



PHIL BALBONI INTERVIEW  
*JIM: THE JAMES FOLEY STORY*  
LIFE STORIES

**Phil Balboni, President of GlobalPost**  
**February 13, 2015**  
**Interviewed by Chris Chuang**  
**Total Running Time: 1 hour, 46 minutes and 41 seconds**

START TC: 00:00:00:00

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Life Stories Presents

The following video contains graphic descriptions of difficult situations.

Viewer discretion is advised.

00:00:09:00

CHRIS CHUANG:

Got of this. All right. Could you introduce yourself and your occupation?

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Phil Balboni

President of GlobalPost

00:00:14:00

PHIL BALBONI:

Sure. I'm Phil Balboni. I'm the CEO and founder of GlobalPost.

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CHRIS CHUANG:

And tell us about the global post and where it fits in relation to other news organizations.

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PHIL BALBONI:

We started GlobalPost to help fill the void that had grown up over the last 15 or 20 years in, international reporting. And I saw an opportunity both, to serve, people with, great reporting from around the world, and also a business opportunity because there was such a small quantity of, of international reporting and the economies and efficiencies of the internet and our ability to distribute, really globally, right from the very beginning was, was compelling. And, so fortunately, I was able to convince, wonderful group of investors, that this was a good idea. And, we started in January of 2009, and here we are six years later. The world has changed so much in terms of, digital publishing and journalism. But that, original vision of, you know, bringing back great international reporting, and the need for it has been, you know, proven out and, we've been able to build up a terrific audience.

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CHRIS CHUANG:

And could you tell me about gap and international reporting that formed?

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PHIL BALBONI:



Sure. Well, it's a kind of a long and complicated story, but essentially, you know, news and in America, and I'm mostly talking about America here, not so much the rest of the world, although much of what I would say would apply in the rest of the world. But the newspapers, particularly as their economic problems, began to come forward, started to eliminate things that they didn't see as essential. And among the things that, were eliminated were all of the foreign bureaus. There was a time when there was quite a large number of U.S. papers that that had robust foreign coverage. And today there's less than a handful, really. The New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, pretty much, all that's left. And then television followed a similar course. You know, the early days of television going back to the late 50s, early 60s television was, television news, received increasing levels of support from the big broadcasting companies ABC, CBS, NBC. It wasn't. Seen as a place that needed to make money. It was a place where they needed to, provide a public service, make the regulators in Washington happy, and to give them, prestige with the American people. And there was a fair amount of international coverage. I mean, those of us who have been around a long time will remember, you know, what Ed Murrow did and coverage in Vietnam and the powerful role that television played in some of those, you know, really historic international stories. But over time there, too, they as as news became less profitable for the networks, we have 11 full time, what we call senior correspondents, and then we have probably 50 to 75 other freelance, correspondents, kind of like what what Jim was, during most of his time for us. So as, as television news became less profitable and as the networks themselves began to feel the need to trim down this commitment to covering stories, international coverage eventually dwindled down to very little. So today, if there's something really big that's going on, you know, a major



natural disaster or obviously during the height of the, you know, Iraq war, the networks will be there. But in the main day to day international coverage on American television news networks, it's pretty much gone away. So we saw an opportunity to fill that, that void and to provide people with high quality international reporting that would be there all the time and to build a brand around it. That's our that's our niche. We don't cover us politics, we don't cover entertainment, we don't cover sports. We cover, you know, international news and conflict reporting has become very central. To what we do. It wasn't that way at the beginning, but it has has become that.

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CHRIS CHUANG:

Tell us about when you first met Jim and how he came to work at the Global Post.

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PHIL BALBONI:

Well, Jim, we met remotely, which is a lot of how things happen in this world today, particularly for us, because all of our correspondents are out in the world and none of them work here. At the headquarters, many of them, you know, end up coming through Boston, and we will meet them that way. Of course, Jim was a local boy from New Hampshire, and, but Jim started working for us in Afghanistan in 2010. And, so my connection with Jim was as, I saw his work and, he was doing some terrific work, and we could see that, you know, he was a very brave, man. And he wasn't. Afraid to be near, where things were happening. And there was one particularly compelling story that he did in Afghanistan. He was with, frontline unit, and they came



under an ambush, and Jim was inside the, armored vehicle. And, maybe you've seen this piece, and the, the trooper who was up in the hatch, was hit, in his helmet, by around from the Taliban. And he fell back through the hatch and down into the compartment of the armored vehicle. And Jim was inside, and he captured this whole thing. He was shooting it as it happened. And, fortunately, that that trooper wasn't killed. The helmet blocked much of it. He he was wounded, but he wasn't killed. And, and then they went out side. Jim took the camera outside and saw where the IED had gone off and it was a terrific piece. And, we had I developed a partnership with CBS news, and, they ran this piece almost in its entirety, with a voiceover from Katie Couric. Was the was the anchor at that time, and she voiced the story. And the PBS NewsHour was also a partner. And they also used the entire piece that Jim had done. And that was that was that really impressed everybody here, because that doesn't happen very often. And it was, kind of our first sign of how intrepid and fearless Jim was and that he had, you know, a great eye for a story and that he could work in, you know, in video, or he could work, you know, in text as well.

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CHRIS CHUANG:

Do you know how Jim felt about getting his first story onto TV?

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PHIL BALBONI:

I think he was pretty excited about it. Yeah. No, I'm I, I think he was very excited about it and very proud of it.

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CHRIS CHUANG:

So, you already covered some of this, but why was Jim, a good fit for the GlobalPost?

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PHIL BALBONI:

Well, we we started with, a need to use freelance, reporters around the world. We couldn't go back to the, shall we say, the old model where you have highly compensated, full time, correspondents in a bureau with staff and, and translators and all the other, you know, things that, were possible when journalism was doing extremely well, we needed to work with, with people that we could pay the most that we could afford. And who could work, in the field without a lot of the, these other supporting mechanisms and and Jim is as, as, you know, came to journalism late in life and, or later in life. Not he was a young man, but later he didn't start out in his in his early 20s. He started out later than that and he decided that going to a conflict area, first Iraq and then Afghanistan was was something that gave him an opportunity to begin his career. And we find. People like this or they find us. I mean, it's amazing. Now, GlobalPost is very well known, but back in 2010, we weren't particularly well known. We'd only been around for, say, a year and a half, something like that. And I don't recall exactly, how it was or who it was on our staff who first made that connection with Jim. But once we made the connection, it never really was lost.

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CHRIS CHUANG:



And you mentioned his age, but how do you think that affected his reporting?  
The fact that he came to this occupation later in life.

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PHIL BALBONI:

I, I don't know, that age was, a factor in. In how Jim approached his work. I mean, I, you know, you learn more about somebody over time. And, of course, you know, since Jim's captivity, the second captivity in Syria, you know, and and even since his death, you know, I've come to know more and more about him, but, and have a deeper understanding of what. A deep person. Jim was and his interest in literature and in philosophy. He brought a lot to his work as a journalist, and I I suppose that's more likely in someone who is in their 30s than in their in their early 20s. But whatever the case, Jim brought a lot of mature humanity to his work. And I think his reading and his understanding of, of human nature and of people was one of the hallmarks of his work.

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CHRIS CHUANG:

To you. How was Jim different from other freelance correspondents that you had?

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PHIL BALBONI:

Well. You know, it's hard for me to answer that question because, you know, as the CEO of GlobalPost, I can get involved in specific editorial or story issues when I feel the need or desire, but that's not really my job. We have, we have an editor and a managing editor and regional editors who who do that on a



regular basis. Obviously, I pay a lot of attention to the important work that we do. And but it really wasn't until Jim's first captivity that. I came to know him well. And, you know, the bond that was formed in April, in May of 2011, during the Libyan captivity, I think was was a bond that, would never have changed. What happened in Syria is, of course, orders of magnitude beyond that. But. Jim was clearly very intrepid. Reporter when I finally got to meet him in person. I mean, he was a very warm and nice guy as well. Somebody that you just enjoyed. Enjoyed talking to.

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CHRIS CHUANG:

What were your first impressions of him when you met him in person for the first time?

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PHIL BALBONI:

I mean, he's instantly likable. I mean, he's got a great smile and, he's modest, and easygoing and I think, you know, I felt a kinship for Jim.

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CHRIS CHUANG:

You remember something that you guys bonded over?

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PHIL BALBONI:

I don't know that there was one particular thing. I mean, I think it was, a progression, for me. You know, I, I don't tend to find, to form friendships



quickly. They're, they kind of they happen or they don't happen over time. Depending on you know, who the person is and what kind of time we spend together. I wish I had more time to spend together. I really wasn't very long. We we had about three months here at the pilot house, our headquarters. When Jim came back from Libya, and, I offered him a full time job. Here's an editor and while he sorted out, you know, what he would do next. And, he sat right outside my office. So I'd see him every day. But, you know, you get we all get swept up in our lives, and you can't. I didn't I couldn't look into the future and see what was going to happen. You know, in two years time, if I if I'd been able to do that I mean, I would have wanted to spend you know, time with him every day and have long, deep conversations, go out drinking at night but of course, I didn't know what the future held in store. I had you know, a, a deep affection for Jim. And I didn't want him to go back into harm's way, that's for sure. And I tried to convince him not to. Sadly, I didn't succeed at that.

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CHRIS CHUANG:

I would like to talk about Libya.

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PHIL BALBONI:

Sure.

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CHRIS CHUANG:

How did you and Jim decide that he would go to Libya?

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PHIL BALBONI:

Well, Jim didn't didn't ask my permission. He just went, and that's, oftentimes the way it works. He. He had come back, after his trips to Afghanistan and. He. He decided that Libya was an opportunity for him to do work that he had become interested in while reporting. We had another of our correspondents who was already there and we were working with her and Jim's arrival overlapped. Her, her being there and, as it turned out, her significant other was also, he he was briefly kidnaped. And when he was freed, he left Libya. And she left Libya at the same time. And, we began working a lot with Jim. Then. And then there was another woman who named Tracy Shelton, who, became a significant, contributor to GlobalPost. And Jim and Tracy were working at the same time, not as a team so much, but they were working in parallel. Tracy was in a different part of, of Libya. Jim had come in, across the Egyptian border in the. East of the country and, was working that, that side of it.

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CHRIS CHUANG:

What kinds of stories did Jim choose to cover while he was over there?

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PHIL BALBONI:

Well, he was he was working on the front lines. I mean, that's now where we should start on pre captivity. So, the rebellion began, significantly in the Benghazi area in the east. And Jim was, was there with a number of other



freelance journalists and they, he was filing reports from, as close to the front lines as, as he could be. And it was on one of those trips, up to the front lines with three other colleagues that, they were captured by the Gaddafi fighters.

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CHRIS CHUANG:

How did you hear about his capture? Do you remember that moment?

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PHIL BALBONI:

I do, it was, it was early morning, in April, and, late April. And, there was an email that came in from Peter Booker, from Human Rights Watch. He's one of the emergency directors, and, works out of Geneva, but he's all over the world. And Peter's got a great network of contacts, and and he particularly looks after journalists. And he had emailed one of my colleagues, to say that, there was a possibility that Jim had gone missing and that was, I'm sorry, to my BlackBerry, you know, like seven in the morning. And, so nothing like this had ever happened to us before and. When I got to the office, we got on the phone with Peter. He told us what he knew, which wasn't a great deal. I reached out to, the foreign editor of the New York Times, whom I knew, and to get some advice because. Their journalists had been briefly detained and things began to move more, more quickly, and. We learned that another American, Claire Gillis, had been been captured, and. We began working with the Atlantic and USA today, for whom Claire Gillis had been freelancing. And we formed a security team among the three news organizations, and none of us had had any experience in having a journalist, captured. So we were all learning on the fly. We hired, international security firm, kidnap and ransom



experts in the UK, in, a firm called Akie, John Chase. And very quickly, John deployed to Tunisia, and got up close to the Libyan border and he stayed there. Pretty much without interruption for the 44, 45 days that, Jim was a captive and so we had, we went into crisis mode and, which basically involved, trying to provide a direction to the security team, trying to find out. For a while, we didn't know who had them, but, within, oh, 4 or 5 days, we knew that it was, the Libyan government, the gadhafi regime that that had them and that they were they were captives. And we then tried to figure out what leverage points we might have to get them released. And I mean, the the calls with the security team, were constant every day. You know, morning, noon, night, weekends, you know, trying to work every angle that we possibly could. We put calls in to gadhafi's, sons and others that we, where we could get phone numbers. Fortunately, here we were dealing with a government. It wasn't a very nice government, but at least it was a government that still played by certain rules and felt they had certain responsibilities and. We use some diplomatic channels that we've never, never revealed who, which, which country it was. But there was one particular ambassador for a country that, was extremely helpful to us. And she had. Communications into the regime and was able to eventually convince them that it was in their interests to release the hostages. And, and they eventually did. And we had our team right there at the border. John Chase, we had another person who was trained in, you know, medical and psychological help. We didn't know what shape they would be in. And so they came across the border late afternoon in in late May, and, they were all in good condition. And we brought them to the hotel in this seaside town named Djerba, where, our team had been, been staying. And, it was then that the horrible story about Anton Hammersley, who was the fourth of of the journalists who'd been there at the moment of capture.



And it was then that we learned that, he had been shot to death by the, Gadhafi soldiers and left behind to die. And, I think the burden of that, was weighed on, Jim, very heavily. And I think that was a big milestone in his life, was Anton's death. He was very devoted to, trying to help Anton's widow, who lived in London. And, you know, they did a fundraiser for her in New York and, but I think the, the combination of being a prisoner and the loss of Anton. And the kind of the bonding that he did with the, Libyan people and the revolution against Gaddafi. I think that was what cemented his determination to continue to do this, this kind of reporting.

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CHRIS CHUANG:

Did he ever, specifically say why it was that he felt such a responsibility for Anton at that moment with such guilt?

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PHIL BALBONI:

Well, it was it was kind of tied up with decision to go to the frontline that particular day. I mean, I think he recognized that it wasn't a good idea and he didn't speak up strongly against it. Nor did anyone else, for that matter. But I think he felt that maybe if he had said, no, let's not do it. It's too dangerous that, you know, Anton would be alive today. I think that's what it came down to. I I've talked to I mean, a lot of people wonder if journalists take too many risks and and whether they're properly trained for these risks. And I think the most experienced war correspondent. A number of whom have died in the last several years. You know, who are highly experienced, been in a lot of combat. Things can happen that over which you have no control. Going to the



front lines is one of those things where you do have some control. You don't have to go. So I appreciated the fact that, you know, Jim questioned that decision. And, I don't know if he blamed himself. He certainly shouldn't have, because it was kind of a collective decision. And it wouldn't necessarily have been a bad one, except that the fighters they went up with kind of left them behind. And over the next hill came, you know, the, the pickup truck carrying the gadhafi shouldered, soldiers. And they were shooting as they came. And it was that stray bullet that that killed Anton.

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CHRIS CHUANG:

He wasn't even a full time correspondent, just a freelancer. Right. Why do you think, you felt such a responsibility for getting him released from Libya?

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PHIL BALBONI:

You know, the thought never crossed my mind not to be responsible. And I guess I've already said we had no experience with what it meant to have a journalist be a captive. I didn't know if it was going to be a one day experience or or weeks or months. And I had no idea at that time what the cost might be. But I knew that we weren't going to just turn our back on on Jim. And it was never, never a question that about that. Since he returned. I mean, after the Libya experience. We took certain steps, to better prepare ourself, through insurance and other things that gave us more capabilities and resources. And we certainly thought more about. When a news organization needs to do to operate responsibly. But one of the things unmistakably that you need to do is stand behind your people. And,



regardless of whether they're, you know, freelance or staff, if you take somebody's work, then you have a responsibility to them. We've since I think all of us, you know, who do international reporting have realized that there need to be better standards. And indeed, those standards have just recently been published by the Committee to Protect Journalists and other Organizations. We were a signatory to those, policies and procedures. And, and I felt strongly that news organizations had to be held to the very highest standard, which is very simply this, that if you accept freelancers work, no matter if it's only one time and they're in a conflict area, then you have a responsibility to that person going forward. It's it's a heavy burden for a news organization to carry, and it can play the opposite way for freelancers and not in a positive way, because it because the news organization is going to be, more careful and, and wary of what they do. They may not want to work with freelancers anymore. So I'm very, attuned to that point as well. I mean, I admire freelancers and, and I think that for a journalist who wants to report out in the world. The opportunity to make your own decisions and to have your work, considered is an exciting thing, but it needs to be done much more responsibly by freelancers. Many people just went off with no training, no experience, no preparation. It was just sheer romanticism about, you know, being a, foreign correspondent and going to a place that was dangerous and they had no right to be there. So those people, when you when somebody approaches you about working for them, you need to know a lot about that person and whether they are properly trained and prepared to be in the area where they're reporting. If you if you determine that they're not, you shouldn't take their work because we can't we can't have young people taking crazy risks, of this kind. Jim was kind of, there at the early stage of this kind of movement, of there being more freelancers in conflict areas. And, you know,



his first captivity was, well, was much noticed in the journalism community. And I think but the steps that needed to be taken hadn't been put in place until the Syria happened, when this really forced people to take a close look at everything that was happening in this regard. We were all learning, because the role of freelancers was more important in international reporting for the reasons that I stated earlier on that the international reporting had gone down. So GlobalPost came along and, and we needed to work with freelancers, and we wanted to we stayed away from conflict reporting for the first. Year and a half. We knew that we weren't ready to take it on. The Iraq war was still, you know, going pretty strong and as was Afghanistan as well in 2009. So it wasn't until 2010 when we started, you know, doing reporting from Afghanistan. And that's when Jim began working for us.

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CHRIS CHUANG:

When did you first see Jim after his release?

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PHIL BALBONI:

It was, within a. A day at the bottom two at the most that he he came to the pilot house. I mean, he he flew into the airport. Went right up to Rochester, New Hampshire, to be with the family. And, but he came in here, you know, very quickly after that. And, you know, we big embraces and, we sat in the conference room right next door here and, and talked about, what happened, how he felt about it and of course, what his thinking was about, you know, the



next step for him and either immediately at that moment or very soon thereafter, I offered him the job of working here, full time.

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CHRIS CHUANG:

At that time, what did he think that the next step would be?

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PHIL BALBONI:

I'm sure he knew what it was. I don't. I don't recall him saying, but I think going back to reporting was clearly what he intended to do. I think he was getting pressure from, you know, his folks, to not. I. I know they were always very supportive of what Jim did, but there's no doubt that they would rather that he had not gone back to a, you know, a conflict zone. And, and it's I said I tried to convince Jim to report someplace else. I mean, I offered him a job in Central America where his Spanish language skills would be, would be very useful. And, whether a lot of good stories and, we didn't have anybody there at the time and he appreciated it, and he, he thought about it, but, he went back to Libya and we and and with our blessing, I mean, by the time, it was getting to be mid to late August of 2011 and the regime was clearly nearing the end, and he wanted to be back for the last chapter of the Libya story. And so we we supported him in that.

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CHRIS CHUANG:

And I want to talk about the. The desk job when you gave him the desk job? Yes. What was it like during those, was it two months or two weeks?

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PHIL BALBONI:

Oh, no, it was. It was 2 to 3 months. Yeah.

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CHRIS CHUANG:

What was it like, watching him at work during that time?

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PHIL BALBONI:

He wasn't a happy guy. I mean, I mean, he was he was grateful to have the job and, but working in an office and working, you know, doing the kinds of things that an editor needed to do was clearly not, what he, what he liked the most. And, I knew it was just a matter of time before you know, he would say. I need to leave.

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CHRIS CHUANG:

And, what sorts of tasks was he doing while he was working in this desk job?

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PHIL BALBONI:

He was. He was writing stories. He was editing, you know, copy, from the field, publishing. Publishing stories. You know, the full range of of things that, you know, a digital news editor, does.



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CHRIS CHUANG:

Why did he want to go back to Libya and not anywhere else?

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PHIL BALBONI:

Well, I mean, I didn't need to ask that question because it was obvious. I mean, it was, it was a great story. It was. A place that he had, had a traumatic, you know, life altering experience. You know, losing a colleague and then being, you know, a prisoner. The story was unfolding and moving towards its, its, ultimate conclusion, and he wanted to be there to see it. I mean, I mean, I would have wanted to do the same thing, so I, I, I certainly couldn't blame him. But it was more for, you know, his own well-being and for what I believed to be his, you know, his mother and father's wishes for him to stay out of harm's way. Because I know how hard that was on him.

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CHRIS CHUANG:

And when he went back, we were told that, him and a colleague were the first to file footage on the recently killed gadhafi. Could you tell us about the story?

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PHIL BALBONI:

Yeah. It was actually, Tracy Shelton, who, who got that video. They were both. You know, in the location, where gadhafi had been driven outside of. Tripoli. And he'd gone back, you know, closer to his home village and. Tracy, had been working a lot in the town of Misrata, which was another center of the



revolution against gadhafi. And she had gotten to know the militia fighters there very well. And so, the, the, the rebel who, saw gadhafi come out of the, the, the sewer drainpipe where he'd been hiding. Had photographed him with his iPhone and, and also captured, we discovered, later the, you know, he he'd been stabbed, with a knife, and, in a most unpleasant place. And this was all captured, on the iPhone. So.

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CHRIS CHUANG:

Did you notice any change in Jim when he came back from Libya?

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PHIL BALBONI:

I. I can't say that I did. He was quiet. I don't want to say he was withdrawn. But he he was he was quiet and he didn't look troubled or tired. And. But it's not surprising that what you say could very well be true. And I, I didn't know that he wasn't sleeping. I mean, he was, he was always fine here at the office.

00:41:31:00

CHRIS CHUANG:

How did you and Jim decide that he would go to Syria?

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PHIL BALBONI:

Well, once again, Jim decided he was going to Syria. I mean, when he came back from, the second trip to Libya, you know, we we had conversations and. I again, you know, urged him to go, someplace else. South America. We, we've



been working a lot with with Tracy Shelton, who was also a very good reporter and. So we didn't make a commitment to Jim to report from Syria. I think I would have preferred that he that he not go back to another conflict area. I mean, and the only control I had over that was to not endorse, you know, him going off to Syria. My recollection is that Tracy had already arrived in Syria and had begun to report for us there. And sometime after the Christmas holidays of 2011, sometime in January. Jim must have decided to go. I don't remember the exact date. And, but I was certainly aware that he was there. But he made that call on his own, and, he made it without a commitment from GlobalPost to take his work. We did, in fact, continue to work with, with Jim. And Pete Gilling, who was our Middle East editor at the time. But Pete, had gotten to know Jim very, very well, and, so as our Middle East editor, he was he was managing all the coverage from, from that area, including our Syria coverage. So, so he he was taking work from from Jim. More it was I mean, Jim would say, hey, I've got a nice story about this or a story about that. Would you be interested? I think from time to time they would talk about stories that Pete might be interested in, and they would they would agree on something. But as you know, Jim was also working for AFP, and I think he sold some video to CNN. I'm not sure about all of his clients, but we were only one.

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CHRIS CHUANG:

Do you know what stories he had that people may not have been interested in buying?

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PHIL BALBONI:

Do you mean us or others?

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CHRIS CHUANG:

GlobalPost in particular.

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PHIL BALBONI:

Well, I don't think, there were stories that we weren't interested in buying, but we had Tracy, who had become full time with GlobalPost, was was in, inside Syria in many of the same places as Jim, you know, in Aleppo and other parts of northern Syria, eastern Syria. So, I mean, we have a limited, budget for this. And so most of the resources that we had were being deployed with Tracy. But we were continuing to, take things from Jim. From time to time.

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CHRIS CHUANG:

And, I want to get to the moment that you heard that he was captured again.

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PHIL BALBONI:

Yeah.

00:45:21:00

CHRIS CHUANG:

Could you walk me through that?



00:45:23:00

PHIL BALBONI:

Sure. So it was. It was Saturday, morning. Oh, probably 1130 or something like that. And I was, in my home in Cambridge, and I, you know, I'm constantly on email. And so I had a message, from Nicole Tung, who was in, Turkey. And she said that she, thought Jim might have gone missing, that he had been returning from Aleppo, and they were due to meet up, in, Antakya, where. She was staying. And he never arrived, and, you know, I didn't completely freak out right at that moment, but, you know. Oh my goodness. Is it possible that Jim, has something bad has happened to him? Or is or is a prisoner? But I did immediately call, a man named, Chuck. Rajini. Chuck, worked with me on the Libya, investigation. And I liked and respected him. And he's a longtime kidnap and ransom expert, former FBI, and was working for, Cairo International. And, and we had a relationship with Cairo. And, so I called Chuck, and I filled him in on the facts, and I said, it looks like we might be needing you. That was. That was November 24th, and that was the that was the beginning of what, you know, turned into, a life altering experience for me. I certainly had no idea at that time that, we would still be searching for Jim, you know, a year, a year and a half later.

00:47:54:00

CHRIS CHUANG:

I want to talk about this first period when everyone seemed to be in the dark about who had taken half. Tell me about the work that you did with Kroll during this time.



00:48:03:00

PHIL BALBONI:

Within less than a week of learning about Jim being missing. We had investigators in the field, on the, Syrian border, in Turkey, and starting to, interview people. Interviewed the translator who had been working with, with Jim and, and with John Cantley, you know. We came to know a lot about John Cantley and about their travels together. And, but we never revealed John's identity at the request of, his family. But the investigators were we're talking to everyone that they could. We had, as many as three people at a time there, one of whom was a native Arabic speaker from Egypt. So that he could communicate. You know, inside Syria. We crossed the border a number of times, you know, to gather information. And the. No one seemed to know what happened to Jim and John. There was, other than the eyewitness account that the vehicle was stopped on the road from, the town of Benicia to the, Turkish border. And several, you know, armed men, with Kalashnikov rifles. Stopped the car, took Jim and John away and released the driver and the translator, that we knew. So we had that eyewitness account, but who they were, what group they belonged to. And what their intentions were were not known. And then for the better part of a year, we searched and we searched and we followed every lead in every place. And there was simply no trace of Jim and John.

00:50:40:00

CHRIS CHUANG:

So I want to talk about these leads that you would follow that would end up going nowhere, you know. Could you talk about that?



00:50:47:00

PHIL BALBONI:

Sure. Well, there were a couple of possibilities, for what might have happened to Jim. Maybe three. Apart from the worst, which was that Jim died, that he was killed almost immediately. And that was never eliminated as a possibility. And we didn't like to talk about it very much with, the family, but, it clearly was always a possibility. Is that, he died and was buried someplace, and we would never know until the war was over. If then, but on the assumption that Jim was alive, he either had been taken by, criminal gang, of which there were many operating in that area, that he'd been taken by one of the militias called the shabiha, working with the Assad regime. And there was in particular a village right in that area within, you know, a kilometer or two from where, Jim was abducted. There should be a stronghold, or he would have or he could have been taken by some unit of the Free Syrian Army. Now, it's difficult now with all the talk about the Islamic State and their they become so present of mind and so famous or infamous that the Islamic State, ISIS, ISIL was on nobody's radar screen in the fall of 2012. If they had a name, it wasn't a name that anybody was talking about. The word jihadist groups, working under the umbrella of the Free Syrian Army. There were quite a few of them. They weren't, hostile to journalists at that time. At least not known to anyone. Al-Nusra. Which is an Al-Qaeda affiliated group, was known to be operating at that time. And we had a lot of explorations with. Individuals inside Syria. Other jihadist commanders that had ties or knew al-Nusra, to see if that possibility might have been the one. And every single person said, no, they don't have them. They denied they have them. And so the most likely. Theory was that Jim had been taken by this group of should be here and held probably in their fortified village. And at some point he had been transferred



to Damascus. And we have over time. Particularly into the winter and early spring of 2013, we had a lot of sourcing around, this the fact that Jim was being held in a prison in Damascus. We even had the specific, name and location of the, the prison, and people who maintained that they could release him for, consideration, you know, payment of money. Jim, was taken on Thanksgiving 2012. On New Year's Day 2013, we announced that Jim Foley was was a captive in, Syria. That was a big decision. And it was a big discussion by myself, our security team, and of course, with the Foley's, with the FBI and. The government in particularly favorite. But John and Diane and I, and Michael, who was very involved at that time, were strongly in favor of going public, and I felt then and I feel now that it was absolutely the right thing to do, to tell America, the world that James Foley was a prisoner in Syria. We didn't know where or by whom, but we wanted people to know that.

00:55:34:00

CHRIS CHUANG:

And the voices that were, opposed to going public. What was the reasoning?

00:55:39:00

PHIL BALBONI:

The general modus operandi for the FBI is secrecy. Don't. Just don't say anything. And certainly there are many cases where the where the blackout, on information about a captive is held by the media. It's a big subject of debate and discussion. Should there be blackout or should there not be a blackout? In this case, we released the most important information. We didn't say a lot. And we didn't say anything again until May of 2013, when we had a



news conference here, that the Foleys attended where we, said that we believe that he was being held by the Syrian government. Well, turned out we were dead wrong about that. But that's what we believed at the time. We didn't say anything again until October, of 2013. This was something Dianne wanted on Jim's then 39th birthday to have, an event. We we didn't have a lot to release. In truth, we had come to believe that our theory about him being held in, in Damascus by the regime was probably not true. But, as of Jim's birthday, we still hadn't found him. Didn't know if he was alive, or where he might be held or by whom. We knew nothing.

00:57:19:00

CHRIS CHUANG:

During that year in which you didn't even know who had taken Jim, whether he was alive. And you were spending all this money on crawl crawl services. Did it ever cross your mind to give up?

00:57:34:00

PHIL BALBONI:

Never. Never. I mean. We? We? How could we give up? I mean. I mean. As long as it was a possibility that Jim was alive, we we couldn't stop. So. No, it was it was frustrating, for sure. And, there was, you know, I think the family was frustrated. And wanted to know more. Try to find a lever. Somebody who could do something. You know, we were, you know, working with the State Department and the FBI, but they had no information for us. Really? Diane was great about meeting with, other governments, embassy, ambassadors in Washington from, you know, Turkey and Russia and other countries that might have some influence. But it turned out that, I mean, no one had any



influence because the group that had them didn't listen to anybody. We didn't we didn't know that. But it was a it was a difficult time. And, I mean. It mean that this effort went off, went on every single day. I mean, I, I've said that this almost two year period was like living in parallel universes. I mean, that was my regular life goal running GlobalPost, my family, whatever else was happening in my life. That was that was one universe. And then the other universe was Jim and the search for Jim and the two worlds. Really. They intersected at some point, but they were very much separate universes. And so and I had to step from one to the other, you know, constantly. And there was almost, not a day that went by during that, period from November 24th until August 19th of 2014. When Jim was killed, that this, this effort wasn't on my mind. Some days it would occupy a huge amount of time, and other times it would be little. But it could and often did pop up, you know, at any particular moment. But as for giving up, no, we never thought of giving up.

01:00:24:00

CHRIS CHUANG:

So going back to George, could you tell us about what he told you about his time with Jim and how big a break in the case it was?

01:00:33:00

PHIL BALBONI:

It was. It was huge because it was proof of life. Remember, it's November of 2013. Almost the anniversary, of Jim's first year of captivity. And we were, like, at square one, all this effort, and we knew nothing. And here along comes this young man who, very convincingly tells us that he has been in a cell with with Jim, and that, you know, he's good. His health is good. And talks about



some of the other details of captivity and some of the other people that are there. Doesn't know a lot about that. And we. We sent one of our top people to, Antwerp, where John was being held in prison by the, Belgian authorities, because he, he's been a jihadist. And now that he was back, they were questioning him and trying to figure out what to do with him. In fact, that case just, within the last couple of days, reached its final conclusion, and he was given a suspended sentence by. But others were, were sentenced to longer periods of time, in, in, prison. And he testified against them.

01:02:06:00

CHRIS CHUANG:

Did you get a sense of what kind of relationship Jim and John had?

01:02:11:00

PHIL BALBONI:

I don't think it was a close one. I think it was just it was a casual relationship. And John wasn't, like, like a fellow hostage. I mean, he fell under suspicion. Because his father had had this a gutsy guy. This this Dimitri had gone into Syria to bring his son back. And, I think that had caused them to be suspicious of him. And so they, they, they held him for some period of time, but then he he was released, and he. He left Syria and went back to, to Belgium. But. He gave us proof of life and he gave us location. And it was clear at that time that he was being held by a jihadist group.

01:03:03:00

CHRIS CHUANG:



Could you talk about working with them throughout, both Libya and Syria, what it's been like? Sure.

01:03:09:00

PHIL BALBONI:

First, I should talk about the kind of the protocol that, I've learned you go through. So in in Libya, we form the security team. Family members were not invited at that time. Remember, there were three news organizations. The family members were not invited to be part of the security team. They were kept informed of what was happening. But it was it was it was not their place, at least as determined then by those three organizations, to help direct the investigation. When Jim went missing in 2012. And I had hired the security team. I immediately invited the family to be part of it. One person, whoever they wanted, it was Michael. That was. That was their decision. And Michael, participated in all the conference calls, you know, the decision making, you know, all the endless email communication. At some point, and I don't know what the family dynamics were behind the scenes, but, Diane's a strong woman, and she had left her job, so she could devote full time to, the search for Jim and. They just somehow in the family, they decided that she would, replace Michael, on the security team. And, Diane was, was very active, as I already indicated, in terms of doing her own outreach. And, I don't mind sharing with you that, you know, we we had some difficulties of having the right communication, protocols in effect, so that everybody was keeping everybody else informed. I mean, I'm, I'm not an expert. Maybe I've become an expert, but I, I learned it in doing it. But the people who do it for a living, people like Chuck, Rajini, I mean, they'll tell you that good communication, making sure that everybody who's involved in the case knows what



everybody else is doing and that, things are, are jointly decided. There were difficulties there because. The the path forward, up to this point or up to the point of the first email from the kidnapers arriving, there was no clear direction. So it was a lot of exploration that was taking place.

01:06:17:00

CHRIS CHUANG:

You felt that he was being held in that prison in Damascus. What's that?

01:06:21:00

PHIL BALBONI:

I don't I don't know if if she disagreed with us. She didn't say it. I think over time. So May of 2013, we publicly stated that, John and Dianne were downstairs and participated in that, in that public announcement at some point in time. I think they began not to believe that that story was true. We had not. When I say we, I mean we the security team had not officially changed our story. There was still a lot of information flowing in. Some of it, you know, highly credible and very specific, and and quite seemingly compelling. It was all wrong. I can't explain why it was wrong. I mean, the amount of effort. I mean, it was a lot of work in Beirut dealing with people there who, maintained that they had the ability to get Jim out. And, it's pointless to try to go back now and figure out why they were wrong, whether it was malicious intent or whether it was innocent. I'm not sure, but I think, we may have all had our suspicions. I think it was stronger for, for for Dianne that it was. It was, another answer. And the answer was that, they were. I think when you said south. You mean north and north of Syria? Which is where the, the, all of the, the Free Syrian Army and the jihadist groups were

operating pretty relatively freely up in the north. But, you know, we our. Our. Shared commitment to this mission was was never in doubt. And, we we always worked, you know, very closely together on on everything.

01:08:49:00

CHRIS CHUANG:

Tell me about the moment that you received the first email from the terrorists.

01:08:55:00

PHIL BALBONI:

Yeah. That was November 26th. And the email was addressed to me and to Michael, and it. You know, I've gone back and I've read it a number of times. It had a friendly tone to it, believe it or not. And it said that, they had, you know, our friend Jim, and, they wanted money fast. And that was pretty much it, there was no diatribe. There was no specific demands made other than money. And it didn't feel threatening. It also, we didn't know if it was. It was somebody else, you know, trying to game us and firm for money.

01:10:01:00

CHRIS CHUANG:

Had that happened before?

01:10:02:00

PHIL BALBONI:

Yes. Not in this manner, but yes. People who maintained that they, you know, they knew where Jim was and they could get him out. These people said they



had him, that was that was new. So we we had a lot of conversation about how to respond. Worked with the FBI and and with, Kroll. And the following is, of course, on how to respond. We decided that the response would come from Michael, not from GlobalPost. Because. The family is the best party to, have this negotiation. At least that was the opinion of the FBI and the experts. And so an email was crafted and sent, and, you know, that led to eventually to a follow up email, and to the offer of proof of life. They said you could ask three questions. And, so Michael and Diane and John, worked hard, to come up with three questions that would be so hard for anybody but Jim to answer. Impossible, for anybody to answer. They couldn't be researched in any way on social media or anything else. And those were sent and, and then they came back with all of the answers. Correct. And that was the, you know, the moment when, we had our second proof of life and it was clear that the people we were communicating with either had Jim or they had access to Jim. Now that two, we couldn't we we we didn't know. We're just dealing with, with an untraceable email address. After that, the first email. There was an effort to trace on this, trace the, the the email address that they used, which wasn't a recognized, internet service provider. It wasn't a Yahoo account or anything like that. So clearly the FBI, I don't know what they do, how they do, what they do, but they did something and, or they maybe they inserted something into the response, but it was detected right away and they said, you know, you do that again and you'll never hear from us again. So, that was the end of that.

01:12:57:00

CHRIS CHUANG:



So they asked for the ransom money. Could you tell us about the communication with the government and what they were, encouraging or not encouraging, us to do the.

01:13:08:00

PHIL BALBONI:

We were keeping, State Department informed, and we were. And and the family which was dealing directly with the FBI was keeping the FBI in our in Chuck, Virginia. And, Dick Hildreth, the other the two senior kidnap and ransom experts who retired, they had very good, contacts within the FBI, and they were keeping them informed. And the FBI was helping with the strategy on how to respond, to the emails. So. You know, everything that we knew. Everything from the very beginning. We always turned it over, to the appropriate, people in the government. Unfortunately, it was a pretty much a one way street. Nothing. Nothing came down that street back in our direction. In terms of information, and I know Diana stated now that they believe that, the government knew relatively early on that Jim was being held, in the North by one of the jihadist groups. No name mentioned, to the best of my knowledge. And I don't know if that was based on hard intelligence or whether it was a guess on their part. Because I told you before, there were only, a couple of real. Likely scenarios. One was jihadist, the other was the regime. And so you could flip a coin and you could you could be right. And so it's I still don't know whether the government actually had intelligence that pointed to Jim being held by what we later were able to call the Islamic State. So when did.

01:15:08:00



CHRIS CHUANG:

You decide to pursue the, strategy of, raising money for ransom?

01:15:14:00

PHIL BALBONI:

I think that was. A discussion that went back a long way. Because even during that period of time, when we believe the gym was being held by the regime, the people who suggested that they had access to the people who were holding him. Syrian intelligence, we thought it was Air Force intelligence that the that they would, trade him off for money. So the idea of, of, raising money was, something that had been talked about a lot. Specific amounts even. But then it was hundreds of thousands of dollars, not millions of dollars. And, you know, the Foleys were prepared to mortgage their house. Do what? What needed to be done. You know, to pay, to make a payment. The ransom demand that the kidnapers the real kidnapers made is, as you know, it's been widely reported at €100 million. They never stated another figure. They never negotiated, at all. And then they stopped communicating. So there were five emails and, then they stopped, and they never they never responded again. So we don't know what was in their mind. And in November and December, they seemed prepared to, accept a ransom of some size or an exchange of Muslim prisoners for Jim. And for some reason, they stopped communicating. Now, the logical conclusion is that they stopped because they were driven out of Aleppo. They had to move all the prisoners. And, that they their operations would disrupted, and they didn't return to the ransoming until the spring. And then they really went to work on it. Unfortunately, they released the group from MSF first, and then they started releasing the journalists, the Western journalists from the European journalists. And, we



had heard from one of the hostages. I do not remember which one that it was a deliberate strategy for them to hold the US and UK prisoners until last, because they knew about the no ransom policy in the United States, in the United Kingdom. And they figured that was going to be harder to succeed there. So they would do the quote unquote easier ones first, and then they would get around to, to Jim Foley and Steven Sotloff and, Peter Kassig and, no one was talking about Kayla mueller at that time. And then the, the, the three British.

01:18:36:00

CHRIS CHUANG:

Prisoners threats the Foley was received about paying that ransom. Would you be able to talk about that?

01:18:42:00

PHIL BALBONI:

That happened on a conference call to which I was not, party? It was a conference call just for the families. So in in May of 2014, a meeting was held in Washington at the Atlantic media offices in which most of the hostage families, came to the meeting. I was I was there and, an outgrowth of that was a more collective approach to the government by the hostage families on the theory that there was strength in numbers and that, you know, that the government would maybe respond more effectively to a group of families into a single one. So one of the follow ups to that May meeting was, these calls with State Department, with FBI, and with the National Security Council. So I didn't hear the call. Of course I've heard about it. And, that this gentleman, you know, stated that, paying a ransom was illegal. We knew that we knew



everything about the policy, and we also knew that, it wouldn't have stopped us. It might have been psychologically, a hindrance, and it may have confused, things. And it certainly might have dissuaded people from contributing, to a ransom campaign. But the FBI had always made it clear, in our in Chuck, Ragini who had participated, in a previous payment, of a ransom to a terrorist organization not in the Middle East and not a part of the world. He knew that, whatever the stated policy was, that there was an ability to pay a ransom. So we always felt, maybe I can only speak for myself here. But. That. If. The. If someone had given us 3 million, \$5 million now, we would have found a way to, to pay that ransom. But the Kidnapers never responded to another email. I mean. That is as much as whatever the US government was saying. The fact is that the Islamic State stopped communicating with the Foley family and never picked up that communication until that fateful email of August 12th, 2014, a week before Jim was killed. And after the U.S. bombing, of Islamic State in Iraq, had commenced. That email, was full of rage at the United States and said that Jim would be executed as a result. And. And that was the first time since December of 2013 that they had communicated. So the email was still alive. It was still the same email address. They just had chosen never to communicate.

01:22:20:00

CHRIS CHUANG:

How did you hear about Jim's death? And, tell us about that.

01:22:24:00

PHIL BALBONI:



I was sitting right here at my desk. And someone on my staff came in and said that, they saw something on Twitter, about. Jim, being a video of Jim or a photograph of Jim didn't know what it was at that time. And, so I immediately went on Twitter and, you know, I, I saw the image with no famous image and everything happened, so fast. And phone calls were starting to come in and everybody was scrambling around trying to figure out what what to do. And. And then I was able to bring up the video and, and I watched the video. And, you know, it was. It was. I know it's hard to describe what it was. I was. I was in a state of shock for, you know, a few moments, or more. You know, seeing what they did to him and seeing how how brave Jim was right until the very end. And then knowing that, you know, we had to. We had to. We had to write a story about it and we had to deal with. You know, I had. No, I. I didn't think that this was going to become the enormous international story that it did. I mean, it was like being right on the crest of a wave before the wave breaks and just that one moment of, you know, kind of scary tranquility. When the horror of what's happened is clear, but you don't know what's going to follow it. And. And then, you know, the next 72 or more hours was, was just a maelstrom of, you know, talking to you know, people in the press from from everywhere. And then on Friday, going up to see the Foleys and at their home and being with their whole family. My wife came with me and. And then there was that, the memorial service? The first one on, on Sunday.

01:25:17:00

CHRIS CHUANG:

Was there ever a moment when you questioned whether you're going to watch the video or not? No.



01:25:25:00

PHIL BALBONI:

I wasn't. I mean, I. I have told people I told people immediately afterwards, don't, don't, you know, don't do it, don't don't look at it. It's too it's too awful. But as I said to someone, you know, having had this long journey, you know, with Jim, I couldn't not take the final steps and and see it through to the end. And I have not I have not watched it since, and I certainly will never, ever watch it again. And I haven't watched any of the others either. Because I know what Islamic State is up to. I don't know that. It was clear then, because nothing like this has ever happened before, you know, a public beheading in a propaganda video. They're incredibly clever, evil people. And they they knew exactly what they were doing. And, I don't know if if they wanted the outcome in terms of what it did to public policy and, and essentially forcing the Obama administration to come down on them and to, and to attack them directly. Maybe they wanted that, too. I mean, it's, they're they're that arrogant.

01:27:04:00

CHRIS CHUANG:

You said, you know what they're doing. Yeah. How how would you define that? Their strategy for recruiting.

01:27:13:00

PHIL BALBONI:

I think they're recruiting more than anything else. I mean, I think they're. They're communicating to the U.S. government or the British government, showing their defiance. And they're, that they're not going to play by the rules, by civilized, quote unquote, civilized rules. And then they go play by



their rules. But I think, they made a calculation that they needed to bring people to their cause and that their use of social media and video in particular, with, combined with social media. Would go all around the world and that there would be young men and young women, who would be attracted to it. As sick as that may seem. It's been successful. We know that. Thousands, tens of thousands of people have gone from 50, 60 different countries, all over Europe. United States, Canada, Asia, all over the Middle East to obviously, particularly North Africa. That people see the Islamic State as, a powerful force. You know, for jihad. And also I think, there is kind of a sick appeal about, about this to, particularly young. Young men who. Who want to participate in in violence. That's what it boils down to.

01:29:15:00

CHRIS CHUANG:

I guess I'm interested in how how you're having put on that public face. How that affected your grieving process.

01:29:25:00

PHIL BALBONI:

I. You know, I don't know if, if I've had a grieving process and I'm certainly aware of people have, you know, counsel me to, you know, seek some professional help or whatever. I'm not done that. I'm pretty strong person. I was in a war myself in Vietnam. And I, I think I have the ability to, you know, absorb and withstand a lot. This was different for sure than anything that I've experienced before. And. It's still, you know, gets to me. I get emotional about it at unexpected times. You know. I feel so bad for the family and, particularly John and Diane. I have a son. I can relate to what it would be like to, you



know, to lose my boy. He you just don't recover from something like that. So. You know, I feel terrible, and, I wish it turned out differently. I've certainly thought about if we had dismissed the, you know, the theory about the regime, whether. If we'd chased those jihadist groups harder. Whether we could have been more successful. I think it's possible. I wish we'd negotiated. I wish we'd been more aggressive. You know, pursuing the kidnapers, you know, peppered them with emails, you know, just made it impossible for them to ignore us. You know, whether we could have gotten them to negotiate. I wish we'd started raising money sooner, you know, so that the money was in hand. And because the experts said don't negotiate a specific deal unless you have the ability to fulfill that deal. Well, that. That would be the worst thing you can do. And. I mean, the foleys were we're a long way from raising the three, \$5 million that was needed. And, I mean. I have a lot of, evolving thoughts about this whole process and what the government didn't do that it. Should have done, what the European, governments did. I mean, if you just look at the facts, there are 15 lot, a lot Europeans hostages who are alive and with their families and friends and loved ones today. We have four dead Americans. And there's something terribly wrong with that picture. And I mean, Kayla mueller, I mean, I've stayed in touch with, her parents. And they wanted to raise a ransom also. They just they weren't able to do it. I think there was an opportunity for sure for Kayla to have been ransomed out. She should never have died. I don't know how she died. I don't know what the photographs show. I didn't ask the Muellers to tell me, but. At the very least, we should have been able to save her. And, I think it's. Just a giant failure that, you know, that that happened. I. I don't know about about the others, but I. We know that the Islamic State wanted to ransom. They did ransom. And, I, I think there's every reason to believe that there was a real possibility that the



American and British hostages could have been freed as well. And yet ransoming is very controversial. Many people, many politicians are are opposed to it. Support the US government policy. No ransom. You know, it's easy to hold that position when it's not your child who is facing the knife. And, my position is that the government can keep its no ransom public policy and just let things happen quietly behind the scenes. Do what is necessary. Don't get in the way. Help where you can. I wouldn't expect them to pay the ransom that has to be done privately. But there are ways that the government could be helpful in this regard. And. I mean, I guess we could debate at some point whether this really helps, motivate other terrorists to take other hostages. I don't think there's any proof that that is true. And I'm just looking at the results, and the results are bad.

01:35:48:00

CHRIS CHUANG:

What position does that put you in as a news editor? Sending or.

01:35:53:00

PHIL BALBONI:

This has made made life very difficult for us. You know, our editorial staff has become incredibly, cautious, almost risk averse. And, this is inevitably the right response, I guess. I mean, we we always need to be careful. And yet, while reporting is is always going to be dangerous, and we can't stop doing it. We don't intend to stop doing it. But we are struggling with how to do it, with a maximum amount of safety. But I think. Jim's death is a huge overhang for GlobalPost. I mean, who would be? It would be terrible. I don't even know how terrible. For us, as a young institution, if someone else fell into harm's



way, someone else was taken. Taken captive. I mean, it could be, it could be very damaging. I mean, I, you know, I did what I, what I felt was the right thing to try to save Jim and without worrying about globalPost or the financial consequences or anything, but. No. It's it would be very hard for us to continue to do this work and have another, another loss. God forbid. Or even another, capture. Even if we if you if we'd done everything by the book 100%. Right. So I, I think it's. It's operationally very difficult. We're still, you know, searching, you know, for the right way forward.

01:38:13:00

CHRIS CHUANG:

What would it mean to not have guys on the ground, you know, in these conflict zones?

01:38:19:00

PHIL BALBONI:

I think it would be just terrible. I mean. And there's so many stories. You know, there's a article writing that I, I, I read last night about, you know, soldiers raping women, 200 women in, in the Sudan. In Darfur. There's a conflict that's been going on for. You know, two decades. Still going on. Nobody there, no journalists there. That story was written on the basis of, you know, information from NGOs and United Nations. There are places where journalists need to be because terrible things are being done and. But they're not because it's too dangerous. And there's not many people doing this work as it is. There's darned few and I don't see a solution for that right at the moment. People aren't going to increase conflict reporting. We're about to launch an effort that that I started, right after Jim's death, I, I wanted to



make sure that we continued our conflict reporting. And, so we've created, a plan for a new team, correspondent and an editor and dedicated editor who would work here as correspondent in the field. And because it's so expensive to do. This, I went out and raised quite a bit of money, from private sources. And we're going to do a Kickstarter campaign, starting next Tuesday. To raise the balance of the funds. And this is, you know, our commitment to keep doing this kind of reporting. And. But it is expensive, and, and nobody wants to sponsor it or, you know, you you just have to find a way to do it financially. It's not easy. I believe that Jim's death and the horrific public spectacle that, the Islamic State made of it, led directly to the Obama administration deciding that it needed to wanted to, take this group on and wipe them out. And, I mean, I think that's an extraordinary turn of events. Just this week, president sent the new War Powers resolution to the Congress that's aimed directly at the Islamic State, as they operate in Iraq and in Syria. We don't know where this ends. How many, American military personnel will be involved? We have jets flying over Syria, bombing Islamic State pretty much every day. Fortunately, no one has been lost. But this is an enormous geopolitical issue. And and I think that it is a legitimate one. I think that this group poses a significant risk, obviously, to the region, to all the surrounding countries, Turkey. Iraq. To Jordan. To Lebanon, and beyond in, in the Middle East. But I think they also pose a national security risk to the United States and, and to other countries in the West, because this is a messianic, group with, big ambitions that is appealing to, unfortunately to young Muslims in many places. So I think we have no choice but to confront them, and try to defeat them.

01:42:54:00



CHRIS CHUANG:

What do you think motivated Jim to do what he did?

01:43:02:00

PHIL BALBONI:

I think Jim will really love the people. I think that was his main motivation. I think. I don't know this for a fact, but I think, the work he did in Afghanistan and Iraq was. Didn't touch his heart the way the work that he did in Libya, and Syria did, where he saw people struggling against an oppressive regime trying to be free of that regime and fighting and dying, for what they believed in. This is powerful and, I think he became interested in, Islam and I think, identified with those people in a very deep, personal way. And I think telling those stories to the world was a mission for him. And. I think. I feel strongly Jim did not, you know, lose his life in vain. I think he he was doing something noble. And I think his example, of caring so much about bringing light to, suffering, and people's struggle is, inspiring. And, I'm sure it will continue to inspire people for a long time to come.

01:44:56:00

CHRIS CHUANG:

How does it inspire the office of the Global Post?

01:45:00:00

PHIL BALBONI:

Well, it's it's, without question, the most important event in our, in our young history, and. I. This effort that I was just talking about, to carry on in the conflict, reporting, is the most important thing I think we can do immediately



to, you know, to stay. Stay true to the, you know, the sacrifice that that Jim made. And, I don't know exactly how to institutionalize that here. I mean, we're a relatively small team. People change, you know? I mean, they're mostly very young. So people who work for us, and they move on, you know, they come and they go, but. This certainly is deep in my heart and and well, for as long as you know I have anything to say about it, it was going to be an important part of our of our legacy and our future.

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