(AI-generated image by *NCO Journal*)

Nothing Else to Consider

By Sgt. 1st Class Justin Malzac

U.S. Special Operations Command-South

Special Warfare Operator 1st Class John Perry watched as the Navy Sea, Air, and Land (SEAL) assault teams neared the cabin. It was the largest of the three jungle camp buildings. He heard a voice buzzing in his earpiece.

"Bravo in place. Perimeter clear."

A brief silence, then another voice.

"Alpha in place. Ready to breach."

Perry tucked the butt of his sniper rifle into his shoulder. His spotter was crouched beside him with an M4 at the ready. A flock of birds raised a ruckus up in the trees, and the whitewater tumbling of a nearby stream shook Perry's nerves. A thousand voices argued in his head.

What if one of the hostages gets killed? Or, God forbid, a SEAL?

He flipped the activation switch on his attention helmet, and the voices fell silent. There was just a sensation of static and absolute focus.

Glancing through his scope, Perry could only see the objective. There was nothing else to consider. He spotted a figure approaching one of the cabin's windows. The man held an assault rifle. A black AK-74M with its stock folded. This guy wasn't ready for what was coming.

"Overwatch in place," Perry said through his throat microphone. "Eyes on one tango. South side of the target building."

"We go on you, Overwatch," the Alpha team leader said.

Perry concentrated on his target. He saw the man lean toward the window, saw the rise and fall of his chest as he puffed on a cigarette, leaving curls of smoke hanging in the air. The man glanced out from a corner of the window, and his eyebrows raised. Perry didn't give the man a chance to react to what he saw.

The four shooters in Alpha team burst through the eastern door. Perry could hear the echoes of submachine gunfire from inside the cabin. He saw another figure through the window. A raised AK. A single shot. Threat down.

After a few more hectic moments, a black-clad SEAL emerged from the cabin, dragging a frightened figure by the arm. Perry lined up his scope. It was just a woman. A shadow moved near one of the adjacent buildings. A rapid clack of 5.45 rounds. Perry took aim and fired on the gunman.

An explosion shook the ground. Two SEALs lay in a heap near the third building, smoke drifting thick into

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the air. Bravo Team opened fire. Another shadow. Perry pulled the trigger. Every tiny movement drew his eye. Perry saw it all.

After what seemed like several minutes — if not hours — the assault teams ceased firing. A figure rushed out of the third building toward the Bravo Team Leader. Perry lined up the shot.

"Hold fire, Overwatch!" a voice screamed over the radio. "You just shot a hostage!"

Deadly concern washed over Perry as he tore off his helmet. The sounds of nature and those nagging voices of doubt came crashing back to him.

Even without the helmet's aid, his focus was as centered as a laser sight on the small, lifeless body that now lay in the clearing. There was nothing else to consider.

Perry fell to his knees and vomited. ■

(AI-generated image by *NCO Journal*)

Author's Note

This story is based on the attention helmet, first detailed by Sally Adee in *The New Scientist* in 2012 and later described by Yuval Noah Harari in his book *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*. I was inspired to write it after hearing Harari's interpretation of brain stimulation and augmentation. *What would the risks be of having too much focus?* I wondered. Military applications seemed the obvious place where such risk would be most prevalent. The U.S. military has since expanded research into brain stimulation technology, as the *Guardian* noted in 2016.
https://www.theguardian.com/science/2016/nov/07/us-military-successfully-tests-electrical-brain-stimulation-to-enhance-staff-skills

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Sgt. 1st Class Justin Malzac has served honorably for more than 24 years across all three components of the Army, and he is currently serving as the reserve Operational Law NCOIC at Special Operations Command-South. As a civilian, he is a senior operational planner at a geographic combatant command and is attending "Cyber War College" at NDU's College of Information and Cyberspace. His professional writing has appeared in the Army War College's Parameters journal and many other publications.

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