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According to one aspect of the invention, a utility hook **140** is attached to the actuator handle **136** and overlaps the window opening at an easy-to-find location relative to the window when the releasable security grating **36** is closed and the actuator arm is in the locked position. The utility hook **140** serves as a reference point for quickly locating the handle by touch so that the latch can be released for emergency exit during hours of darkness or when the room is filled with smoke under zero visibility conditions.

The utility hook **140** can be used in the conventional way to suspend ornamental objects or living plants adjacent the window space. When so used, the utility hook **140** does not give away the presence of the releasable security grate **36** or the latching apparatus. Additional fixed utility hooks **140** are also installed on the fixed security gratings, thereby providing a uniform appearance when viewed externally, as shown in FIG. 5. By this arrangement, a potential intruder will not have any basis to differentiate one window with respect to the other, and thus would not be likely to detect the location of the releasable security grating **36** or the release apparatus.

Referring again to FIG. 2 and FIG. 3, the latch assembly is unlocked and the security grating **36** is released for movement simply by lifting the actuator arm **134** out of engagement with the latch receivers, thus allowing the security grating to be swung open to the emergency exit position as shown in FIG. 3. Because the release handle **136** and the attached hook **140** are maintained at a known position relative to the window opening, the release handle can be quickly located even when the room is filled with smoke under zero visibility conditions. The occupant can detect the main retention frame **48** and recognize by touch the repeating pattern of the nested guard frames.

This arrangement provides a point of reference that identifies the location of the release handle **136**, which is maintained at a fixed location relative to the center of the releasable security grating **36**. This determination is made first by detecting the main retention frame **48** and following one of the horizontal retention bars until reaching the vertical retention bar **74** that is laterally spaced from the left window jamb **16**. The occupant can then easily detect the presence of the actuator rod **134** and the actuator handle **136**. The security grating **36** is released by grasping the actuator handle **136** or hook **140** and lifting the actuator rod **134** completely clear of the latch receivers, as shown in FIG. 3. This permits the security grating **36** to swing into the interior of the building structure, thus providing immediate access to the lower window, which can then be unlocked and raised to open the emergency exit.

In the preferred embodiment, the nested guard frames **76**, **78** are disposed substantially in coplanar relation with the linking bars **96**, **98**, **100**, **102**, and also substantially in concentric relation with each other, thereby forming a pleasing pattern that repeats identically from window-to-window. Because the movable release hook and the fixed utility hooks are identical in size and are located in the same window positions, a uniform appearance is presented to an outside observer, as shown in FIG. 5. Moreover, the release arm and latch receivers are concealed behind the retention frame **74**. By this arrangement, a potential intruder will not have any basis to differentiate one window with respect to the other, and thus would not be likely to detect the location of the releasable security grating **36** or the release apparatus.

The main retention frame **48** is formed by sections of one inch square steel tubing, with the sections being welded together. The guard frames **76**, **78** and linking bars are preferably formed of ¼ inch×½ inch flat steel stock. The

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horizontal frame segments are spaced on 5 inch centers throughout, and the vertical segments are likewise spaced on 5 inch centers throughout. The actuator arm is formed by ¼ inch outside diameter solid steel rod, and the latch receivers are formed by ¼ inch inside diameter pipe sleeves. Preferably, the utility hooks **140** are integrally formed with the handle portion of the actuator arm, and have a length dimension of approximately 4 inches.

Although the invention has been described with reference to certain exemplary arrangements, it is to be understood that the forms of the invention shown and described are to be treated as preferred embodiments. Various changes, substitutions and modifications can be realized without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the appended claims.

I claim:

1. A quick release security guard assembly for installation in a protective position adjacent a window opening in a building structure comprising, in combination:

- a retention frame;
- a security grating;
- a hinge assembly coupling the security grating to the retention frame to permit movement of the security grating from a closed position in which the security grating opposes entrance movement through the retention frame, to an open position permitting exit movement through the retention frame;
- a latch assembly for releasably locking the security grating onto the retention frame in the closed position, the latch assembly including latch receivers mounted on and overlapping the retention frame and security grating, an actuator arm urged by the force of gravity into latched engagement with the latch receivers and a release handle attached to the actuator arm for manually disengaging the actuator arm from the latch assembly, wherein the actuator arm is disposed upright and overlaps a first portion of the retention frame in the protective position and the release handle extends substantially at a right angle to the actuator arm and overlaps a second portion of the retention frame; and
- a utility hook attached to the release handle, wherein the utility hook depends from the release handle and overlaps the window opening in the protective position, whereby the latch receivers, actuator arm and release handle are accessible to an occupant inside the building structure but are concealed from observers looking through the window opening from a location external of the building structure, and the utility hook and release handle can be quickly located and operated by an occupant to release the security grating during an emergency that may arise during hours of darkness or when the room is filled with smoke under zero visibility conditions.

2. The quick release security guard assembly as set forth in claim 1, including a retainer tray attached to the retention frame for holding the release handle in the overlapping position when the security grating is in the closed position.

3. The quick release security guard assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein the latch assembly comprises:

- a first latch receiver coupled to the retention frame and a second latch receiver coupled to the security grating, the first and second latch receivers being disposed in latching alignment with each other when the security grating is in the closed position; and

the actuator arm is operatively coupled to the latch receivers for manually locking and releasing the latch assembly when the security grating is in the closed position.