



Eleven Days in Hell: The 1974 Carrasco Prison Siege at Huntsville, Texas (Crime and Criminal Justice Series)

William T. Harper

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From one o'clock on the afternoon of July 24, 1974, until shortly before ten o'clock the night of August 3, eleven days later, one of the longest hostage-taking sieges in the history of the United States took place in Texas' Huntsville State Prison. The ring-leader, Federico (Fred) Gomez Carrasco, the former boss of the largest drug-running operation in South Texas, was serving life for assault with intent to commit murder on a police officer. Using his connections to smuggle guns and ammunition into the prison, and employing the aid of two other inmates, he took eleven prison workers and four inmates hostage in the prison library. Demanding bulletproof helmets and vests, he planned to use the hostages as shields for his escape. Negotiations began immediately with prison warden H. H. Husbands and W. J. Estelle, Jr., director of the Texas Department of Corrections. The Texas Rangers, the Department of Public Safety, and the FBI arrived to assist as the media descended on Huntsville. When one of the hostages suggested a moving structure of chalkboards padded with law books to absorb bullets, Carrasco agreed to the plan. The captors entered their escape pod with four hostages and secured nine others to the moving barricade. While the target was en route to an armored car, Estelle had his team blast it with fire hoses. In a violent end to the standoff, Carrasco committed suicide, one of his two accomplices was killed (the other later executed), and two hostages were killed by their captors.

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