

Marc Van den Reeck- Preparing for Janko

I had never met anybody who had been for two years in a Taliban prison and then afterwards for a number of years in Guantanamo. So I had no benchmark. It was very difficult for us to try to understand, um, how a person, uh...how a person like that is, how he develops. We...we had no... we didn't expect anything actually to be very honest. I mean we were expecting to see a man, um, who was obviously going to long for being freed, who was obviously going to be a bit bitter and so on and so forth on those things, who would obviously have had some, um, mental scars from...from being locked up for a number of years like anybody else.

And I think we'd been working for the better part of two months to lay the ground for his coming across. On the American side they were a bit pushy on that—to let him come across—and we said we will let you know when we are ready. We have made a political commitment that we will take him. There's no reason to put that into doubt, unless other factors come up, but they probably won't. Um, let us take care of the...the arrival process, which has to be done extremely carefully. And, uh, let us also take care of once he's on our ground, what we are going to do with him. Where are we going to bring him? How is he going to live? What are we going to surround him with? How are we going to take care that, uh, if he falls ill that someone takes care of him? Which roof is he going to have over his head? Who are the...who are the instances who are going to keep an eye...uh, a watchful eye on him? Uh, who's going to know...uh, how are we going to know where he goes and when he goes? So we were, we really prepared it very, very properly, believe me. Very properly.

Initially, uh, the American embassy came to us...came to me with a...with a...a screenplay...with a...with a...with a scenario. And I said you put your scenario aside, *here* is a scenario. The military airport in Brussels is on...is on Belgian soil. We are going to tell what the scenario is because we are going to carry the consequences afterwards. Well that took a little bit of difficulty, but at...at, um, um, at last end, this was accepted too. And it made a difference in the sense that, uh, for instance, there were some symbolic elements in it of course but there were also very practical elements. Symbolic elements were, for instance, that, uh, we insisted that, uh, for instance, he would be undone...his handcuffs and so on, on board the plane. We did not put him in to handcuffs. We were not going to take his handcuffs away. It's not up to us to take the handcuffs away. We wanted him to put his first toe on Belgian soil as a free man.