



JASON ELAM
AND STEVE YOHN

A RILEY COVINGTON THRILLER

INSIDE

THREAT

*"[MONDAY NIGHT JIHAD IS]
A CHILLING RIDE THROUGH
A NIGHTMARE SCENARIO."*

*JOEL C. ROSENBERG,
NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR*



A
JASON ELAM
AND STEVE YOHN

NOVEL

INSIDE THREAT

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Inside Threat

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JASON ELAM

It is to the real Jesus that I dedicate this book.

STEVE YOHN

To the God of uncomfortable surprises.

*What a blessing it is to live and learn
through the undeserved victories and
the glorious disappointments.*

DEDICATION

LORD, WE THANK YOU first and foremost. You more than anyone know the miracle of this process. We ask that You continue to use this series to surprise people with Your truth.

To Tami and Nancy and all of the kids: Your love and support mean everything. This book wouldn't have happened without you.

To Matt Yates: You have moved from agent to friend to brother. We so appreciate all that you and the rest of the Yates & Yates team have done.

To Karen Watson: We could say the same about you, obviously, replacing *agent* with *publisher*, *brother* with *sister*, and *Y&Y* with *Tyndale House*, and probably getting more team-specific by including names like the editorially amazing Jeremy Taylor, the artistically spectacular Dean Renninger, and the assistantly irreplaceable Stephanie Broene, but other than that . . .

And finally, to all of you who have been reading through this series. Thanks for your unfailing support and encouragement. Picturing your smiles and laughter is what keeps the fingers moving over that laptop keyboard on those cold, lonely, basement mornings.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 11:35 A.M. EDT
WASHINGTON, DC

The September sun soaked into Scott Ross's face so deeply that he could almost feel his skin browning. *Yeah, baby, brush a little butter on me, and you'll cook up a nice golden, flaky crust.* The leaves around him hadn't started to drop yet, and the breeze that rustled them smelled fresh and clean—not always a given in the nation's capital.

The moment of peace contrasted sharply with the insanity taking place around him. For Scott, as director of the counterterrorism division's Special Operations Group Bravo, life was always a little crazy. But whenever a credible tip came in on an impending attack, it was Katy bar the door.

Scott and his team had gotten the call less than twenty minutes after Malik Abdul-Tawwab walked into the Washington, DC, Metropolitan Police Fourth District station.



Less than half an hour after that, Scott was in an interrogation room getting the scoop.

Malik Abdul-Tawwab was a young, second-generation American Muslim who had been frustrated with his life. With no work and no prospect of that situation meaningfully changing, he had become bitter toward the land of his birth. It wasn't long before he found himself drawn to a radical group that had formed within his mosque. The talk of jihad, threats of revenge, and promises of a better life for all Muslims struck a chord with him. Gradually what he once had considered *his* homeland transformed into *their* homeland.

Then, three weeks ago, this ten-person cell received a call informing them that it was time to put their talk into action. That night, the imam asked for a volunteer who was willing to become *shahid*, a martyr for the sake of Allah. All ten members of the group raised their hands, including Abdul-Tawwab. All were ready to kill; all were ready to die. However, only one was needed, and the one chosen was a seventeen-year-old named Taqi Abdur-Razzaq.

Although disappointed for himself, Abdul-Tawwab was happy for his friend and proud to be part of an operation that would strike terror into the corrupt hearts of the American public.

At least, he had been proud. Then the other attacks had started happening.

The first took place eight days ago. An American-born Muslim walked into the Alamo in San Antonio, Texas, and opened fire with an assault weapon, killing eight and wounding twelve before an off-duty police officer managed to put him down with a .45 cal to the chest.

Four days after that, a young Islamic man on a helicopter tour over Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, pulled the pins on a couple of M67 grenades. According to witnesses on the ground, it looked like the pilot had yanked the chopper to the left just

before the explosions. As a result, the wreckage crashed into a field rather than the intended crowd that had gathered to watch a Civil War reenactment. Even so, four were killed, and seventeen were wounded by the flying debris, including a five-year-old who was blinded by a severe head wound and a three-year-old who would never walk again.

That's when the reality of what Abdur-Razzaq was about to do set in. And the following day Malik Abdul-Tawwab walked into the police station. That was three days ago.

"Foxtrot One, this is Foxtrot Three. You still awake?" Gilly Posada asked through Scott's earpiece.

"Yeah, Foxtrot Three. Ready and raring to go."

"You sure? 'Cause I've got you in my scope, and you look like you're in happy, happy dreamland." Posada was one of two snipers Scott had positioned in the vicinity of this bench.

"I told you I'm awake. Now point that thing somewhere else before you put someone's eye out."

Gilly Posada was one of seven "Foxtrots" Scott had scattered near the reflecting pool that stretched between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. The *Foxtrot* moniker itself was Scott's idea and had much less to do with the NATO phonetic alphabet than it did his favorite album by the band Genesis, whose 1981 *Abacab* Tour T-shirt he was currently sporting under a heavy, green army trench coat.

Alongside Posada was his spotter, Ted Hummel. Matt Logan was manning a second sniper rifle, with Carlos Guitierrez spotting for him. And Kim Li and Steve Kasay were on a bench across the pool from Scott, battling away on a plastic chess set.

According to Abdul-Tawwab's story, he had seen a map of the planned attack that showed Abdur-Razzaq coming along the reflecting pool toward the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Once there, he would seek out a tour group, then detonate an explosive vest. That was plan A.

Abdul-Tawwab also claimed that they were having trouble

putting the vest together, since none of them had done it before and they were mostly working off Internet sites. So if the vest turned out to be a no-go, plan B was to open up with an automatic weapon and take down as many people as possible—not quite as effective as the vest, but effective enough.

Back at SOG Bravo headquarters, Scott's team of analysts had been monitoring cameras at the four key entry points of the reflecting pool plaza. Each possible suspect was quickly scanned through facial recognition software. So far, though, no hits.

Patience was not a virtue that came naturally to Scott, and his antsiness was starting to burn off the groove he was getting from the sun. *Come on, hajji wannabe, show yourself. I want to get home in time to put James to bed.*

It was nearly two years since Scott had sustained multiple fractures of his leg during an operation to stop an electromagnetic pulse bomb. While in the hospital, the infatuation he had for his lead analyst, Tara Walsh, soon turned into mutual admiration and, finally, love. These two examples of opposites attracting were married eight months later.

Soon after, Tara discovered she was pregnant—a fact that inspired Scott to insist for the next six weeks that everyone at the office call him Captain Testosterone, much to Tara's chagrin. Then, six months ago today, little James Gerald Ross was born—James for Scott's former boss, killed in the line of duty, and Gerald for the late father of Scott's best friend, Riley Covington.

Seriously, if this waste of oxygen makes me miss my boy's—

"Foxtrot One, this is Base. I think we've got him," came the voice of analyst Evie Cline.

Scott fought hard not to react. "How sure are you?"

"I'd say 85 percent. This facial recognition software is crap."

"I need better than that. Where is he?"

"We just got the hit, and he's already about to pass you. Sorry, Foxy, but as I said, this facial recognition software is slower than—"

“Don’t need a metaphor, just a description,” Scott said, as, with a groan, he slowly spun his feet to the ground. As he did, a young African American man in a black jacket and a black cap turned quickly toward him. Scott stared at the ground and scratched his marriage-expanded belly.

“He’s an African American male, black jacket, tan pants, black baseball cap.”

Swell, he thought as he peripherally watched the suspect slide past. The young man was still watching him, so Scott loudly hawked up a large wad of phlegm and watched it slowly drop to the ground.

“Ewww,” Evie said, along with at least three of the Foxtrots.

Scott got up and stretched, then casually started following Abdur-Razzaq. The easiest thing would have been to let Posada or Logan send a 7.62 full metal jacket into this fellow’s cranium. However, he needed better than 85 percent to give that order.

Besides, I want to talk with this idiot.

“Foxtrot Six and Seven,” Scott said softly to Li and Kasay, “start arguing over the chess game. I want him looking somewhere other than back at me.”

Suddenly, a string of profanities echoed across the reflecting pool. Li was standing over Kasay and pointing at the board.

When the would-be terrorist’s head was turned toward the ruckus, Scott quickened his pace, making up quite a bit of ground.

Now, Kasay flipped the board off the bench and stood up chest-to-chest with Li.

“Careful, boys, we don’t want DC’s finest stumbling in on us.” Scott had purposely chosen not to inform the MPDC of the details of this operation as a protection against heroes and leaks—both of which could get a lot of people killed.

As they neared the end of the pool, the number of tourists began to grow. Scott quickened his pace. Abdur-Razzaq had

just moved into a crowd at the base of the steps leading up to the memorial, when he turned around. His eyes locked onto Scott's, and Scott knew he was burned.

"Put your hands up," Scott commanded, quickly drawing his harnessed Bushmaster assault rifle from under his jacket. "Put up your hands! Now!"

But rather than surrendering, Abdur-Razzaq clenched his arm around the neck of one of the now-screaming onlookers and placed a pistol to her temple. "Drop your weapon, or I swear I'll blow her head off," Abdur-Razzaq yelled.

Part of Scott was relieved that this homegrown terrorist cell's apparent incompetence in all things explosive had kept him from being diced into small morsels. The other part was ready to kill this weasel.

"You drop your weapon," Scott yelled back for lack of a more creative option.

"You drop yours!"

"You drop yours!"

The voices of Li and Kasay joined in as they finally pushed their way through the fleeing mass of bodies. "Drop your weapon now!"

Instead, Abdur-Razzaq pushed the barrel of his pistol harder against his hostage's head. "I'm going to put a bullet in her, man! I swear I will! On three she's going to die! One! Two!"

"Whoa, whoa, whoa," Scott called out, moving his weapon out perpendicular to himself. This situation was way out of hand. "No one needs to die today."

Slowly, he lifted his rifle's harness over his head and laid the weapon on the ground. "See, weapon's down."

"Now those two," Abdur-Razzaq said, motioning toward Li and Kasay.

"Wrong-o, wingnut," Li answered. "How about I give you until three before I put 115 grains of lead into that empty brain cavity of yours?"

Still looking at Scott, Abdur-Razzaq answered, “Tell him to drop it! I’m not messing with you!” Sweat was pouring off the young man’s face, and Scott could see scared determination in his eyes.

“Agent Li, hostile attitudes like yours don’t fully meet with our government’s new kinder, gentler policy toward whacked-out terrorist nut jobs. Put your weapons down,” Scott said, his voice growing firmer with the last sentence. “Now!”

Li and Kasay obeyed.

Turning back toward Abdur-Razzaq, Scott said, “So, the weapons are down. What now?”

“Now? Now I die a *shahid*, and I take you American pigs with me,” he said, still clutching the woman tightly but pointing the gun at Scott.

“Wait, wait, wait,” Scott said, lifting his hands up. “What do you mean ‘you American pigs’? Dude, you’re as American as baseball, hot dogs, apple pie, and government-owned motors! Don’t be giving me ‘you Americans.’”

“Shut your mouth! You don’t know what you’re talking about! I don’t belong to this nation of infidels! I belong to the nation of Allah’s warriors!”

“And I belong to the nation of tall, goateed fat guys,” Scott said, trying to buy time, praying for Abdur-Razzaq to make a mistake and give him an opening. “Allah’s warriors? Give me a break! I’ve seen your file, man. Your real name’s Byron, for the love of—”

Scott felt the bullet strike his chest even before he realized Abdur-Razzaq had fired. As he fell backward, two sounds echoed in his ears—the report of Abdur-Razzaq’s gun, and the *thwip-pop* of the head shot coming from one or both of his team’s snipers.

Scott landed with a splash in eighteen inches of water. As he lay there groaning, two thoughts played in his mind—*Thank God for the inventor of Kevlar and I’m going to be hurting for a good, long time.*