



Chechnya (1995): The Disappearance

Description

Fred Cuny's final mission, to attempt to negotiate a cease-fire in Chechnya, ended with his disappearance.

Body

There was no aid operation in the war zone of Chechnya, the breakaway Russian republic, but Fred Cuny believed he could help. Grozny, Chechnya's capital, was full of civilians who needed to be evacuated. Russia's military was in the process of destroying the city's infrastructure, so the people needed to get out quickly.

Again, Cuny had a choice. One option was to travel to Grozny and try to figure out a way to get the people out. This might be the quickest way to aid the citizens, but it would be very dangerous and probably require substantial military support. Another option was once again to get mixed up in politics. But if he chose this second option, how far would he go? How would he try to deal with the dangerous wartime conditions? Would he be happy just to evacuate the citizens, or would he try to end all the suffering by somehow negotiating an end to the war?

When Cuny saw the opportunity to make such a far-reaching difference, he jumped at the chance. But this time, his ambitious designs would end in tragedy. He attempted to convince both Chechnya and Russia to negotiate a cease-fire. On March 31, 1995, he headed toward ground zero of the war with two Russian doctors and an interpreter. He wanted to obtain a cease-fire, and then use the cease-fire as a stepping stone for further negotiations to end the war.

Unfortunately for the city of Grozny and the world, Cuny's plan never came to

fruition. He and his three companions were never heard from again, and their bodies were never found. It is believed that they were executed by Chechen intelligence, possibly because Russia circulated propaganda accusing Cuny of being a spy. Cuny's family, in fact, lays the blame on Russia.

[Continue to *Frontline* documentary.](#)

Rights

Use of Materials on the OEC

Resource Type

Case Study / Scenario

Topics

Human Rights

Catastrophes, Hazards, Disasters

Discipline(s)

Engineering