

KIDNAP INCIDENTS - INITIAL LOCAL RESPONSE

INTRODUCTION

Guidance is given in this document on measures to be included in the immediate local response to be made by the company or family member nominated to be in charge of initial action following a suspected abduction.

Several days may elapse between the disappearance and suspected seizure of a hostage and the receipt of a telephone call, letter or other form of contact from kidnappers. Further, if the person thought to have been abducted is an employee of a commercial or other organisation, and the incident occurs at the location of a subsidiary office, there may also be a delay before relevant instructions are received from the head office of the organisation concerned.

During this initial period, it will therefore be in the best interests of a hostage, as well as in the interests of his or her family and of any organisation involved, if the initial local response to be taken has been previously agreed and co-ordinated.

INITIAL RESPONSE ACTION

On the assumption that an abduction has taken place, the individual appointed to be in charge of the initial local response should:

- Confirm that the nominated family members or officials at the victim's head office (as relevant) have been informed in accordance with the agreed procedure.
- Start diary of events.
- Designate the telephone to be used for negotiations with the kidnappers and make arrangements for its permanent manning; recording equipment should be fitted to this telephone.
- Brief other likely recipients of telephone calls from the kidnappers, with instructions to direct the caller to use the designated telephone.
- Brief the local law enforcement agency at the highest possible level.
- Reassure family members involved and make arrangements for their physical protection, possibly by moving them to a safe location.
- Avoid making comments to representatives of the media, unless through an authorised spokesman. Prepare text of public statement; if relevant, agree with the head office and have all enquiries referred to the head office until text has been agreed.
- Discreetly review the security of senior associates and close family members of the victim, as appropriate.
- Obtain the confidential personal records of the victim; be prepared to ask a 'proof-of-life' question on receipt of the initial call from the kidnappers: this is a prepared question the answer to which will be known only by the person reported to be the hostage and not by his or her captors.
- Consider the most senior level at which contact with the host government could be established; be prepared, after clearance with the head office of the victim's organisation or an appointed family member (as relevant), to confirm that:
- Whilst there will be full co-operation with government agencies, the safety and well-being of the

hostage will be the first priority of such agencies involved, including the Police.

- The organisation (or family, as appropriate) has authority to negotiate for the release of the hostage.
- Identify sources within local government agencies of possible statements to the media which may complicate the task of those directing the response to the incident; consider ways of attempting to limit comment from such sources.

It should be noted that, until appropriate authority is given, no negotiations should take place with any caller who states that he or she represents the kidnappers; even when such authority has been granted, negotiations should not commence until a correct answer has been received to the 'proof-of-life' question. This will indicate that the caller is in contact with the kidnappers holding the missing person and that the call is not a hoax.