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Deciding whether to let a civilian go free if they might disclose your position to the enemy is indeed a difficult question. Letting the civilians go will potentially cost the lives of the soldiers. On the other hand, killing unarmed civilians too is against ethics as those innocents did not put themselves in that position. This question puts many lives on the line and the loss of life in both cases is a burden on the shoulders of the decision-maker.

The movie ‘Lone survivor’ is about a similar decision the Navy SEALs had to make. The movie is based on a book by the soldier who faced this situation (Berg et al., 2014). Marcus Luttrel was the only survivor of this mission and in his book, he mentioned that this decision was extremely difficult. The incident is from Operation Red Wings where a band of four SEALs was dispatched to Afghanistan's Kunar Province in 2015 (Darack, 2009). The seals were on the mission to abolish anti-coalition and help stabilize the region. Their responsibility was to inspect and find the location of Ahmad Shah, a Taliban leader. After a few hours of their placement, two unarmed Afghan goatherders stumbled upon the SEALs. Now, the time for the critical life decision began between Luttrell and his comrades. They had two options: either, they could kill the Afghans and continue their mission with lesser uncertainty, or they could let them go, after which the herders would possibly rush to disclose the information and position of the SEALs to the Taliban. In both cases, either the civilians would die, or the soldiers would.

While making such intricate and critical decisions, it is important to contain emotions and deal proactively. The decision can go either way, but it is necessary to make the right call (Josephson & Hanson, 2002). Even the right decisions can cost more, but it will still be better than making an unethical and unjust decision. If I were to make this decision, I would let the goatherders go. Even if the mission is compromised, it would have been unethical to kill unarmed civilians who came across SEALs unintentionally. They neither planned to be there or to attack the SEALs. They were innocent and did not pose any direct threat. Hence, they could not be punished for a mistake they did not make. The capture of Ahmad Shah was a top priority but to kill two innocent people to capture one guilty person cannot be justified.

Some might believe that killing the goatherders is a sacrifice for a greater good. But they must realize that the goal of the operation was to stabilize the area and provide better living conditions to the habitants. Those who went to save people from forceful living conditions cannot take their lives forcefully and label it as the cost of the mission. I would not kill those goatherders just to ease the mission and continue it. I would rather let them go and improvise. No soldier must be afraid of death. As a Navy SEAL, it would be my responsibility to put my life on the line and save the lives of the innocent.

Another option could be to not hurt the goatherders but secure them until the mission is completed. It would be necessary to provide them with conditions where they could survive but not disclose the location. They could have been extracted later too. However, this option might put their lives at risk too.

In reality, the Navy SEAL let the herders go free and changed their location. On should not be afraid of other’s criticism rather focus on what is right. Their decision cost them the lives of three SEALs. Only Luttrell survived the mission.

**References**

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