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Kurt Muse

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Kurt Muse: Profile

"When you reach the point when you can no longer be silent, start doing what is needed, then what you can. Soon you'll be doing the impossible" -Kurt Muse

Kurt Muse was born in the United States into a family of citizen soldiers whose roots go back to the Revolutionary War. His adventurous family lived first in Cuba and eventually settled in Panama where they began a printing and graphic arts business. Kurt married his high school sweetheart and came back to the U.S. for college. After graduation, Kurt took his ROTC commission for a short stint in the Army. Obligations fulfilled, he returned to Panama to help grow his family's business and start a family of his own. Being an American citizen, Kurt studiously avoided politics...until 1987. Noriega burned down one of his printshops and killed one of his good friends. Panama was the only home Kurt knew, and it was being threatened by a ruthless machete-waving dictator.

Vowing to restore free speech, Kurt and his friends built an underground radio station, The Voice of Liberty. They

were on the air for nearly a year. Panama's alleyways were scenes of constant and deadly games of cat and mouse with Noriega's soldiers. Driven to the edge, Noriega imported Castro's top direction-finding teams to track down that country's only free radio station.

After his capture, Kurt Muse endured days of sleepless interrogation. He spent nine months in solitary confinement in Noriega's infamous Modelo Prison. A soldier was posted at Kurt's cell door with orders to execute him if anyone tried to rescue him. At 12:45 am on December 20th, 1989, elite Delta Force commandos stormed the prison in what was to be the most dramatic rescue in recent military history. America's finest and bravest warriors fought their way down to Muse and stole him back to the roof to an awaiting helicopter. It was shot down twice. Kurt Muse is the only American hostage ever rescued President George Bush called Kurt Muse "a great American."

"Courage, duty, loyalty, heroism seem to appear infrequently on our social landscape. Kurt's message is a powerful one, truly inspirational, and it reflects just these virtues. It needs to be heard by all generations..."

About Kurt Muse:

My American Journey,

by Colin Powell

"Reports dribbled into the crisis center in frustrating bits and pieces: "Delta Force landing on the roof of Modelo Prison...Delta has killed the guards...Delta Force in...Kurt Muse out of his cell...Delta Force leaving in the helicopters on the roof. It's okay. No! The helo is taking fire. It's hit! It's coming down! No, its going down the street..it's hit, it's down, they're okay..." This rescue operation took six minutes that lasted an eternity. p415

The Commanders,

by Bob Woodward

"There was a report that the helicopter carrying Muse away from Modelo Prison had crashed and it looked as if the crew and Muse might be dead. Disappointment was written all over Powell's face. Muse was the guy they were going to rescue for the President, and now the helicopter had gone down....they'd reached a real low- no Muse and no Noriega." p184 "Cheney called the White House. (in his first call directly to the President)...he told Bush that Muse was safe. What's more, the Delta team had done the job in record time, even better than the best practice time". p185

The Memoirs of General Manuel Noriega

by General Noriega

"I have to admit one sober fact: the mishandling of the arrest of Kurt Muse was a fatal mistake for which I alone must take the blame"

ECLIPSE, The Last Days of the CIA,

by Mark Perry

Muse was a hero in every sense of the word. He had been elevated from simple citizen...to America's most important and public opposition voice in Panama. He was lionized by the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. He (Kurt Muse) had become our man in Panama." p294

The Washingtonian Magazine, June 1990.

The feature article is the Kurt Muse Story. It is the most comprehensive story in print.

The Noriega Mess

"Kurt Frederick Muse had to be rescued. Since April (1989) he had been languishing in an isolated cell of the heavily

guarded Modelo jail, adjacent to the Comandancia (Noriega's headquarters building)..."

President Bush had taken a personal interest in the fate of Kurt Muse. After all, the long-time resident of Panama had risked his own life by setting up a clandestine radio network as part of (operation) Panama-4. The highly perilous operation had been given priority within the invasion plans. The special elite unit of the US Army, the Delta Force, had rehearsed the action in a model of the prison built in a remote location of southern Florida."

The Commandos

"...the commandos and Muse climbed aboard the helicopter on the roof...three commandos jumped on each of the two pods outside (the) Little Bird (helicopter)." The chopper took off. But about ten feet airborne Muse felt...a big jolt: rifle fire from the nearby Comandancia (Noriega's headquarters building)."

"The aircraft plunged to the street just passed the prison wall. The pilot literally drove it down the street, bouncing along, and turned left into a parking lot. The pilot tried to get the chopper aloft again, but the plane didn't reach past two stories high when it was again met by a hail of gunfire...and dropped to the ground like a stone."

Unconventional Warfare

"...the security around Muse increased even further. On December 19th (1989) Muse's guard made it clear that if the United States invaded Panama, Kurt Muse would be the first to die. At 12:45 a.m. on December 20th (1989) Muse was awakened abruptly by sounds of machine gun fire and people running down the hallway. Throwing himself on the floor, Muse heard rockets and guns of an AC-130 Spectre Gunship tearing into the Comandancia walls. The Prison lights were out and explosions in the hallway blew debris into Muse's cell. As told by Muse, 'an apparition came to my cell door. The guy looked like Darth Vader. He was wearing a funny-looking helmet, funny-looking goggles, funny looking uniform and had a funny looking weapon."

"The apparition...was a member of Special Forces Operational Detachment-D...(Delta Force)."

Operation Just Cause

"The spookiest element of Operation Just cause was Task Force Green. Although (Delta Force's) role in Operation Just Cause is murky, the primary mission...was to strike Noriega's suspected hideouts...(and) the rescue of American civilian Kurt Frederick Muse from Modelo Prison..."

"Muse saw his adopted home being torn apart by a rabid dictator. His radio broadcasts became more varied, with news reports on antigovernment protests and demonstrations. Muse and his network of seven (friends) became the mouthpiece of the Civic Crusade, a non-partisan group of Panamanian businessmen and officials who led protests against Noriega and the PDF (Panamanian Army)-run regime.

Time-Life Commando Operations

"Kurt Frederick Muse, like many other American civilians in Panama, woke with the start of Operation Just Cause. This gringo was unusual, however, in that his bed stood in a cell at Modelo Prison...(outside his cell door stood) a special guard, who told the American that he had been ordered to execute him immediately in the event of hostilities".

"Muse, a longtime resident of Panama and a member of the Rotary Club, languished in prison because he had helped organize a group of fellow Rotarians, all Panamanians, to foster opposition to Noriega...The band of patriots began broadcasting three times daily, calling themselves Radio Libertad. Enraged, Noriega sent direction finding teams to track them down, but they eluded capture by frequently moving their transmitting gear. Eventually, however, the secret police caught up with him through an informant. Then came sixty hours of relentless

questioning and accusations of being a CIA agent. Muse denied the charge but eventually confessed: "I'm Radio Libertad."

"There followed a nightmare of imprisonment."

Newsweek

"At H hour on the night of the U.S. Invasion of Panama, Delta's mission was to storm the prison and rescue Muse. Casualties seemed inevitable. Secret Delta Force doctors, stationed at military hospitals around the country, were told to be ready to fly to Panama on the eve of the invasion. The mission had to succeed, not only for Muse's sake, but also for the future of the newly formed U.S. Special Operations Command."

History Channel, The Secrets of War Series

In November of 1998, The Kurt Muse Story premiered as part of a History Channel Series on The Secrets of War. The show is narrated by Charlton Heston and will air twice yearly for five years.

On January 16, 2000 The Discovery Channel premiered the Kurt Muse Story as part of their new series: On The Inside: The CIA. The show is narrated by James Coburn and airs monthly throughout the year.

"I truly appreciate not only you sharing your story, but also the dramatic and captivating manner in which you conveyed it on camera. Interviews such as yours are the kind that all producers dream of. It was exciting, dramatic, emotional, intense and heartfelt. I assure you that you will be proud of the story we construct around the interview."

The Producer

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