



# USA TODAY™

A GANNETT COMPANY

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USA TODAY

August 21, 2014

## WHAT HAPPENED AFTER HE WAS TAKEN

### HOW NEWS OUTLETS TRY TO PROTECT - AND RESCUE - THEIR OWN

As kidnapped photojournalist James Wright Foley languished in the hands of terrorists, the news outlet he had been working for in the U.S. sought his release through highly secretive security channels.

Working with a security firm founded by a former Australian army officer, the international news website GlobalPost, where Foley was freelancing when he was abducted on Thanksgiving 2012, had made contact and continued to negotiate with Foley's kidnappers.

While he declined to reveal specifics, GlobalPost CEO Phil Balboni said he worked extensively with the security firm Unity Resources Group and other intermediaries with contacts at the FBI, security services and the White House as well as the Foley family.

"All those points, we were constantly in the process of communications and sharing knowledge," Balboni said in an interview with USA TODAY. "Anything we learned, we shared with the U.S. government."

He added: "We've not revealed any of these details over the last 20 months. Time will come for that."

Foley's beheading by terrorist group Islamic State serves as a sober reminder of the need for and limits of the risk-mitigation procedures that are in place for correspondents in hot zones. Most news organizations, including GlobalPost, train war-and-disaster correspondents, even if they're not eager to talk about it openly. But kidnappings and assaults of journalists still occur.

Jill Carroll was kidnapped in Iraq in 2006 while working for the Christian Science Monitor and released after nearly three months in captivity. Daniel Pearl, a Wall Street Journal reporter, was kidnapped and beheaded in 2002 by Pakistani militants, an act captured on video that served as a visceral reminder of the dangers faced in covering the war in the region at the time.

Balboni says he followed established protocols when he learned of Foley's kidnapping in 2012. He called a colleague who was a senior executive of a security firm GlobalPost was working with at the time.

The firm chose to no longer take kidnapping cases in January 2013 but continued to pursue leads and develop contacts until the effort to free Foley was transferred to another firm, Unity Resources, this year.

"I personally supervised (the case) the last two years," Balboni says. "It's an immensely complicated undertaking to try to manage recovery operations of this kind."

Foley's captors demanded that the U.S. provide "a multimillion-dollar ransom" for his release, according to The New York Times, citing a representative of his family and a former hostage held alongside him. The U.S. refused to pay.

Foley, like other GlobalPost writers, underwent conflict-zone training offered by a third-party firm and was required to check in "at least once a day, if not more often," Balboni says.

"It's an immensely dangerous business," Balboni says. "Jim is an example of courage and incredible bravery ... not only in doing his job but how he met the end of his life. It's something every reporter should examine and be reminded of the important work we do."



James Foley is seen covering the civil war in Aleppo, Syria, in 2012. Private security forces were working behind the scenes. Photo by NICOLE TUNG, AP



Dan Richards, CEO of crisis response firm Global Rescue.

Boston Globe via Getty Images

Dealing with kidnapers is a sub-branch of the security-management industry, whose business has been growing in recent years. Staffed often with former hostage negotiators, these firms, including Unity Resources, often partner with other security firms that specialize in other areas of the process, such as transportation or insurance, says Dan Richards, CEO of Global Rescue, which offers medical evacuation and security advisory services.

**Unlike what Hollywood might have you believe, a lot of these negotiations happen over a protracted period of time, Richards says. "A relationship develops between negotiators and hostage-takers. It is through the success of that relationship that individuals get released."**

**"Where kidnapers have ideological motivation, like ISIS, then it becomes much more challenging," he says. It was "a very challenging mission."**

Global Rescue CEO Dan Richards

### Outsourcing Help

Many news organizations and companies have standing arrangements with search-and-rescue companies — often staffed by former military and CIA types — whose job is to serve as an emergency point of contact and rescue employees who are in danger.

But the business of ensuring foreign correspondents' safety has been irrevocably altered, particularly in the Middle East, by a confluence of factors. Ideology-driven terrorists often have no interest in ransom money, making negotiations difficult. With the emergence of online news outlets focused on foreign news — GlobalPost launched in 2009 — the number of correspondents working in dangerous terrain has grown. And reporters sent abroad are also noticeably younger than in the past, says John Rose, COO of iJet, a rescue company that works with corporations and media organizations.

Media companies that engage in reporting from abroad have a sizable security industry to tap into for help. Up-front training is becoming more emphasized, Rose says.

"You're seeing a lot of work done in pre-phases," he says. "Back in the glory days of media, you had certain reporters known for being war correspondents who were highly trained. Now, you're seeing a lot of media organizations sending less-experienced reporters. And they're looking for preparation and monitoring."

With the Ebola outbreak in West Africa and the continuing violence in the Middle East, news outlets' interest in security services has intensified, Richards says. "In the last three or four months, we've seen an unprecedented volume of inquiries coming into our operation centers," he says.

Still, understanding the level of risk for employees can be difficult to assess for many employers with no regular presence in hot zones. "We do see institutions often — I don't think it's a choice but they're operating in the blind — that don't know what their risk exposure is," iJet's Rose says. "Sometimes they're sending people into areas where they may not have expertise."