

## Fleeing abuse in real time: Part IV

Written by Dara Carlin | Examiner.com  
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Believe it or not, there actually were some brief moments of comic relief throughout this odyssey - starting when we got to Japan. Although I'm 1/2 Japanese, I can't speak any and after asking a few Narita airport employees for information, mom made the observation that the Japanese were looking at me strangely when I'd speak to them in English. We finally figured out that they must not have understood why someone who looked Japanese couldn't speak Japanese.

Then there was the time when mom and I tried to scoot past a drunk wedding party reception in our hotel's ballroom floor to get to the elevator. The crowd of boisterous party goers made mom extremely anxious so she latched onto my arm as we successfully moved behind the crowd that appeared to have no interest in the elevators. Because no one was facing the elevators and mom was so anxious, I tried to lighten the mood by asking, "So - what are the chances that all of these people are going to pile into our elevator?" Mom wasn't amused.

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The elevator pinged its arrival and mom and I quickly pushed our floor's button and moved to the back of the elevator. Just as the door was about to close, one of the guys realized the elevator had arrived and I guess shouted to the others that the elevator was leaving. All of a sudden, a flood of drunk Japanese men poured in through the closing doors. A guy who hit the

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back of the elevator next to us realized we weren't a part of the party and began shouting to the others that there were "strangers" in the elevator (or at least that's what we thought he must've been saying) because he began apologizing, putting his arm up around us to prevent us from being squished by the crowd. Just as the elevator door was about to close again a young, drunk Japanese man decided to catch the elevator with us. Shouting "BANZAI!!!" he jumped in through the door body-surfing style. Needless to say, we were grateful when the elevator reached our floor...

Meanwhile back in Germany, mom's husband arrived home to find everyone gone. I really felt sad about that (because I know dad and he's a really awesome guy) but necessity truly outweighed courtesy.

While in Japan, we subsequently learned that dad had been ordered to go home that Thursday morning by the high ranking enlisted after his wife, who works at Child 1's school, called her husband to report that Child 1 hadn't shown up for school that day; the high ranking enlisted instructed dad to pick Child 1 up at home and bring her to the school to dis-enroll her.

Why is this important? Because Child 1 would've been naturally dis-enrolled from school anyway by Friday because mom, Child 1 and her siblings would've been on a plane to Florida that weekend - so why would dad be ordered to leave his job to do this menial, unnecessary task? All this information did was confirm for mom that her decision to take an impromptu vacation was a good and valid one, but that's NOT the way the military apparently saw/sees it. We were informed that it was against Bavarian law for a wife to leave her husband with the kids without the husband's permission and that **Germany** was going to be pursuing kidnapping charges against us!

We couldn't believe it: why would the MILITARY be pushing for kidnapping charges when dad himself wasn't? And the country of Germany was going to go out of its way to pursue and apprehend a stay-at-home mom, her DV survivor advocate and three small children for taking a vacation? Really???

The charges against us seemed severe, extreme and scary; we were told that Interpol was getting involved, that our passports were flagged and that mom's military ID would be frozen as well as her access to her finances – of the four initial threats presented, only the last one panned out to be true for a short period of time but not willing to take any chances mom, Child 1 and I got our hair cut off because on entering Japan, photos of us had been taken at Customs.

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Our fear began to wane when the "charges" against us started to mount and become more ridiculous with each one we were informed of. I began to keep a running tab of them because they were so absurd:

- Mom was (suddenly) "crazy" and therefore a danger to the kids
- Mom showed disregard for Child 1's education by withdrawing her from school earlier than scheduled (Child 1 missed two whole days of Kindergarten; I DON'T think her college career has been compromised)
- Mom took a vacation without permission
- Mom violated an EROD order
- I was responsible for the attacks perpetrated against mom (Yea, I flew all the way out from Hawaii just to rough mom up cause I have nothing better to do with my time)
- Mom flew on a military passport for leisure purposes (technically a no-no but everybody does it)
- (And this one came from a Major): we were guilty of child endangerment because we were two "attractive women" traveling with children alone which put us at risk of human trafficking (I got hung up on the "attractive" part and am pretty sure the major doesn't know what human trafficking is for him to raise such a concern)
- Mom was medically neglecting Child 1 for a recently diagnosed congenital condition (Child 1 isn't even eligible for treatment until she's MUCH older)
- Animal abandonment (Even though dad's still at home taking care of the cats and dogs, this was the last "charge" thrown at mom)

As for mom's permission-less vacation and the violated EROD order, apparently the only person subject to military orders is the service member – spouses, children, relatives, family friends, DV survivor advocates, etc. are not subject to military orders but while in Japan, we didn't know that yet...

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