

ADVENTURES OF A WOULD-BE ARMS DEALER

BASED ON A TRUE STORY

Robert Butler 2008

I HAD TAKEN REFUGE IN KIGALI'S STADIUM—THE UN'S HEADQUARTERS DURING THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE.



AS I FLEW INTO KIGALI, MY THOUGHTS FLOATED BACK TO THE HORRORS OF 1994.



I HAD BEEN AMONG THE PRIVILEGED FEW... BUT NOW I WAS BACK ON A SPECIAL MISSION



I HAD BEEN HIRED TO ORGANIZE AN ILLICIT ARMS DEAL AS A WAY OF TESTING THE STRENGTH OF EXPORT CONTROL SYSTEMS.



MY FIRST TASK WAS TO MEET CHARLES—AN OLD CONTACT WHOSE PICKUP I HAD RENTED IN '94. I WAITED IN THE BACK OF A BAR.

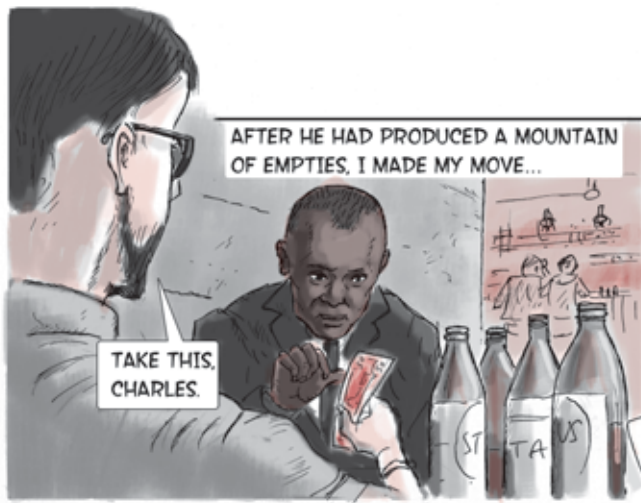


SORRY I'M LATE, RED MY WIFE... SHE'S THREATENING TO LEAVE ME. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. I NEED A DRINK!



SHE SAYS MY DEFENCE MINISTRY SALARY IS A DISGRACE, THAT I'M A DRUNK, THAT SHE WANTS NEW CLOTHES...





AFTER HE HAD PRODUCED A MOUNTAIN OF EMPTIES, I MADE MY MOVE...

TAKE THIS, CHARLES.



YOU CAN HAVE THREE MORE OF THESE IF YOU BRING ME A BLANK, SIGNED END-USER CERTIFICATE TOMORROW NIGHT.



CHARLES BLINKED AND THEN NODDED. IF HE DECIDED TO RAT ON ME, I WOULD ARGUE THAT HE'D BEEN SO DRUNK HE MISUNDERSTOOD ME.



MY NEXT BEER RUN PROVED FUTILE. CHARLES HAD ALREADY PASSED OUT.

I'LL GET YOU A CAB, BUDDY



I SPENT THE NEXT DAY ANXIOUSLY PACING AROUND MY HOTEL ROOM.



WHEN I ARRIVED AT THE BAR THAT EVENING, CHARLES WAS ALREADY THERE.



AS I BROUGHT OVER THE RITUAL BEERS, CHARLES PLACED AN ENVELOPE ON THE UPTURNED CRATE NEXT TO MY STOOL.



INSIDE THE ENVELOPE WAS THE EUC AS I HAD REQUESTED IT: ON MINISTRY OF DEFENCE LETTERHEAD, SIGNED...

... AND WITH ALL THE RIGHT BLANKS: CONTRACT NUMBER, DATE, MY COMPANY'S NAME, AND THE TYPE OF MUNITIONS



WITH THE EUC TUCKED SAFELY IN MY INSIDE POCKET, I HANDED CHARLES THE PROMISED CASH.



I BOUGHT ANOTHER ROUND FOR CHARLES AND THE BARTENDER AND KEPT A DISCREET EYE ON THE TIME.



THEN I CAUGHT THE LAST PLANE TO CYPRUS. PHASE II COULD BEGIN.



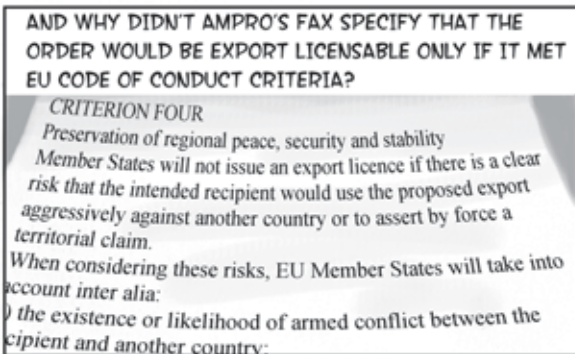
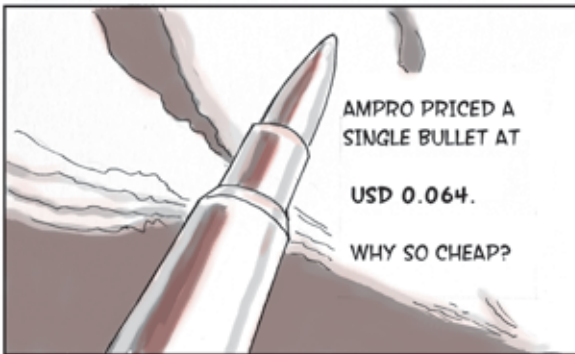
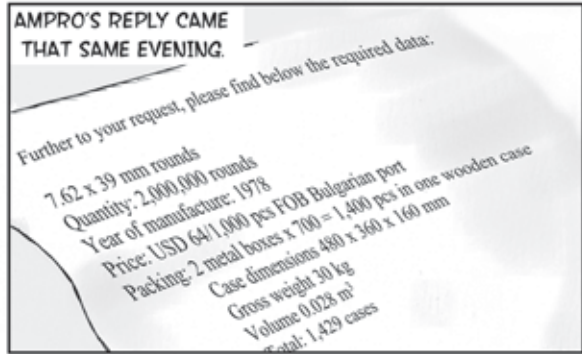
THE NEXT DAY—ON MY HOTEL BALCONY IN CYPRUS—I BEGAN TO FILL IN THE EUC BLANKS.



WITH THE EUC, I COULD PRETEND THAT THE RWANDAN ARMED FORCES HAD HIRED ME TO SOURCE MUNITIONS FOR THEM. WHY NOT 2 MILLION ROUNDS OF AMMUNITION?



Please advise availability, price, and packaging for 2,000,000 rounds of 7.62 x 39 mm ex. Bulgarian port.
I have an EUC made out to my company from the Government of Rwanda.
A speedy response on a time schedule.
I KNEW THAT AMPRO, A BULGARIAN AMMUNITION PRODUCER, HAD SUPPLIED RWANDA IN THE PAST. I SENT A FAX REQUESTING A QUOTE.





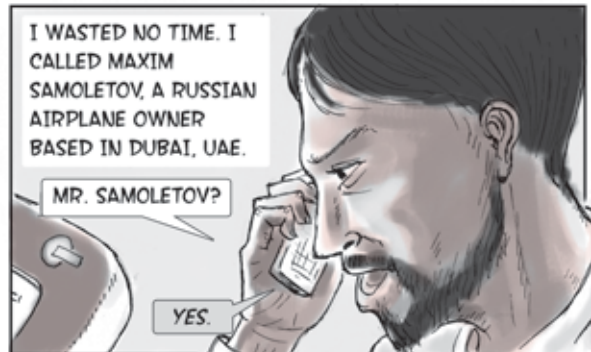
THIS WASN'T THE END OF MY ADVENTURE, HOWEVER. IT WAS TIME FOR PHASE III. NEXT STOP: GUERNSEY, CHANNEL ISLANDS - GENTEEL TOURIST RESORT...



... AND HOME TO A LOT OF REMARKABLY ANONYMOUS FRONT COMPANIES, SOME OF THEM OPERATED BY THE WORLD'S MOST NOTORIOUS GUNRUNNERS.



FROM GUERNSEY, I WOULD HAVE A PLAUSIBLE AREA CODE WHEN TRYING TO ARRANGE A SHADY SHIPMENT DEAL.



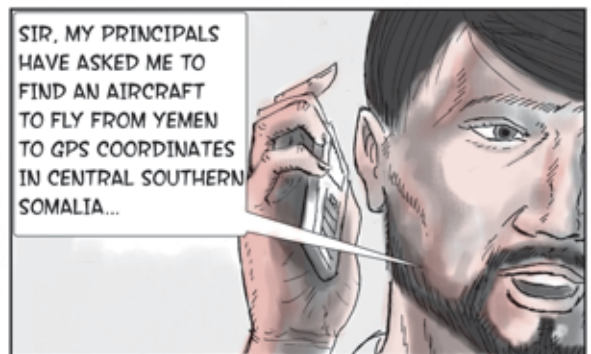
I WASTED NO TIME. I CALLED MAXIM SAMOLETOV, A RUSSIAN AIRPLANE OWNER BASED IN DUBAI, UAE.

MR. SAMOLETOV?

YES.



SAMOLETOV HAD BEEN ON THE UN SANCTIONS COMMITTEE'S RADAR SCREEN FOR OPERATING AN OLD ANTONOV AN-8 WITH CONNECTIONS TO KNOWN ARMS DEALERS.

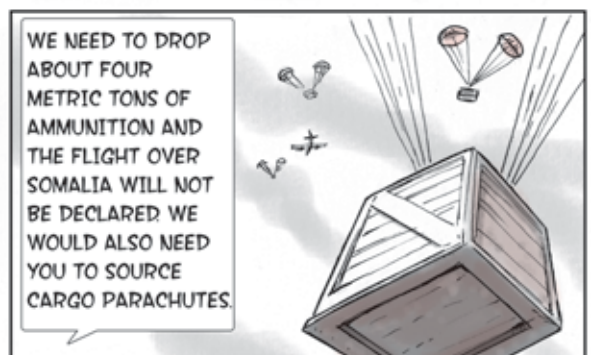


SIR, MY PRINCIPALS HAVE ASKED ME TO FIND AN AIRCRAFT TO FLY FROM YEMEN TO GPS COORDINATES IN CENTRAL SOUTHERN SOMALIA...



... AND THEN PARACHUTE-DROP AMMUNITION FROM THE AIRCRAFT.

HE'LL NEVER BUY THIS!



WE NEED TO DROP ABOUT FOUR METRIC TONS OF AMMUNITION AND THE FLIGHT OVER SOMALIA WILL NOT BE DECLARED. WE WOULD ALSO NEED YOU TO SOURCE CARGO PARACHUTES.

AND MR. SAMOLETOV, SINCE THERE IS NO SURVEILLANCE OF AIRCRAFT IN THE REGION, WE EXPECT THIS WILL NOT BE A PROBLEM FOR YOU...



SEND ME YOUR REQUEST BY FAX, PLEASE.

SURELY SAMOLETOV KNEW THAT A UN ARMS EMBARGO PROHIBITS THE SUPPLY OF ARMS TO ANY SOMALI GROUP, INCLUDING THE TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT.

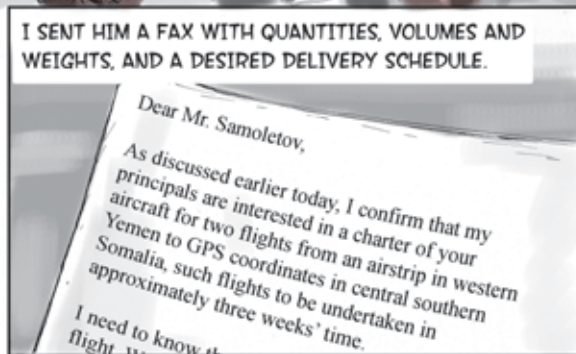
SAMOLETOV PROMISED TO RESPOND TO MY FAX THE NEXT MORNING. IT WAS ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT THE ILLEGAL NATURE OF THE DEAL WAS IRRELEVANT TO HIM.



AND HE DEFINITELY WASN'T GOING TO APPLY TO THE UN SANCTIONS COMMITTEE FOR AN EXEMPTION.



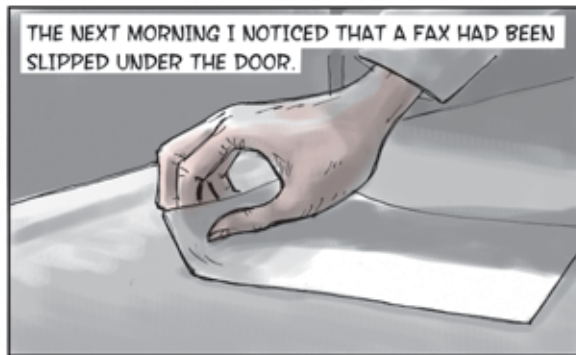
I SENT HIM A FAX WITH QUANTITIES, VOLUMES AND WEIGHTS, AND A DESIRED DELIVERY SCHEDULE.

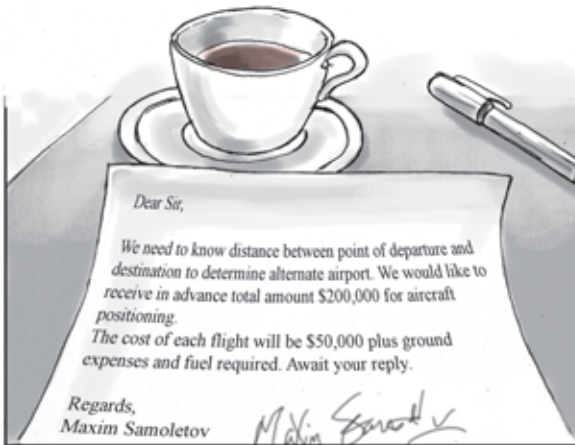


AFTER A LONG, MEDITATIVE STROLL, I WOUND UP IN A GOURMET RESTAURANT - BUT I COULDN'T TASTE A THING.



THE NEXT MORNING I NOTICED THAT A FAX HAD BEEN SLIPPED UNDER THE DOOR.





to know distance between point of d
on to determine alternate airport. We
a advance total amount \$200,000 for
ng.
of each flight will be \$50,000 plus g
and fuel required. Await your reply.



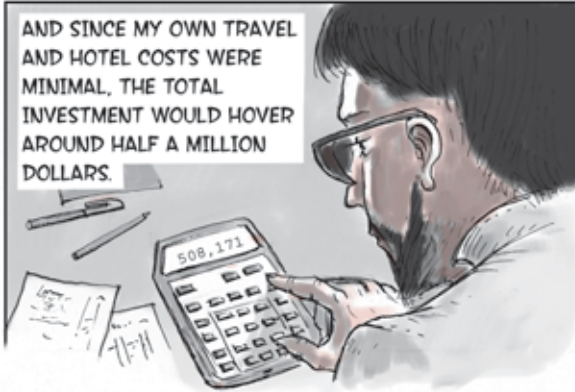
THE PURCHASE AND SHIPPING OF THE AMPRO AMMO WOULD HAVE COST ABOUT USD 160,000...



THE TRANSPORT WOULD HAVE COST NO MORE THAN USD 350,000...



AND SINCE MY OWN TRAVEL AND HOTEL COSTS WERE MINIMAL, THE TOTAL INVESTMENT WOULD HOVER AROUND HALF A MILLION DOLLARS.



ASSUMING A BULLET SELLS FOR ABOUT USD 0.75 IN SOMALIA, THE SHIPMENT WOULD HAVE SOLD FOR USD 1.5 MILLION.



THAT TRANSLATES INTO A TIDY PROFIT OF... USD 1 MILLION.



NO ADDITIONAL AMMUNITION WAS MADE, OR INDUCED TO BE MADE, IN THE COURSE OF THIS EXERCISE. NAMES OF INDIVIDUALS AND COMPANIES HAVE BEEN CHANGED.

