days you have to renew the process. And that renewal includes getting authority from Department of Justice, from FBI Headquarters, as well as the District Court that you're in. So it's a pretty large burden for any office to carry.

Hollstein: There's a lot of people involved and a lot of oversight.

Hahn: Precisely.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: An awful lot of people involved, awful lot of oversight. It's like an egg race kind of thing where you're constantly taking what little information you can get; making sure it's documented; putting it back into paper that goes to the court, and/or goes into a renewal affidavit. Keeping these things going is a challenge in and of itself.

Hollstein: Sure. Now, the transcriptions ... are they generally done by Agents, transcriptions of the tapes?

Hahn: Well, in this case, the people in the safe houses were speaking in Spanish ...

Hollstein: Uh-huh.

Hahn: ... so we did have to get translators, Agents that were translators. You could not have a non-Agent, non-law enforcement person monitoring the tapes.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: So the live monitoring was all by Agents and then because it was somewhat dialectical Puerto Rican-Spanish, again, we didn't have support people that could do that so we brought in Agents. So I was bringing in Agents from all over the country and from Puerto Rico, in particular, to sit and listen to these recordings.

Hollstein: Hmm!

Hahn: So, interestingly, over the next couple of months, New York, obviously, between January, when they had the bombings that injured three police officers and mid-March, or so, they also did the work up on this Luis Rosado using an alias that he'd had, and got themselves, located a safe house also, and got themselves a Title III also. So they were monitoring at their end and we were monitoring at our end. But we were, in Chicago, considerably farther ahead of them. We had gotten our safe house located in August the year before and, although we had not penetrated it until January, we were still in it by January, mid-January. And had ongoing conversations regularly recorded and transcribed. And, quite frankly, there just didn't seem to be a lot going on. Also, when we had gone in to place the microphones, we had done a safety search and found basically nothing in the apartment. There was a suitcase in the closet that had some radio gear in it. But no explosives, no weapons, nothing like that.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: And the supervisor at the time, a guy named Bob Buckley, was convinced that this was ... first of all, he didn't like the fact that this had completely turned the squad upside down. (Laughing)

Hollstein: Sure.

Hahn: It was a squad that handled all kinds of both international and domestic terrorism and this one case was now sucking all the manpower plus, you know, manpower from other offices and he just was not comfortable with it.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: And he and I were at loggerheads over this. And, in fact, we had one particular day where we argued on a Friday afternoon about the manpower and whatnot.

And the following Monday I did not come into the office. I, instead, went to the U.S. Attorney's Office and worked on the renewal affidavit. And this was now going onto our third renewal. It was March. And during the whole time, we'd had several conversations but we couldn't tell exactly what was going on; their conversations were cryptic; again, we hadn't seen any weapons or explosives or anything.

Hahn: On Tuesday, March 8th, I came into the office for the first time since Friday when I'd had my tête-à-tête with the supervisor. I discovered that the supervisor had taken the live monitor off of the wire. And when I found the supervisor, he was out of the office when I first arrived there, but when he came in and I talked to him, I asked him why he had done that and he said, "You know, these people both work full-time. You know that they're at their jobs. You know that there's no point in monitoring during the day. You're just wasting manpower."

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: "Just suck it up." And with that, I went and found one of the translators that was working on a tape that they'd recorded some days earlier and asked him to go in to the monitoring room. He did so, and when he got in there he found that there was, sounded like somebody was in there. I then called ... the camera was being monitored separately at an apartment that overlooked the building where the safe house was. So I called the guy that was there and it took me a while to get him in the apartment ... 'cause he was out. But when he got in, he called me and he said, "There are guns on the table." And I said to him, you know, "I'm not having a real good day. Don't joke with me." And he said, "No. I'm serious. They've got a bunch of guns on the table and they're cleaning them."

I immediately called Margolis, the U.S. Attorney. He told me to come directly upstairs to his office, which I did. Margolis, in the meantime, went ahead and called the Director of the FBI at the time, William Webster, to tell him that we had penetrated the safe house and that we had, as he spoke, that we were monitoring them cleaning guns, and loading them, and preparing for some sort of an action. And, of course, Margolis was smart enough to know that by doing so he would completely overrun any resistance that we were encountering by the supervisory staff there in Chicago. So by evening that night, we had watched them leave the apartment empty-handed. We had seen them on video, also, building firing circuits for bombs, by the way.

Hollstein: Wow! Oh boy.

Hahn: Uhm.

Hollstein: That's got to be wonderful tape.

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Hahn: Oh yeah. Yeah. We got a new search warrant and about ten o'clock at night we went in and, again, we couldn't find anything until somebody noticed that when they opened up the cabinet under the sink. You know how a cabinet is constructed with a kick space ...

Hollstein: Right.

Hahn: ...from the floor of the cabinet it's about four inches off the floor and the masonite had real shiny nails. And he thought, "This isn't right." So he pried up the masonite and there, in those several cubic feet of space underneath the kitchen cabinet ... were eight weapons, 5,000 rounds of ammunition, disguise materials, documents, plans, false IDs, all kinds of things.

Hollstein: Hmm!

Hahn: In the bathroom vanity, the same thing. Except it was twenty-four pounds of explosives. About forty blasting caps, detonating cord, all kinds of things. Everything you needed, including the guns that we had seen them cleaning and the box of tools that they had used to make their firing circuits and some altered watches, and the whole nine yards was there. And so we brought in specialists from the FBI Laboratory, who neutralized the weapons. They substituted the explosives for a look-alike material.

Hollstein: Were you able to do this all in one night?

Hahn: No.

Hollstein: Or did you have to go back, then?

Hahn: Three different nights.

Hollstein: Uh-huh. Yeah.

Hahn: In fact, kind of an aside story here. The explosives guys came, they went in with us at ten o'clock on that Tuesday night and discovered that the materials that they had brought for substitution were not suitable.

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Hahn: So they had to go back to DC to get stuff. They couldn't leave, obviously, till six in the morning on Wednesday morning, and it was three in the afternoon the next day, or Wednesday, before they got back to Chicago with the correct materials. And during that whole time, obviously, somebody had to maintain the search in an active mode. Because, as you know, once you go out the door, you have to get another search warrant to go back in.

Hollstein: Sure.

Hahn: So I took a wooden chair that was in the place and set it up opposite the door and I went to sleep with my .357 in my hand facing that door figuring if ...

Hollstein: Oh boy! (Chuckling)

Hahn: ... if one of the bad guys showed up I wanted to say good morning to them. (Laughing)

Hollstein: (Laughing)

Hahn: (Laughing) So I held the fort there for all night, and then most of the next day until the ...

Hollstein: There's probably no trouble staying awake. (Laughing)

Hahn: I was running on adrenaline, obviously. (Chuckling)

Hollstein: Sure.

Hahn: So we did do that. We substituted everything, including we took the 5,000 rounds of ammunition out of the place and had eight guys work as re-loaders and dumped the powder out of the shells. Put in coconut charcoal for weight and re-crimped the bullets back into the shells and put it all back in one night's time.

Hollstein: The logistics of this are amazing. (Chuckling)

Hahn: Yeah. The logistics were truly amazing. And, of course, none of this would have happened if you didn't have the right players. I mean, you've got a U.S. Attorney here who's got a lot of temerity. You know, (**unintel**) the guy who picks up the phone and calls the Director of the FBI. The SAC, at the time, was a guy named Ed Hegarty who, you know, his ... his self-stated claim to fame was he was the guy who discovered the Cosa Nostra. (Chuckling)

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: You know. Which all of us question. But Hegarty was not short on temerity either. So, you know, you had a couple people here who were really willing to stick their necks out and make ... do things that other people simply, other managers simply would not do.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: So, at that point, we know that something's afoot. Within a week of that event, or those events, a guy comes in from Puerto Rico - the following Wednesday, in fact - and they meet at the safe house. They pick him up at like at ten o'clock at night. They bring him to the safe house. We could see on the camera that they seemed like they were wrapping up some of the weapons and stuff and then they took some shopping bags down. They had two cars that we had never seen before, one of which was registered in a bogus name; one of which was a stolen car with a stolen plate on it. And they loaded this material in the cars and all this is occurring now up until about one or two in the morning.

I had a surveillance team that had started on the morning shift that had now pushed through sixteen hours of doing surveillance, including an aircraft. And at about two in the morning, the aircraft is screaming at me that they can't fly anymore. And so when they walked out of that safe house on March 15th I cut the surveillance. I said, "These folks, they've packed everything up. I'm certain that they're just gonna go to bed and get up in the morning and, do whatever they're going to do tomorrow." And I was, of course, dead wrong. (Laughing)

Hollstein: Ahhh!

Hahn: They, in fact, got in their cars and, although we didn't know it at the time, they drove from there to Leavenworth, Kansas, where they had plans on Friday morning to break Oscar Lopez, one of the FALN leaders, out of prison. That was Wednesday. Thursday we realized what had happened that they'd disappeared, of course, and didn't know where. But going through the materials that we'd gotten out of the safe house, we knew that there were floor plans of different prisons. So we contacted all the prisons and found that Leavenworth was one of them and we knew Oscar Lopez was there. When we talked to the warden we found out that Lopez was scheduled Friday morning to be taken to Wadsworth VA Hospital to be examined.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: And so we flew a team from Chicago to Kansas City, a bunch of guys that had worked on the surveillances and knew what these people looked like, with the instruction that they not intercede but simply conduct a surveillance at the Wadsworth VA Hospital emergency entrance, where the ambulance was supposed to arrive. And we asked the warden to make sure that Lopez, rather than getting in that ambulance, was simply taken to the infirmary at the appointed time and just held there so that he would have no way of knowing until the last seconds that he wasn't, in fact, going to be transported ...

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: And sure enough, on Friday morning, our suspects from Chicago or our subjects from Chicago, showed up, dressed in disguises, moving around the hospital entrance. You could see that they were carrying a roll of duct tape hidden in a hat. You could see that at least one of them was wearing a bulletproof vest and, we basically had stopped it simply by stopping Lopez from showing up.

One of the surveillance guys managed to find the safe house in Kansas City that they had rented. And basically we stopped Lopez from escaping ...

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: ... without them ever realizing that we were onto them.

Hollstein: Well, now Lopez must have had pretty good communications with these people. Because it wouldn't be something like you'd write a letter and say "they're going to move me two weeks from now."

Hahn: Well, actually, that's exactly what he had done.

Hollstein: Uh-huh.

Hahn: He had communications through legal visits.

Hollstein: Oh, I see. Okay.

Hahn: And through the legal visits. and, of course, it wasn't the lawyers going in, it was people that they designated as paralegals of theirs.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: Which would be relatives of Lopez or friends of Lopez. And they would go in and visit and they would not be subject to search because they are paralegals.

Hollstein: Right.

Hahn: So he could pass them documents. They could pass him documents. And they would communicate, frequently, by writing because they were so paranoid they wouldn't even speak in the prison.

Hollstein: Uh-hmm.

Hahn: So, you know, at that point, we had obviously stopped the break out attempt and over the next month or two we continued to monitor. New York is trying to get some progress on their end but all they're getting is an occasional meeting at their safe house.

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Hahn: In May, the subjects in Chicago wanted very much to get some support because they were being criticized by the other FALN members and by the terrorists in Puerto Rico. The ones in New York and the ones in Puerto Rico were saying that Chicago obviously didn't know what they were doing; they were unsuccessful in breaking Lopez out because they didn't plan very well, and that sort of thing.

So, one day we have Alejandrina Torres go to the safe house and use the phone there to call Mexico. And she dialed the number obviously, that we capture. She ends up speaking to a guy who's using the name *Jorge*. And he is the guy who is concerned about not having documentation. He's concerned about some operations that he's going to have on his face and his hands, that sort of thing. She wants him to come up to Chicago to support the Chicago contingent. He says, "No, you come down here." Sort of thing.

They can't agree and so they agree that she will call him back at the same location one week, exactly, later. And if she misses that call, then it'll be two weeks later. And, of course, I took the phone number and passed it to FBI Headquarters and passed it to Legat in Mexico, asking Mexico to tell me where this phone was and asking Headquarters to give us permission to do a surveillance in Mexico. Headquarters came back and said, "No way are you going to do a surveillance in Mexico." And then, unilaterally, the Legal Attaché in Mexico, based on the fact that Headquarters said we couldn't do a surveillance, they identified the phone and gave all the information to the Federales.

Hollstein: Ah-hah.

Hahn: And, by that time, we had said, based on the description of this guy and the fact that he's complaining about needing surgery on his face, needing surgery on his hands, we think this is William Morales who escaped from New York back in 1979.

Hollstein: Uh-huh. Is this the guy with no hands?

Hahn: Yep. Yep. And so the Legal Attaché. I kept on calling him and calling him and he wouldn't answer my calls and the Assistant Legal Attaché kept telling me how this is not a problem because we always get drug dealers extradited. And I go, "You don't understand. This isn't a drug dealer. This is a politico and we don't have an extradition treaty with Mexico." Well, sure enough, the first night that the call was supposed to go down, we do a surveillance of Alejandrina Torres in Chicago. She does not use the phone at all. We break down the surveillances around 8:30 at night; she was supposed to call at six. Never happened.

We all go down to this cop bar where we hung out regularly and about ten o'clock at night, I get a phone call from the office saying the Legal Attaché in Mexico wants to be patched through to me. I get patched through to the Legal Attaché; and he tells me that there is a firefight in Mexico, ongoing at that time. He said, "It's the second one today." They had captured William Morales but in the process a police officer was killed; another police officer was shot.

Hollstein: Oh my.

Hahn: At least one other person was killed. By midnight, I had the FBI Headquarters supervisor calling me wondering why I was doing proactive investigation in Mexico (chuckling).

Hollstein: Ah! (chuckling)

Hahn: The Ready Room at the White House was on alert because the Ambassador to Mexico understood that the FBI was involved in this shoot out and wanted to know why the FBI was down in Mexico. It was just unbelievable (chuckling) ...

Hollstein: Oh my goodness.

Hahn: ... a complete nightmare. But the bottom line is that Morales was, in fact, captured down there. I had hoped, what I had hoped to accomplish was, it was quite evident to me that the Chicago people would've done anything to get him back up into the United States. And, of course, with a Title III, I thought, we could know exactly when and where he's going to cross the border. We'll just tip off some Border Patrol people.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

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Hahn: They'll be very alert that day and just happen to catch him. And it would've gone smoothly. But now we had to contend with the fact that he gets captured and the only connection between his capture and the active people in Chicago is that phone in that safe house. And we're thinking we're going to lose the whole Title III. And, of course, we did!

Within a couple days of that the FALN people in Chicago weren't sure that we were on that phone but they thought that with Morales in hand that we would be able to backtrack and trace his activities and find that phone in Chicago as a result. So they abandoned that safe house but they moved to a second safe house in Chicago that we had already identified. And so we just continued on from there ...

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: ... with one safe house instead of two at that point.

Hollstein: This was really sophisticated.

Hahn: Oh yeah!

Hollstein: This wasn't a bunch of *jibaros* wanting to see if they could have an adventure here, essentially.

Hahn: That's exactly right.

Hollstein: This was the real thing.

Hahn: That's exactly right. So the next thing that happens, essentially, is that they're planning to do a robbery. They're going to rob the CTA fare collectors. How do I want to say this? On the Chicago Transit Authority Subway Lines at the end of the day, evening time, nine, ten o'clock at night when they shut down the cashiers at each of the stations. What they have is they have a push-cart type safe that travels on the trains and the guys get off the train and go downstairs and get the cash receipts from each cashier. And the cashier then locks up for the night and they put that into this drop safe that's on a cart and they get back on the train and go to the next station and shut it down. So it's successively along the line and by the time it gets to the end of the line they have, you know, tens of thousands of dollars. And these guys were going to rob that.

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Hahn: And we disrupted that by, simply as they were doing a surveillance, having a marked car come up and grab a couple of them (laughing) and shake them down.

Hollstein: Uh-huh.

Hahn: Which so distracted them that they dropped that plan. And then as June approached ... now, mind you, this has gone on from January till June and, again, the enormous number of resources. At some points in time, we had 125 people doing surveillances. If you can imagine that.

Hollstein: Hmm!

Hahn: Because the SAC wanted to make sure we didn't lose track of these people after the episode with Oscar Lopez in Kansas.

Hollstein: Right.

Hahn: And so, you know, without getting burned, we wanted to make sure we had enough people on every shift and, you know, it was just, again, logistically a Cecil B. DeMille production.

Hollstein: Wow. Yeah, just getting aircraft up and, you know, finding the aircraft and getting 'em up and ...

Hahn: Well, ...

Hollstein: ... all those cars, and everything else. Hmm!

Hahn: And translators. 'Cause, I mean, you (**unintel**) the conversation and it's in Spanish and so the translators want to listen to it a couple times. You know, when you put a microphone in the corner of a room it sounds like you're listening from next door.

Hollstein: Sure.

Hahn: So understanding exactly what's being said is not that easy.

So in June they planned to do yet another series of bombings and as they built up their materials in the new safe house and actually they drafted a communiqué and you could hear them reading it to one another over the tape and whatnot.

Hahn: On June 30th we made the arrests and that was also a big production because we didn't want any fugitives so we made sure we had surveillance on all four people before we gave a green light to make the arrests so that they would all be arrested simultaneously. And successfully arrested them and successfully, you know, executed the searches and, ultimately, successfully prosecuted these people.

At the time that we made the arrests, both New York, which had not yet progressed as much as we had and didn't really have what they felt was a prosecutable case against anyone, begged us not to make those arrests. San Juan, which now, by this time, they had had a LAW rocket fired at the FBI Office in San Juan. (chuckling)

Hollstein: Wow! (Chuckling)

Hahn: So they were desperate to have, you know, us keep this thing going so that they could make a connection. 'Cause the guy who came in to do the escape at Wadsworth VA Hospital was the guy from Puerto Rico. You know, we had tried to track him back on the plane but lost him in the airports. But the bottom line is they knew that our people were in connection with their people. They also begged us, Dick Held was the SAC there at the time, begged Hegarty not to take this thing down.

But from Hegarty's perspective he had stuck his neck out long enough, you know, we weren't going to get anything more that was going to get more time for these people. We had identified as many as we could. We had four subjects in Chicago.

Hollstein: And they might get away and do something.

Hahn: And they might have killed somebody. He said, "Can you guarantee me that you know where all their explosives are?" I said, "No. I can't guarantee you that." He says, "Well then, this things going down." And that was that.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: Unfortunately, within a couple days, the New York safe house, the guys just bailed out of there and never came back. Luis Rosado is still a fugitive. He was charged federally. But I know the federal process has been dismissed since then. But he is still a fugitive based on an activity that he conducted in Chicago while he was there, where he stole a vehicle from a used car lot at gunpoint and actually took the salesman hostage for awhile. Personally robbed him also.

But the bottom line is these people were suddenly so paranoid. They couldn't believe that we actually did this by surveillance. They thought for sure there had to be some insider or something else going on. And, of course, they did get discovery through the process but they didn't full discovery until 1985 and we made the arrest in 1983. Through their own litigation because what they did is they appealed the decision of the local District Court to allow the Title III and to allow the videotaping. And when the Appellate Court upheld it, they petitioned the Supreme Court to hear it and, of course the Supreme Court decided not to hear it. But the bottom line is all that took almost two years. So it was two years later before they actually went into the courtroom.

Hollstein: So that was in certainly in your advantage, then to your advantage.

Hahn: Oh absolutely.

Hollstein: Yeah.

Hahn: Because what happened in the interim was while New York was not able to muster this sort of penetration again, San Juan was. San Juan took basically our game plan. They went out and did surveillances of a couple suspects, very discreetly, and they picked up one suspect meeting with a guy at a restaurant, where they'd get in the car and they'd circle around a couple times dry-cleaning themselves and then go off into the mountains. And they then identified where that guy lived and were watching him, and they weren't sure who he was. And this guy would come out of the condominium he lived in and go across the street to a little shopping center, a little strip mall, and use one of the pay phones there. And, you know, this went on for about two or three months where they had surveillances on this guy.

Hahn: Weren't sure who he was, but were sure that, you know, they were probably on to some sort of a cell. And one day a guy named Pat Daly, who was working the surveillances, brought a bolt cutter to work and after this guy used the phones across the street, Daly went over to those same phones and cut the receivers off of each one of them and threw them in plastic bags and sent them off to the FBI Laboratory. And the latent fingerprint people identified the fingerprints of long lost fugitive Filiberto Ojeda Rios.

Hollstein: Ahhh! I remember him from my time down there.

Hahn: (chuckling) Yeah, as being on one of those phones. And so this guy was identified as Filiberto Ojeda Rios. And, you know, that kind of put them over the top in terms of getting a Title III. Again, using the 'walks like a duck, talks like a duck' sort of thing. And when they got the Title III what they discovered was that this was the *Macheteros* in Puerto Rico, and that they were responsible for an 8.2 million dollar robbery of a Wells Fargo truck in Hartford, Connecticut.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: Where they had used a Puerto Rican kid that was working as a guard for Wells Fargo, on the truck. And he drugged his two co-workers and they took 8.2 million off that truck and sent 4.1 of it to Cuba. (chuckling)

Hollstein: Wow! (Chuckling)

Hahn: And so, you know, the bottom line is that the game plan that we developed in Chicago ended up being very useful for fighting the same sort of terrorism there in Puerto Rico. And, since 1983, there has not been a claimed FALN action anywhere.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: All these people have, in fact, in 1999, as you're probably aware, Bill Clinton gave them all amnesty, a pardon, basically without any sort of cooperation required. And the shame of that is that Fraunces Tavern has never been solved. You know, you have four dead there that nobody has ever paid the price for.

Hollstein: Right.

- Hahn: And you have outstanding fugitives who still have ... William Morales, ultimately, was released from a Mexico jail and now lives in Cuba.
- Hollstein: Does the President have to say anything about his thinking at all on these things? What influenced him to release these people?
- Hahn: Well, this was subject to hearings by both the Senate and the ... and the Congress, in the House.
- Hollstein: Uh-huh.
- Hahn: And the consensus opinion is that at the time that he made these releases ... mind you there was over 3,000 applications for clemency pending at the time ...
- Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.
- Hahn: ... and he had only granted, in his Administration, like six prior to this time. This is September of 1999, so it's a year and half before he's out of office or nearly a year and a half before. But the consensus opinion is that he thought it would help Hillary ... because Hillary, at that time, had just started her campaign for the Senatorial seat out of New York.
- Hollstein: Oh.
- Hahn: And, of course, there's a large Puerto Rican population in New York and, as you probably know, an awful lot of Puerto Ricans, despite the fact that they may say that they want to stay a Commonwealth, they would love to be an independent state, and they sympathize with these terrorists.
- Hollstein: Yeah. Well, we kept them going over the years. I started down there in San Juan in 1962, in the Army. There was the Independentistas and they could never get up enough people voting to be recognized as a party. And they kept lowering the levels of voters registered as Independentistas just to keep the thing going. Just so there'd be some sort of opposition other than, you know, like Republican-Democrat.
- Now, did Clinton also pardon the people who had tried to, had shot up Congress and had tried to assassinate ... ?

Hahn: No, Jimmy Carter did.

Hollstein: Oh, Carter did that. Okay.

Hahn: Yep. Carter did in 1979.

Hollstein: Yeah, they'd been in jail for a very long time.

Hahn: Yes. Exactly. You had the people that shot up Congress and the one survivor from the attack on Truman.

Hollstein: Right.

Hahn: All released. That was one of the issues that the FALN claimed in all their communiqués was they wanted to free the five Puerto Rican prisoners-of-war.

Hollstein: (Chuckling)

Hahn: You know. And then when that issue disappeared, they still kept on bombings.

Hollstein: Well, whatever works. You know. If you can, hang their hat on.

Hahn: Exactly. Cause de jour.

Hollstein: Yeah. So in terms of, though, there's sophistication and lack of sophistication. You're describing their actions as being, this is the kind of stuff that you'd get from real pros out of Russia or some other place.

Hahn: Oh, precisely. And everyone believes that these, the training may not have been direct, but the training came from Cuba, we believe. And doing terrorist manuals and things like they were, some of that stuff that you couldn't identify exactly where it came from but it was in Spanish. We think that that's exactly where this came from. And it probably came through the white girls. I think I told you last time that the white girls that were involved in that Nanuet Mall shootout with the blacks in Nyack, New York.

Hollstein: Right.

Hahn: Ultimately, some of the May 19th people that were found to be part of that investigation, they found a FALN communiqué, a carbon copy. You know, the old style carbon copy.

Hollstein: Right.

Hahn: In the search of their apartment. And their apartment was like six blocks away from where that communiqué, the original ... had been dropped at a phone booth.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: Beyond the cases I've already discussed, Oscar Lopez, again, tried to break himself out of prison on another occasion. And in 1985, while we're in trial, we're simultaneously selling explosives to his co-conspirators that were outside of prison. All the arrangements had been made through an undercover on our side, and then suspects, Chicago Puerto Ricans on the other side. But when the deal actually went down, what showed up but two white radicals from the '60s to buy the explosives. So, I mean, the connections between the white radicals and the Puerto Ricans was there, I mean, demonstrably there.

Hollstein: It sounds like, though, the Puerto Ricans were being used to ... to create problems and *sturm und drang*, and what have you, which the white radicals could use, then.

Hahn: Yep. Yep.

Hollstein: Interesting. Interesting.

Hahn: Yeah.

Hollstein: Tell me a little bit about how these, how a trial of this type operates. Just here again, just to give a feel for what it's like to be involved in this kind of thing.

Hahn: Well, first of all, let's take the case that we talked about here. Obviously, I end up with hundreds of hours of tape; hundreds of pages of transcripts, video, again, tens, tens of hours of, if not over 100 hours of video tape; plus all the physical evidence from the searches of the apartments.

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Hahn: And because they're all over the place. You know, they're in Kansas; they're in Bloomington, Illinois, where they had planned to break out some of the other people. We needed maps. We needed all kinds of things. So you have way too much evidence. (chuckling)

Hollstein: Right. Yeah. (Chuckling)

Hahn: As opposed to scratching around for how do you prove this. The question was what do you use and what do you not use because you can't overwhelm the jury.

Hollstein: Right. Right.

Hahn: And, of course, every little thing that you do is challenged. And what we ended up doing is bringing in a large screen TV and a couple of smaller TVs and the Judge let us play the videotapes or we played portions of the videotapes, actually. I was on and off the stand, I think, twenty-two times during the course of a six-week trial.

Hollstein: Hmmm!

Hahn: Because they used me to introduce tapes. And used me to describe what was going on in some of the videotapes. We probably had somewhere in the neighborhood of a hundred witnesses testify for the Government in that case. And, again, the rigors of discovery were just enormous.

Hollstein: Well sure. Because all of this is, well, not all of it, but much of it, anyway, is based on Title IIIs. So they're going to attack that at every level. Yeah.

Hahn: Exactly. The good news was that they only used standby counsel. They did not have full representation when they actually got to trial. But their standby counsel sat, just like defense counsel would, sat at the table with the defendants. And the defendants, themselves, got up and tried a little cross examination which backfired on them on a couple occasions.

Hollstein: Yeah.

Hahn: It was, to say stressful ...

Hollstein: (Laughing)

Hahn: ... is something of an understatement.

Hollstein: But you're just coming off all of this circus to start with.

Hahn: Uhm-hmm.

Hollstein: And then into this thing is, had to be a, be a real stressor. How many Agents would actually be assigned to a prosecution like that when you're going in for, I mean, to manage the whole thing?

Hahn: I think I had myself and two other guys is all there were.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm. Plus your people from the U.S. Attorney's Office?

Hahn: Right. Which we had three, we actually had three prosecutors involved.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: A guy named Joe Hartzler; a guy named Jim Sanders, and a guy named Jim Ferguson. And Hartzler ended up being the guy who prosecutes Timothy McVeigh. And I had a hand in doing that because I was in Oklahoma City.

Just to give you a little about the rest of my career, I mean, I went from that ...

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: ... they gave me the Attorney General's Distinguished Service Award for my work there on the FALN.

Hollstein: Rightly so.

Hahn: And I then went to the FBI Lab Explosives Unit because those guys went all over the world in response to attacks against U.S. interests. And I really wanted to be right in the middle of it all the time. So I went there and I was in the middle of it all the time. I ran the crime scene at the World Trade Center in 1993. I ran the crime scene in Oklahoma City in 1995. I was, you know, all over the world in response to attacks and it was great.

Hahn: But when I was in Oklahoma City, the First Chair Attorney from the prosecution of the World Trade Center in 1993 was walking around there and I ran into him and said, you know, "What are you doing here? Are you going to take this one too?" And he said, "No, no, no, no. I've had my share, but Justice is looking for somebody that they think is a good, competent guy that knows something about terrorism." And I said, "Well, why don't you call Joe Hartzler?" And he said, "Who's that?" And I said, "Well, Joe was First Chair in the prosecution of the FALN back in the '80s, you ought to see if he's willing. He's down in Springfield. He's still a prosecutor." And they did and Joe did and the rest is history. But you know, it's funny. It's a very small clique of people.

Hollstein: (Laughing) Yeah, the bomb crowd. Yeah. Well, it was interesting. Jim Norman just made a little posting on Xgboys.

Hahn: Yes, I saw that.

Hollstein: And I got a hold of him and I said, "How about being interviewed for the oral history?" And he said, "Oh, yes. Yes." And he said, "Well, you know, you gotta get a hold of Rick Hahn too." And (laughing) I said, "Well," for once anyway, "I was one step ahead of him." And so we talked a little while. We'll be interviewing him within the next couple weeks, I think.

Hahn: Well, that's great.

Hollstein: Yeah.

Hahn: He's got some great details to tell and none of these things go according to Hoyle, as you well know. But, the biggest problem in any of these big events, I think, is just trying to, having people that can work around the bureaucracy. Because it's always there and, you know, it can be a real stumbling block. And it can make you do dumb things if you're not careful.

Hollstein: Tell me a little bit about World Trade Center number one.

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Hahn: You know, the laboratory, the way they operated was, they would send an explosives guy to be THE lab guy and he would control all the other lab people there and direct things. And they sent a guy named Dave Williams who was one of my co-workers there in the lab, and he got there, I think, on Saturday. I didn't get there until Monday, but when I got there ...

(End of Side A)

Hollstein: Side B of tape 3. So Dave Williams had gone to the command post.

Hahn: Yeah. He was the designated lab guy and he was spending his time up in the command post at the FBI Office at the same time ATF and whatever Bureau guys were bomb techs there. And some of the New York City Bomb Techs had found a basement in a building right around the corner from the World Trade Center that was willing to give us space to use as a crime scene command post. And knowing that Dave couldn't be in both places I went to him and said, "Look, if you're going to be uptown with the bosses that's fine, but somebody needs to be down here to make sure that, things are run right down here on a day-to-day basis."

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: And, you know, "I'll sweep floors for you if you want, but if you want, I'll run this show." And he said, "Fine." So that's how I got involved. And Dave and I, together, really ran this thing.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: But I was on the ground there. One of the interesting things that happened is ATF, of course, was always competing with the Bureau, and ATF had brought in their National Response Team, which is a pre-organized, pre-structured sort of thing, which includes a supposed evidence specialist, you know, that is going to be in charge of keeping the evidence and making sure all the logs are right and that sort of thing. The Bureau, at the time, did not have anything similar to that.

Hahn: And, so Dave had agreed with ATF to allow their Evidence Tech to be the person who was going to take charge of the evidence. And he told me that and I accepted that. And I said, "Okay. I'm going to organize things." And I got all the volunteers, or all the people that the FBI Office sent me the first day, to sign, you know, just a form that said, or a sheet that said who they were, what squad they were on, what telephone numbers they had, what shift they would prefer, and whether or not they had any sort of crime scene experience. And there was a gal by the name of Beth Gallagher who had been a crime scene specialist as a police officer. And so when I made the assignments of the FBI people, I took Beth and asked her to be the person that would sit with the ATF gal. It was a girl from the ATF ...

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: ... and make sure that that ATF girl did not, you know, that she was doing things according to Hoyle, basically.

And we started processing the scene, I think, on Wednesday. And Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. Friday afternoon, Beth comes to me and says, "Rick, I don't understand what we're doing." Now mind you, we're only working one shift because this whole thing is contained inside the complex.

Hollstein: Right. Right.

Hahn: We work an eight hour shift collecting evidence. The end of that eight hour shift the teams would bring in, and mind you, there's about 300 people involved here. The teams would bring in their evidence to this basement across the street and turn in over to the ATF gal. And Beth says, "Every night I meet her here. We sit in on the debriefing at four o'clock and she takes all the evidence and then she pulls the tags off the evidence and throws them away and puts ATF tags on them. And then she takes the logs and rewrites them where she says she's the finder of all the evidence." I said, "Beth, you've got to be joking!"

Hollstein: Oh no.

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Hahn: "You must be confused." She goes, "No, Rick. Look." And she goes over to a drop safe that was there. You know how a drop safe works where the drawer, the top drawer is the depository and once it's closed, the bottom drops and drops into the lower part of the safe.

Hollstein: Right.

Hahn: Well, the drawer had not been closed since this gal had thrown a bunch of tags in there. And so Beth opens up that top drawer and pulls out a handful of original evidence tags. (Chuckling)

Hollstein: Oh my.

Hahn: With the initials of the Agents that had collected the evidence.

Hollstein: Yeah. Yeah.

Hahn: And I just kinda went, "Oh my God." So, I ended up testifying, actually, for the defense in that case because I testified to what I'm telling you now.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: ATF refused to remove her from the site. Of course, I removed her from her position and put Beth in charge of the evidence. But that's basically what she was doing. And the theory is that the ATF simply wanted the stuff, they wanted to be able to say it was THEIR evidence and going to THEIR lab because they wanted the aggrandizement that would attach thereto. And so she was ...

Hollstein: Oh boy.

Hahn: ... taking the evidence tags off the evidence and claiming that she had found all the evidence. Now, you know, you imagine one person trying to claim that they found the evidence that 300 people are collecting (**unintel**)

Hollstein: Right. Right.

Hahn: It's just ridiculous.

Hollstein: Yeah. And there's a chance that she could ruin the whole thing. Boy oh boy.

Hahn: Oh absolutely. Absolutely. If I hadn't caught it within the first couple of days. Some of the evidence, some of the real, very good evidence ... the wheels off the truck that were found in the first couple days were tainted and they did not use them. So there, you know, there's a number of things.

Hollstein: Do I remember correctly, now. You got the VIN from axles or was that? OK City had the axle, right? The rear axle?

Hahn: OK City had the axle. What happened in the World Trade Center is that everyone had agreed that nothing would be removed from the scene until they could sit down and agree to some ground rules. And, mind you, the place was not workable on Saturday, or even very much so on Sunday because there had been so many fires inside the basement.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: It's a six-story basement that's a block square and the towers actually ran through the basement all the way down into the bedrock. But the basement had collapsed all the way down six stories. On the level where the bomb had occurred, there's a hole about 110 feet in diameter and then it got smaller, obviously, as it went down.

Hollstein: It's amazing that the whole building didn't go down. When you listen, you know, you think about a hole that size and all that power contained in it.

Hahn: The concern that they had was the basement was, or the concourse, as they called it, it was a big concrete bathtub. All six layers, it's like six sheets of cardboard stacked on straws. The straws being the I-beams, support beams ...

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: ... and they were 25 foot on center. But without the floors to connect them, now those I-beams could flex.

Hollstein: Right.

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Hahn: And that was the concern was that if they flexed, if they were subject to much vibration that there would be further collapse of the floors in the concourse, itself, inside this big concrete bathtub.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: So, it wasn't so much that, because the towers were rooted in the bedrock. And that, they didn't think was going to be a problem.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm. Well now, the collection of the evidence had switched over to Beth Gallagher, there.

Hahn: Yeah.

Hollstein: Now did you have anything to do with the rest of the investigation or you were strictly explosives at this point?

Hahn: I was strictly explosives. I mean, I did some analysis of some of the evidence that they found in one of the searches but oh, you asked how this thing was solved so quickly.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: On Sunday, although there had been this agreement to, you know, not remove anything. And mind you, like I said, a lot of cars had burned because what happens to cars when they get crushed is, first, obviously, their fuel tanks breach ...

Hollstein: Uh-huh.

Hahn: ... and then there's usually a lot of sparking from the batteries or from some of the wiring and so you end up with fires. And there had been several fires in the basement. So Friday, I mean, just getting the evacuation done on Friday was a big problem. Saturday, they were still trying to turn off all the electricity, turn off all the water, to make sure that, you know, they didn't have those issues going on.

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Hahn: But on Sunday they had that kind of pretty much under control. They were just waiting to kind of work out the details of an agreement of how to go about doing this and some of the New York PD Bomb Squad guys and a couple ATF guys took hand-held lights and went down to try and determine where the perimeter of the blast was.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: I mean, we knew where it had breached up into the lobby. We knew it had occurred on B-2 but, you know, you've got no lights because you've cut the electricity.

Hollstein: Sure.

Hahn: And so, it's like going into a cave. So they went down there and their futzing around and, mind you, there's hundreds of cars 'cause this is a parking garage.

Hollstein: Sure.

Hahn: But as their putzing around down there, they find a bumper that has a piece, a fractured piece of frame rail attached to it. And these are explosive-trained guys and they look at it and go, "This looks like explosive damage and this looks, to us, like this could be part of, maybe, even the vehicle that was the bomb."

Hollstein: Uh-hmm!

Hahn: And so they put a line on it and got a little bobcat and pulled that thing out of the basement and took it to the NYPD Lab. That was Sunday. And, of course, there's great consternation about this on Monday when it becomes known to the managers that this has been done. People get their wrist slapped. At the lab on Monday, two guys that work in the lab start looking this thing over and they find a partial VIN on that frame rail.

Hollstein: Ahh-huh!

Hahn: And so by Monday night, we know that this is a Ryder truck. And, again, the speed at which this occurs and the luck involved here is just phenomenal!

Hollstein: (Laughing)

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Hahn: Just phenomenal! And they find out that it's a Ryder truck and that it's been rented in Jersey and the guy who rents it ... it's like when they tell us the name of the guy who rents it we go, "John Wilkes Booth!" We know who John Wilkes Booth is" ...

Hollstein: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Hahn: ... sort of thing. And, of course, this is the guy, he rented it in his true name. And, to boot, he told them that the car was stolen. He had a four hundred dollar cash deposit and he wanted his deposit back. They said, "Well, you're going to have to fill out this form ... here's a three-page form to fill out ... and when you give us the form back for our insurance purposes, we'll give you your deposit back." Sent him away, when he had showed up for his deposit, like the day after the bombing.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: So, it's now, it's like February 28th, February 29th, something like that. What we did is the FBI had the people at Ryder, where he had rented it, call him and tell him that they needed to clear their books and would he please come in and bring in the form so they could give him his four hundred dollars and they could settle the matter with their insurance company. And don't you know, this guy comes strolling in (laughing) ...

Hollstein: (Laughing) It's amazing, isn't it?

Hahn: ... to get his four hundred bucks. (Laughing) Yeah. I mean, it's just absolutely incredible.

Hollstein: But, you know, time and again, the actions that we take on kidnaps and a lot of other, many other things where, like this, where it's a big event, swarming it, getting all over it and moving around and early on seems to break loose leads more times than not.

Hahn: Yep.

Hollstein: And it really works.

Hahn: Yep. It really does.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

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Hahn: It really does.

Hollstein: That was World Trade Center.

Hahn: That was World Trade Center, yes.

Hollstein: Then the next big one, then, was OK City? For you?

Hahn: The next big one in the United States. I mean, I'd worked on Pan Am 103. I was over there for awhile. I had worked on an Avianca Airliner that went down in Colombia.

Hollstein: Humm! We're just getting ready to interview the Case Agent from Pan Am 103. I think he's done.

Hahn: Marquise?

Hollstein: Yeah.

Hahn: Right.

Hollstein: Yeah. He's just been interviewed. So that'll be an interesting one to pick around, also. What type of work did you do on the Pan Am one, case?

Hahn: When I got there, they had organized the assemblage of evidence into two areas. One was they had a hangar where they were actually bringing parts of the aircraft and reconstructing that. And then the soft materials, you know, the luggage and whatnot that had come out of the aircraft was being processed in a separate center. And, obviously, we were trying to identify things. Separate valuables so we could, you know, put them in a safe and, in part, because we knew that the bomb had occurred in a cargo bin, looking for blast damage to clothing.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: Or suitcases or what ever. And so I was giving on-the-job training to the Scottish Police literally, you know, standing there. We had four or five big banquet-type tables set up, covered with paper and the floor covered with paper. As the stuff came in, we'd open up the bags and spread the stuff out and look at it.

Hahn: I'd be explaining to them how, you know, what you're looking for; how blast damage is different from impact damage, or fire damage, or your normal tears. And, we did, in fact, find some things that had blast damage.

And the way that case was solved was some of the clothing that was in the bag with the bomb had pieces of plastic from the timer and from the radio that contained the bomb broken up and, because it was hot from the thermal effect of the explosive, it fused to the clothing. So when they brought in the clothing and they found clothing that was blast-damaged, we would package it up and send it down to their lab. Their lab, in fact, pulled out these pieces of circuit board that ends up solving the case. So, that was my role in Pan Am 103, is I was helping train these guys on the job and separate out the blast-damaged clothing.

Hollstein: Well, that's not a very big country up there in Scotland or an area, I mean, and they'll probably never see something like that again. But, thank goodness you were there to help them out and keep them, get things going.

Alright, OK City. You worked that one also.

Hahn: Yeah. In fact, Louis Freeh was then the Director and when this thing went off basically what he did is he said, "Are the guys that ran the World Trade Center crime scene still available?" And I had left the lab. I was, actually, SSRA in Long Beach at the time, but, you know, all my managers knew my reputation and knew that I was, you know, up to my eyeballs in this bomb stuff through most of my career.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: And Ron Iden was the guy here and he called me and said, "Have you heard?" And I said, "No." He said, "There's a bomb in Oklahoma City. They're probably going to ask for you. Why don't you just go home and pack a bag." (Laughing)

Hollstein: (Laughing)

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Hahn: So that's what I did and before long there was a phone call and, you know, they said, "Can you come?" And I said, "Sure." And so Dave Williams and I, again, went there and did the same sort of thing where I ran the day-to-day operations and he interfaced with upper management.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm. Did Jim Norman end up as the Case Agent?

Hahn: Yes. He was ...

Hollstein: Writing it up and all. Yeah.

Hahn: He was the only bomb tech there in Oklahoma City, assigned there. And of course, he knew all the explosive guys; knew all, you have one in the office, obviously.

Hollstein: Sure.

Hahn: It took about three or four days before I even saw Jim because just because the way things work, you know, the logistics of getting in there and getting things organized and whatnot. But very much the same, you know, there's so many things to think about when you go into that sort of an environment. And the biggest problem is that, again, you're going to have the bureaucracy and the bureaucracy multiplied several times over because you're not just dealing with one agency, you're dealing with dozens of agencies.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: ATF is there. DOD is probably going to show up. The OSHA people are going to be there.

Hollstein: Sure.

Hahn: All kinds of different people and ...

Hollstein: Plus the local fire department and the police department. Yeah.

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Hahn: State and local guys exactly. And then people from all around the country who are bomb techs, who think that they, they want to be there, want to come and volunteer. Just organizing all that and keeping it all straight and keeping it running.

Hollstein: It's amazing the number of people that have received training in bomb work. I mean, that was a big deal there for awhile. And, even little towns will have some guy who's had some bomb training.

Hahn: Yep. Yep.

Hollstein: So you don't have any shortage of experts showing up.

Hahn: No, you don't anymore, that's for sure.

Hollstein: Well, good. Back home after that one?

Hahn: Back home after that one. I think the last thing I did that was bomb related, in my career, was in 1998. I went down to Argentina to review two truck bombs that had been set off there in the early '90s. Clinton had promised President Menem that he would have a team come down and they selected me to lead that team.

Hollstein: Was that at the Jewish Center there?

Hahn: One of them was, yeah. One was at the Israeli Embassy and one was at the Jewish Community Center.

Hollstein: Uh-huh. That's interesting. I went to that place a few years ago. I went down there ... private ... what was his name? Steve Emerson ... who's a ...

Hahn: Oh yeah.

Hollstein: ... in Washington, there. I went down with him in advance of the Maccabee Games that were being sponsored down there ... in Argentina, on behalf of the Jewish community that was going to be going down there. They're sending athletes down and they wanted to know if things were okay yet. And, as part of it, we went over to that location. And it's been all rebuilt, of course, and it's still a Jewish center.

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Hahn: ... and met some people there and saw pictures and what have you, and I ended up signing a Book of Remembrance at the place. So it was kind of, it brought home to me, how devastating that was for that community. And ...

Hahn: Uhm-hmm. Oh yeah.

Hollstein: ... really ... really very sad. And then just nothing more. You know. They just disappeared, these characters. And I guess there was some identification but I don't think it was ever solved, as such.

Hahn: Well, I think, in fact, one of the guys who was recently killed by a U.S. missile was supposedly involved in the planning of that.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: It was most likely Hezbollah and through intelligence, they identified specific individuals.

Hollstein: Yeah.

Hahn: But you know in that tri-border area, there's a very strong Muslim Fundamentalist, you know, Paraguay, Argentina, Brazil ...

Hollstein: Right. Right.

Hahn: ... tri-border area.

Hollstein: Yeah.

Hahn: There's a very large population of Fundamentalist Islamic people there.

Hollstein: Yeah, that's a tough crowd. You know, it just seems that that ... also that area was an area where there was a lot of Nazis after the war ...

Hahn: (Chuckling) Yeah.

Hollstein: ... had settled down there. I mean, what a crowd.

Hahn: Yeah.

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Hollstein: And it's Wild West. I spent a little time in Paraguay, there. And, at the time I was down there it was, you know, it was really the end of the world pretty much. It was something else.

Hahn: Yep.

Hollstein: Well, good. Then you retired. You've been doing some teaching, I guess.

Hahn: Yeah. I've done a couple different things. I've done a lot of vulnerability assessments, you know, for public utilities. I was THE terrorism guy for Los Angeles Department of Power and Water for awhile.

Hollstein: Uhm-hmm.

Hahn: And I did general investigation. I'm doing some teaching for State Department in their Anti-Terrorism Program, these days. I've written one book on the FALN. And I've got a second book on the FALN in the works. I don't have a publisher yet.

Hollstein: Oh ... Oh!

Hahn: But I do have some people from the, you know, from the television industry that are interested in the manuscript.

Hollstein: Great. Great. Really interesting. Let me turn off here.