Newsgathering Safety and the Welfare of Freelancers

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Newsgathering Safety and the Welfare of Freelancers, a white paper by the Frontline Club

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Introduction

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The purpose of this paper has been to consider how news organisations and journalists who work in environments that are dangerous to them might further improve safety in newsgathering, with an emphasis on the wellbeing of the burgeoning international community of freelance contributors. It mainly focuses on conflict and most contributors work in television. I am very grateful them and the many more people: freelancers, editors, managers, trainers, safety advisors and insurers that have reviewed it.

There is a new restlessness amongst freelancers covering Syria who want news organisations to help them find better value insurance and appreciate their contribution more. As well as promoting a better understanding of how legal duty of care requirements affect journalism as well as journalists in danger, this paper seeks to suggest how this might be done.

I still think that it is remarkable the way in which so many enterprising and entrepreneurial men and women respond to even the slightest unsupported opportunity to seek a new future documenting the horrors of conflict.

The 'Arab Spring' delivered that opportunity to many more people than Afghan embedding did. It reminds me, as an Afghan hand of the 1980s, of the sudden accessibility of the 1990s Balkan wars and that the Frontline Club's most identifiable community remain those who started their careers in the Balkans, often as freelancers.

While today's freelancers deliver new energy into our trade, their physical and mental safety, covering particularly dangerous conflicts like Syria, worries us and tests the industry's legal duty of care responsibilities. It is essential that we consider how these policies can also affect the freelance opportunity and their right to report.

Duty of care considerations are complex, but beyond them I believe that we all have an individual responsibility to each other as subscribers to a common calling, joined in an undertaking to serve the public interest by providing news from hostile places.

We expect freelancers to take more responsibility for their own safety though. There has to be a universal minimum bar of entry into war journalism for those that travel to join it and that bar must include the maintenance of appropriate first aid skills. We have the right to expect that if we are injured and can be saved then our colleagues will have the skills to do so.

We should correct negative assumptions about freelancers. In truth their content is now indispensable. In fact, freelance operators have become, on the whole, more experienced in covering conflicts than their employed colleagues. As way of example, freelance content dominates international news coverage of Syria. Without freelancers, reports would be reliant on material from activists, fighters and other local observers.

Freelancers have a surprising potential to collaborate and organise themselves to improve their collective safety and there is long-established freelance practice in mentoring. Freelancers lack resources but the very many serious ones have no lack of integrity or commitment.

Reflecting on my twenty-five years as a freelance it is hard not to conclude two things. The freelance community is here to stay and there has been a general shortfall of leadership and guidance to them from the news industry. Freelancers have delivered relatively inexpensive material to news organisations over that time which triggers the question from them, to misquote Janet Jackson, "What have you done for us lately?"

It is surely unique to the culture of our industry that news organisations have not collaborated, for example, to define common standards in news safety. Doing so would encourage freelancers to meet those standards and it is reasonable to presume that this would therefore save lives.

I am sensitive to the observation that my generation of freelancers have left so little behind us to aid those independents working in Syria today. We can surely now collaborate to do more to unlock better insurance options and increase the availability of training to freelancers.

In 2012 the Frontline Club conducted a survey of freelance safety. For the results, see: http://www.frontlineclub.com/freelance_safety_survey/

Duty of Care

By David Loyn
Foreign Correspondent for the BBC

Duty of care, the legal responsibility that US and European news organisations have to care for their employees and contractors is a serious issue, sometimes undervalued by journalists pushing to get to a story. Apart from the human cost of death and injury if things go wrong, claims for damages and reputation damage to companies can have a substantial cost. Expectations on corporate liability have changed, and it is important to have an evidence trail – to show, if things go wrong, that training was up to date, and a full appreciation of risks was carried out. That has formalised risk assessment for journalists. But it is a relatively new field, beginning after the Bosnian conflict in the mid-1990s, and it is important to get the balance right. Since then it has become better understood that risk taking is an essential part of journalistic endeavour, and risk assessment has matured. The news merit of the story is part of the calculation. The important question at the heart of the process is 'What risks are worth taking?'

Nobody should be forced to take a risk they do not want to take, and this principle is now widely accepted. But less well understood is the need to have the ownership of risk in the right place. Second-guessing risk from the editorial desk rather than respecting decisions made on the ground tends towards excessive and unnecessary caution. Risk is a variable, and should be delegated to people in the field – particularly experienced people – during a fast-moving story. The editorial desk may own the overall plan, but it needs to be open to change. An experienced news editor said at one Frontline Club seminar that the delegation of risk to trained people on the ground is 'not opting out of duty of care, it's exercising it.'

There is a 'triangle' of ownership of risk in news organisations – involving safety advisers, news managers and journalists in the field – and the pendulum has swung between them over the years. When safety advisers first emerged in the late 1990s there was a strong view among many reporters and camera crews that safety advisers had taken too much authority, and overstepped the mark – exercising a veto rather than collaborating on decisions. There were major cultural barriers to overcome between safety advisers who were ex-soldiers, used to rigid command structures, and journalists, who put a premium on not being easy to order around.

The situation has improved over the years, as safety advisers have developed their role, and the better individuals are valued members of journalistic teams, protecting lives, and enabling some important high-risk journalism – particularly in places like Baghdad, and now in Syria. Those organisations which do not have safety advisers on staff try to hire them from a small list of people they know well to improve familiarity with people and with the job.

But challenges still remain, and the balance is now shifting so that both managers and journalists increasingly want safety advisers to take more control, which the best of them are resisting. At it's worst, this development has led to risk assessment being a box-ticking exercise, an insurance policy or comfort blanket for managers. And handing over control – outsourcing safety decisions to security advisers in an almost mystical belief in the quality of ex-soldiers – has led to a generation of journalists growing up who have had personal responsibility trained out of them. One way of restoring equilibrium would be to rename the hostile environment training course 'self-reliance training', encouraging those who go into the field to take responsibility for themselves. An advanced course could include camping.

The recommendations in this chapter concern all three groups, aiming to stabilise the relationship, improve specific training, and increase respect across the three corners of the triangle, to assist in informed decision-making for journalism involving risk. There is an added question about duty of care to freelancers and of course locals in the field and fixers, who are outside the 'triangle' but since the Arab Spring have provided an increasing proportion of footage used on screen.

Safety Advisers
Safety advisers need be part of the decision-making process, not exercising a veto, and they need to take more account of the experience of journalists and fixers they are working with. They need to adapt to local conditions, where the

safest course may be to travel in a low-profile thin-skinned local vehicle, rather than an armoured vehicle with armed guards. Journalists' relationship to hostile environments is in every way different to that of soldiers, and they are not on a zero-risk contract, unlike, for example, Foreign Office officials working in a private-security, close-protection bubble in Helmand. Understanding the need for flexibility is the most important part of the job description.

Safety advisers need to be taught journalistic ethics. Often they travel as 'producers' since revealing their true role would be unacceptable, but there have been a number of stories of safety advisers drawing unwelcome attention to themselves by, for example, obtrusively mapping terrain with GPS; handling, or in some extreme and shocking cases, firing weapons in the front line; and acting otherwise inappropriately. If they are suspected of being spies, this makes the whole team less safe, the opposite of their main task. There should be approved short courses for safety advisers, with a kite mark similar to what is being proposed for freelancers. UK military training is usually their only qualification for the job, but advising and escorting journalists is highly specialised.

Editors and Managers
Managing risk in conflicts and other environments hazardous to journalists is a complex task, different to all other management tasks. Editors and managers need to be able to assess whether those going into harm's way really consent to it, and understand the risks. It is essential that they take risk assessment seriously, and do not use it as a comfort blanket. There needs to be separate training for editors and managers. It might be possible to wrap this into the existing hostile environment training process, with managers signing off risk assessments during the course, but that would probably test the role-playing scenarios to destruction, and managers would not need the first aid components.

It would be better to construct a one- or two-day course to teach risk management. This would include:
- Understanding how to assess risks
- Establishing contingencies for when things go wrong, times for phone calls, backup plans and family details
- Basic introduction to kidnap negotiation
- Bereavement advice
- Best practice on trauma preparedness and aftercare
- Advice on the best forms of security, and help in deciding when to reduce security, and when not to send a security adviser with journalists.

Reporters, Producers, Photographers and Camera Crews
Journalists who go into the field like to quote Robert Capa's famous maxim: "If your pictures are not good enough, you are not close enough." Or as more pithily expressed by a veteran correspondent who is still reporting: "Safe journalism is not good journalism." This bravura has its place, and illustrates the cultural chasm – almost tribal – that can exist within organisations between those who choose to work in offices and those who have, in Kipling's phrase, "a lust to go abroad at the risk of their lives and discover news".

The risk assessment process is a rather imperfect way of bridging that chasm, and some journalists who go into conflict need to understand the weight of responsibility on the shoulders of those who have signed off their risk assessment forms. On both sides, there needs to be an awareness of trauma and its impact as a working journalist in the field. Principles of duty of care need to be introduced into hostile environment training courses. This is particularly important in broadcasting organisations sending large teams into the field. Producers need to learn to assess the relative capability of people in the team – drawing on the experience of those who have travelled a lot, and supporting others.

And there needs to be recognition on training courses of the differences between different news organisations. In major newspapers, foreign correspondents tend to demand, and be allowed, more autonomy than their broadcasting counterparts, and own decisions on safety; and in general they take more risks. This could be changing. Developments in safety, from the introduction of body armour to hostile environment courses, have tended to be led by broadcasting organisations, with newspapers following suit. Journalists need to consider whether they really need security teams. Safety advisers have complained that sometimes they are taken into the field as 'fashion accessories', when they are not needed. This is a particular concern on live shoots on domestic stories.

Freelancers
Broadcasting organisations have different policies towards using material shot by freelancers or non-journalists, especially those who have no safety training or insurance. Sky News commissions very little freelance material. Al Jazeera commissions a lot and has a good record in supporting those who carry out tough investigative journalism, for example with their series Africa Investigates. Channel 4 has the most developed system with the Film Fund (formerly 'Independents Fund'). It encourages freelancers from abroad to come to the newsroom and in the words of one senior executive, they "almost become part of the family . . . so they start to think about risk in the same way we do".

But there are problems over how much responsibility news organisations have to people who shoot material that they have not commissioned. The BBC has the hardest line on not using 'pictures bathed in blood' from freelancers, but this has not been consistently imposed on the deluge of UGC footage available since the start of the Arab Spring.

And few organisations want to ask questions of whether international news agencies were operating with the same ethical standards that newsrooms adopt for material they buy directly. News organisations take risks up to a certain level, and then pull back to rely on the agencies. There is a strong view that the London-based News Safety Group, through which INSI brings together executives from a number of news organisations, has been a valuable resource for sharing concerns and increasing safety, and that international agencies should be encouraged to participate.

The whole area of relationships with freelancers and non-journalists who send in pictures is constantly changing. The kite mark scheme for freelancers, described in a later chapter should be a valuable contribution, filling an important gap. Freelancers themselves are not often asked what they think about news industry duty of care policies. Almost all freelancers expect to be covered in the same way that members of staff are covered while actually commissioned by a news organisation. And of course this makes them reasonably subject to that news organisation's news safety policies for the period of their commission.

Freelancers have a much wider range of views though about the news industry's responsibilities for them when working on spec. Some think that it is remiss for a news organisation to express interest in their work, asking to 'see it when they get back', without investing in it. The prices offered for video or photographs when they get back infrequently covers the real cost of acquisition and the freelancer and their families can be left high and dry if they get injured, killed or kidnapped.

Other freelancers, though they may prefer commissions to on-spec work, will often be serving more than one outlet and will see no obstacle with varying levels of industry commitment. They are more focused on the income they generate from their material and will argue that if they were paid better for their material then they would be able to afford to enhance their field safety.

These freelancers guard their right to work on dangerous stories and though they welcome support from the news industry they do not want to see due of care concerns impede their ability to sell material. They consider that the news industry has a wider duty to journalism and should broadcast or print freelance material when it is journalistically right to do so, as they do with citizen mobile phone material, without the handwringing. They think that it is patronising for news organisations to discourage freelancers from taking risks and doing so misunderstands the contemporary democratic direction of journalistic practice.

Summing Up

Understanding of the issues of safety, duty of care and risk management has come a long way in the last twenty years. There can be no return, and most journalists now realise the value of training and safety advice. It is rare for a story to be stopped for safety reasons, and high-risk, frontline journalism continues to be done – most noticeably recently in Libya and Syria.

But this needs constant review, and change could be forced if only because the cost of safety is becoming prohibitive. As budgets are squeezed, foreign news is becoming harder to afford. Teams that are cutting out producers and picture editors find themselves having to take safety advisers, who are usually on a day rate far higher than anyone else in the field. The industry needs to consider whether much of this work, particularly where it does not involve firearms, could be done by producers given advanced safety, first aid and logistics training, rather than ex-soldiers.

Key points and specific recommendations:
  • Continue to ensure the best quality safety advisers, and make them part of a process, not exercising a veto
  • Develop training courses for safety advisers to ensure they are aware of journalistic practice and ethics, and encouraged to be imaginative about locally appropriate solutions that may not include armour
  • Focus hostile environment training courses better on the relative needs of journalists
  • Ensure that duty of care is taught on hostile environment training courses so that journalists understand the burdens of responsibility
  • Ensure that safety advisers only go out on trips when absolutely needed – not as comfort blanket to managers or 'fashion accessories' for journalists
  • Encourage the INSI's News Safety Group to continue
  • Managers need training to assess risks. Should they come to the hostile environment training course for the last night to oversee the risk assessment and scenarios through the last day?
  • Develop training courses for producers to take on some roles currently filled by safety advisers.
  • Be aware of trauma and its impact as a working journalist in the field, and the work done by organisations such as the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, dedicated to news reporting on violence and conflict.
  • Work with emerging freelancer groups to refine commissioning practice.

The Freelance Reality

By Aris Roussinos, Ayman Oghanna & Emma Beals
Freelance Journalists

Ongoing economic decline, the constantly evolving face of traditional news media and increasing security concerns have diminished high quality news coverage. Important stories worthy of the focused attention of news organisations are not getting the coverage they warrant. As staff journalists' budgets and even their jobs are been slashed, an increasing amount of news coverage is coming from professional freelance journalists. This is the reality of today's news environment and it is not going to change.

The Arab Spring has seen the Middle East and North Africa play host to many, often young, freelancers learning the craft of conflict reporting through a trial by fire. Free of the restrictions of the embedded reporting trends of the Afghan and Iraqi wars, freelance foreign and conflict reporting is, as it was in Kosovo and Chechnya before, both possible and desirable.

In an era where long-term professional assignments are virtually non-existent, freelancing is both a legitimate career choice and is now an essential part of international newsgathering. However, freelancers are finding themselves forced to operate in an arena without financial, logistical and institutional support. Many editors view freelancers as reckless or unprofessional because they lack the safety nets of security advisers, training and high-risk teams that staff journalists enjoy.

This has led to two clear trends in newsgathering: The first, as demonstrated by a number of major newspapers in regards to Syria, is simply not to buy any freelance content at all. Without the resource to cover the conflict in-house the quality of content decreases and the audience is poorer for it. There is little more disheartening than reports that facts cannot be verified because journalists are restricted from entering Syria when, in fact, it is the outlet itself and its restriction on freelance journalists and the coverage they secure, that is the cause.

The second trend is for news editors not to commission content from freelancers in advance but to make it clear that good conflict material will be viewed eagerly with an eye to purchase upon the freelancer's return, offering the tenuous promise of publishing once they are out of danger. For the news editor back in London, New York, Paris etc, this is by far the safest option: if the content is good, it can be bought cheaply, as freelancers have relatively little negotiating power, without paying for the security and insurance overheads that the same work would require if produced by staffers. If the journalist is killed, wounded or kidnapped, the news organisation can wash their hands of the whole affair, claiming no liability.

Neither trend works to the freelancer's advantage. By not buying freelance content at all, news editors make freelance journalism impossible, shutting out freelance journalists from their audience and market. While a policy of refusing to commission freelancers in advance is seen by many freelances as a grave form of exploitation. Few freelances approve of either.

Professional freelancers are highly motivated and keenly aware of the risks involved in their work. To compete they need to go in earlier, stay longer and get closer to the action. Freelancing in conflict is often lonely and normally difficult, but its journalistic value is rarely challenged. Yet in order to work safely in the field, freelancers need more support and engagement. They need body armour, trauma kits, insurance and medical and hostile environment training. These are all expensive commodities and it is rarely possible to fund them from sales to the news industry as the rates that freelancers are paid for their material infrequently reflect the costs of acquisition.

There is a new hunger within the freelance community, born of the extraordinary dangers and difficulties on stories like Syria, to work together to take their collective security more seriously. There are ongoing discussions to develop a body for freelancers, run by freelancers, that can better articulate freelance concerns while promoting best freelance practice. With it will come an opportunity for news organisations to better address freelance concerns and reflect a better regard for those journalists now actually gathering the news from conflicts.

Digital Security

By Andrew Ford Lyons
Online Producer for the Rory Peck Trust

Some Background

There is a risky disconnect in how we currently tackle digital security, separating it from a news gatherer's physical safety. But they are both parts of the same equation, especially for those working in regions with a hostile government and/or groups seeking to limit information about their activities. Here we are not talking about censorship, or blocking access to information, but the use of technology to identify, track and target journalists, in various - often brutal - ways.

Neither news organisations nor freelancers are giving enough attention to digital security. The lack of attention to digital security is usually in the details, and often happens on the part of both the freelance journalist and the news organisation with which they are contracted to work. Both parties need to up their game and take responsibility. For the news organisation there is a reputational risk in not practising a digital duty of care, and a greater risk of information winding up in the wrong hands that could put not only one journalist at risk, but also jeopardise her or his contacts, colleagues and entire news gathering projects. For the freelancer working in the field, and especially for those living in the regions in which they work, the risk is far more immediate, and severe.

Online tracking is ubiquitous. Its foremost purpose is marketing. For anyone interested in seeing how their online use is being tracked I'd invite them to try out Collusion tracking.[1] One reporter using this browser plug-in logged 105 companies tracking his Internet use over a thirty-six-hour period.[2] While this kind of intrusion may seem relatively benign, these are the same technologies that are being extrapolated for criminal purposes, and by governments and hostile groups to monitor and target those whom they perceive as threats.[3]

Let's take hacking, first. In 2012 the following massive data thefts took place:
- LinkedIn: 6.5 million passwords stolen
- Yahoo: 400,000 passwords stolen
- Globalpayments: 1.5 million customer credit card numbers and PINs exposed
- Iran: 3 million Iranian bank customers debit accounts and PINs stolen.[4]

These examples show how random hacking can put people at risk in a more bulk rate fashion. But let's turn to the more Orwellian prospects of digital intrusion that can have a direct impact on journalists, whether they're a freelance blogger or BBC correspondent. I refer to Net Delusion author Evgeny Morozov talking about dissidents.[5] He could be referring to anyone seen as a threat:

The shift of communications into the digital realm solves many of the problems that plagued surveillance in the analog age. Digital surveillance is much cheaper: Storage space is infinite, equipment retails for next to nothing, and digital technology allows doing more with less. Moreover, there is no need to read every single word in an email to identify its most interesting parts; one can simply search for certain keywords – 'democracy', 'opposition', 'human rights', or simply the names of the country's opposition leaders – and focus only on particular segments of the conversation. Digital bugs were also easier to conceal. While seasoned dissidents knew they constantly had to search their own apartments looking for the bug or, failing that, at least tighten their lips, knowing that the secret police was listening, this is rarely an option with digital surveillance. How do you know that someone else is reading your email?

How does this happen? There are many routes, but one of the most invasive spy programs used by authoritarian regimes in countries where news gatherers regularly put their lives on the line comes from UK. FinSpy and FinFisher,[6] exported by the British firm, Gamma International, is a suite of spyware tools used by governments in Bahrain, Egypt, Nigeria and elsewhere.[7] It can copy and transmit all communication from an infected machine. Gamma International is now under government scrutiny for violating export laws by doing business with brutal regimes, but it is just one example of similar types of spyware on the market.

Freelancers and those who employ them, have a significant reason to be worried. If hostile governments or groups can find you, they can attack you. As Reporters Without Borders states: "If war reporters care about their physical safety, they take a helmet and bullet-proof vest when they venture into the field. Similarly, all journalists should equip themselves with a 'digital survival kit' if they are exchanging sensitive information online or storing it on a computer or mobile phone."[8] News organisations have a role to play here in both advocating for and supporting best practices.

The good news is that the technology does exist to ward off threats and provide journalists with greater security during the course of their work. The bad news is that people tend to adopt the technology without the appropriate accompanying strategies and habits that make it effective. This is an area where both news gatherers and news organisations can partner to create a better digital eco system for secure communication.

The Difficulties

The various methods and software for digital surveillance threats are impossible to list in total. The problems are varied and change as fast as the technology itself. There is no one foolproof method for security. Human behaviour is another complicating factor. Last year, a Freedom House survey on digital security threats to journalists in Mexico found the following:
- More than half of the survey respondents have little to no experience using tools to safely store and erase documents
- Fifty percent of survey participants mix personal and professional information on Facebook and Twitter, which can make their identity public.[9]

People expose themselves in ways of which they are not even aware. It is not just about protecting one's self, but sources as well: "The problem isn't that journalists aren't aware of the necessity of protecting sources. It's that the majority of journalists don't understand the gravity of cyber threats, and that everything they do online can be traced to the real world."[10]

To drive that point home - in 2011 the severed head of a Mexican editor, who had used social media to report on organised crime, was found alongside a computer, mouse, cables, headphones and speakers.[11] That sent a message as succinct as any Twitter tweet could be. We have seen examples in China,[12] Colombia[13] and elsewhere about how journalists have found out (the scary way) that they're being watched:

They were able to hack into the computer and remotely access my Facebook account, printing out a transcript of a private conversation. Then they told me who I'd been talking to over the past week and who was on my contacts list. They'd hacked into my phone. When they first told me they could hack into computers and phones, I didn't believe them. So they showed me.

- 'Colin', a Northern Ireland investigative journalist[14]

The sense of insecurity - creating a sort of panopticon culture of fear - makes it harder for news gatherers to do their work as well as protect their safety. Sources can be more reticent to communicate if they are concerned that the journalist may be tracked. In Syria, digital spying has been a major tool of both sides, with the government having particularly advanced methods courtesy of technology bought from German firms.[15] Laws around the sale of this kind of technology are not yet clear.

Given our problems (user behaviour, evolving technological threats, and the difficult to predict sources of threats), news gathers and media organisations must establish reliable kits, training and the infrastructure to deal with threats. It should be based around the simple concept: never assume security.

1   Collusion: a Firefox browser add-on created by Mozilla which graphically displays data gathering services monitoring your internet activity: http://www.mozilla.org/en-US/collusion/
2   Alexis C. Madrigal, "I'm Being Followed: How Google—and 104 Other Companies—Are Tracking Me on the Web," *The Atlantic*, February 29, 2012, http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/02/im-being-followed-how-google-151-and-104-other-companies-151-are-tracking-me-on-the-web/253758/
3   "The Spyfiles," *Wikileaks,* accessed May 03, 2013, http://wikileaks.org/the-spyfiles.html
4   Sean Valant, "1984 in 2013: Privacy & The Internet," *Gator Crossing*, April 23, 2013, http://blog.hostgator.com/2013/04/23/1984-in-2013-privacy-the-internet
5   Evgeny Morozov, *The Net Delusion: How Not to Liberate the World* (London: Penguin, 2012), p. 186
6   FinFisher, IT Intrusion by Gamma International UK Ltd., accessed May 02, 2013, http://www.finfisher.com/FinFisher/en/index.php
7   Morgan Marquis-Boire, *For Their Eyes Only, The commercialisation of digital spying*, Citizen Lab, May 1, 2013, https://citizenlab.org/storage/finfisher/final/fortheireyesonly.pdf

8   *The Enemies of Internet - Special Edition: Surveillance*, a report by Reporters Without Borders, March 12, 2013
9   Jorge Luis Sierra, *Digital and Mobile Security for Mexican Journalists and Bloggers*, a report by Freedom House, February 2013
10   Sonia Paul, "The Scary Implications of Digital Espionage for Journalists," *Global Newsroom*, April 8, 2013, http://globalnewsroom.org/the-scary-implications-of-digital-espionage-for-journalists/
11   "Maria Elizabeth Macías Castro," Committee to Protect Journalists, accessed May 03, 2013, http://www.cpj.org/killed/2011/maria-elizabeth-macias-castro.php
12   Dan Nosowitz, "Google's Sergey Brin Talks Hacking: Chinese Human Rights Activists Targeted," *Fast Company*, accessed May 07, 2013, http://www.fastcompany.com/1562186/googles-sergey-brin-talks-hacking-chinese-human-rights-activists-targeted
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14   Lyra McKee, "Online security for journalists: Never assume you're secure," *Online Journalism Blog*, February 6, 2013, http://onlinejournalismblog.com/2013/02/06/online-security-for-journalists-never-assume-youre-secure/
15   Sven Pöhle, "German surveillance is used against dissidents," *Deutsche Welle*, April 23, 2013, http://www.dw.de/german-surveillance-is-used-against-dissidents/a-16765104

A Way Forward

What follows are ideas that news gatherers and the places that employ them can adopt when dealing with high-risk areas. It must include a mix of technology and behaviour training, and also a way of recording threats experienced. Freelancers must take more responsibility for their own safety and that of their sources. News organisations need to make sure they include and maintain a 'digital duty of care' component in contracting journalists to work in high-risk places.

1. Establish a collaborative, digital security threat database that identifies trends and experiences taking place in different countries and regions. This is a potentially huge project that would require multi-organisation support and funding from the private sector. It would need to be administered by a coalition of non-profits and pull in data from multiple sources.

2. Provide secure methods for news gatherers to submit material. Those employing news gatherers should make sure that the means for submission from dangerous locations are as secure as possible, using strong encryption and methods to obscure the origin of the material during transit.

3. Support peer-reviewed, vetted and/or open source digital security projects. Open source projects allow for greater scrutiny and more rapid development of important features and bug fixes. There are some cases where software is not entirely in the open source domain, but can be substantially vetted to prove that it provides the security it claims. It is not enough to simply trust what the program says it can do.

4. Run Tor Project relays to improve the system.[16] Relays help one of the most common and affordable secure proxy systems operate faster and more securely. The more relays that exist, the faster people can use it and the more random the connections become. This helps minimise risk.

5. Do not allow work over insecure systems. Establish agreed upon means to communicate ahead of time and stick to it. In safety policies, it should be pointed out that journalists and sources should not rely on inherently insecure systems such as Facebook messaging or other social or non-encrypted methods. They should keep track of services with particularly poor records when it comes to government intrusion and avoid them, and likewise, maintain a list of preferred systems and providers that defend privacy rights of their users.[17]

6. Provide pre-configured technology and guidance about it. Some of these could include:
   i. Generic-looking USB sticks with the Tor Browser Bundle or Tails operating systems,[18,19]
   ii. Mobiles with security enhanced features such as those from the Guardian Project,[20] and with other features that make tracking and identification easier disabled
   iii. Devices with encrypted, invisible hard drive partitions
   iv. Software that removes author information from files.

7. Support organisations such as the Rory Peck Trust, CPJ and Reporters Without Borders. Groups that monitor Internet surveillance, offer training bursaries and educational materials provide the journalist's lifeline. With resources and funding, digital security preparedness can grow throughout the entire community of news gatherers, creating better safety for themselves, their sources and employers.

8. Maintain a roster of approved trainers based upon agreed criteria. Among other things, this should include:
   i. Those who have worked with journalists and digital security
   ii. Trainers familiar with the region in which their training subjects will be working and the individual issues they'll face
   iii. An ability to explain technical concepts in everyday language
   iv. An understanding of the ethos and ethics of journalism and support the aims of a free press
   v. Familiarity with best practices for handling laptops and mobiles.

9. News organisations should advocate for better policy on commercial exports of weaponised software. It is in everyone's interests to have export controls restricting the sale of surveillance technologies to repressive regimes, and transparency about what technology is being sold abroad and used domestically.

We should be realistic about the situation: There is no such thing as an unmonitored phone or computer. Having a mobile phone in your pocket is like walking around with a tracking device. Knowing simple tactics, such as how and when to switch SIM cards and phones, or how to identify a legitimate download and tell it apart from a potentially damaging one is for every journalist to have down. News outlets can help through supporting organisations working for freelancers and all journalists, and also help in providing the training and awareness of these issues. Working together on this can create a safer environment for reporting, increased safety and security, confidence among sources, and ultimately better coverage.

Freelancers who operate alone with no back-up, or 'Operations Room' behind them should be encouraged to use trackers such as Spot Tracker: http://www.findmespot.eu/en/index.php?cid=102
Devices cost @ $180 and service plans @ €100 for a year's cover. Trackers are proving invaluable in Syria where more journalists are being kidnapped/abducted.
See the Frontline Club's top tips for secure mobile communications: http://www.frontlineclub.com/top-14-tips-for-secure-mobile-communications

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Safety Training for Freelancers

By Simon Marr
Head of High Risk for the BBC

The Context

We know only too well how many of our friends and colleagues have lost their lives in the course of their media work. The roll call of the dead is a living testament to their, and our, desire to bear witness to the effects of war, instability, conflict, poverty, inequality, lawlessness and banditry around the world. Uncovering, understanding and communicating the facts at the centre of the most challenging stories, in the most difficult environments, is a key tenet of our journalistic principles. Yet journalism of this kind cannot come without risk. With the rapid expansion of the information domain, and the critical role that media and information now play in shaping perceptions in 'wars amongst the people', reporting from today's conflict zones remains a highly dangerous and difficult job. It requires risks to be understood but it requires risks to be invariably taken. Sometimes risk-taking pays off. But sometimes it does not, and another person perishes. Sometimes this is simply unavoidable. But there are occasions when a lack of experience and a lack of appreciation of the environment combine with deadly results.

Media organisations face a dilemma. They want compelling, challenging and, of course, competitive content to place before a reader or viewer, but they do not want their people dying in pursuit of these stories. Moreover they are legally bound by national health and safety legislation, at the heart of which is the requirement to provide a safe working environment for staff. The law expects employers to take 'reasonable' actions to recognise and mitigate the risks to their staff. To expect that a war zone can be anything other than a war zone, with all its inherent, hostile and harmful facets, is facile. Under these circumstances, how does a media organisation discharge its legal obligations and provide a reasonable duty of care? Put very simply, it must identify and assess the spectrum of risks that its staff are likely to face when working in a 'hostile environment'. It must then give its staff the tools to recognise and mitigate these risks on the ground. It must put appropriate levels of personal and corporate insurance in place. It must take judgements on the risks-versus-reward equation related to its activities in such challenging environments. And it must not pressure individuals to undertake activities of this sort against their will.

Training for media workers who deploy to, or who live, in hostile environments is an acknowledged and well-tested component through which a media organisation can discharge its corporate liability for duty of care. The aim of the training

is to expose individuals to the possible risks that they may face in a hostile environment and to give them an understanding of the skills, techniques and practical measures that may mitigate risk, thus enabling them to do their job more safely. Training is, of course, only a means to an end and it is but one part of a risk mitigation system that takes a holistic, but pragmatic approach to preparing, sustaining and recovering people for work in these most challenging environments.

The training prepares individuals to do their job more safely, but it does not remove the burden of individual responsibility for one's actions. It comes with an expectation that a trained member of staff will not take (and is not expected to take) unnecessary or unacceptable risks that put lives in danger. A media organisation that has such a training regime can take greater confidence in knowing that its compelling, challenging and competitive content has been collected, packaged and delivered in as responsible a manner as possible.

The Problem

There are two issues for the freelance community when the subject of training comes up. The first is practical and the second is moral. Firstly training comes at a price. Whilst a large media organisation has the ability, and a responsibility, to invest in a training regime for its people, the costs of training for hostile environments are often a barrier to a freelancer. Of course, a lack of formal training does not stop a freelancer from travelling to a hostile environment and getting a story. But it will stop another organisation from buying the story, because the freelancer is unable to point to anything other than his or her own experience as evidence that the story was gathered in a responsible manner; and that might not be sufficient for corporate liability. And it may stop other organisations from commissioning freelancers in the first place, because, and this might be despite extensive experience, they cannot demonstrate any formal training that has prepared them for deployments to hostile environments. Organisations are then faced with a choice: commission the freelancer and ignore the duty of care requirements; train them at their own expense; or find a freelancer who has some sort of formal hostile environment training.

Freelancers have been, and will continue to be, a critical part of the media industry. For some, freelancing may be the apprenticeship that sets them up for employment within an established media organisation. For some, freelancing may be the only way that they can pursue their journalistic calling. And for others, freelancing might be both a work and lifestyle choice where the relative freedoms of salaried commission work are not hidebound by the norms of an established media organisation. Regardless of reason, what is clear is that the media industry needs freelancers' product. There is a symbiotic relationship that then places a moral responsibility on the industry to enable freelancers to opt into formal training for hostile environments, helping them do their job in as safe and as responsible a way as possible.

There is therefore a need to determine how to provide freelancers with affordable and credible training for hostile environments that both gives the individual the necessary skill set to survive and that provides a prospective employer with an assurance that the individual can be commissioned within the broad bounds of a corporate duty of care construct.

Hostile Environment Training and First Aid Courses

Hostile environment training and first aid courses have evolved considerably over the last ten to fifteen years. It is being delivered by various competing commercial companies to the media industry and other commercial and non-commercial organisations, whose staff are required to operate in challenging environments. Instructors will normally have security or paramedic backgrounds on which to base their expertise. The best training not only uses specialist instructors with credible and recent operational experience, but also ensures that it is focussed clearly on understanding what a media worker is trying to achieve on the ground, and how a media worker needs to operate. At its core the training is usually a suite of security and safety modules that expose the trainee to a spectrum of likely threats and appropriate responses (ranging from, for example, road traffic accidents, crowds, security forces' and criminal checkpoints, reaction to artillery fire and small arms fire, to the mental and physical stresses of detention) and First Aid modules (ranging from, for example, the application of basic, self-help for travel sickness, to life-saving techniques for trauma casualties). Hostile environment training courses might last for anywhere between three to five days. Media organisations will often invest in a longer basic course for novices and then refresh this training very two to three years, recognising that threats in a hostile environment evolve and mutate over time and that new methods of applying First Aid are developed.

But despite this plethora of training courses and training providers, there is no acknowledged industry standard against which providers can be measured. This is unlikely to change in the short to medium term. This does mean that though

training syllabi may look broadly comparable, there is a range to how well they are delivered and received. There is a broad consensus that the most credible training is usually based on a model of 'explanation, demonstration and imitation', which will include a balance between classroom-based teaching and hands-on practice in simulated scenarios.

The Issues

There are four inter-connected issues that need to be addressed for those freelancers who wish to demonstrate a commitment to safety and responsibility through formal training:

1. Consensus on appropriate and available commercial hostile environment training courses that meet the needs of the freelancer and the industry
2. The institutionalisation of a hostile environment training regime for freelancers that enables individuals to develop a portfolio of skills and qualifications that retain an agreed currency
3. Consensus on the means whereby freelancers demonstrate the validity of his or her hostile environment training in terms of currency (in date qualification) and in terms of competency (the standard of training)
4. Affordable and accessible hostile environment training for freelancers.

The Propositions

Consensus on Appropriate Hostile Environment Training Courses
Consensus on what looks like an appropriate hostile environment training course for freelancers will require pragmatism. All media organisations have their own preferred training supplier and hostile environment training course. That selection is driven by what is seen to be the optimal balance between the training benefits for staff, and value for money. Put simply, some organisations can afford to invest more in training than others – it comes down to the culture of the organisation, the volume of its training requirement and how it chooses to interpret and discharge its legal obligations.

Given the lack of an industry standard and subsequent wide choice (and the commercial interests at stake), it seems unrealistic that a single commercial training provider should have, or indeed could cope with, a monopoly of hostile environment training for freelancers. The most important step must therefore be for the industry to agree a list of bona fide hostile environment training commercial providers, whose course syllabi meet a minimum acceptable level of training assurance.

> **Proposition 1:** In order for a freelancer to demonstrate an intent and a capability to gain and retain a recognisable hostile environment training qualification, training must be focussed at two levels. There should be a basic course which is structured and delivered for those without previous experience of working in a hostile environment. Additionally there should be a regular refresher course (every three years) either for those who have already completed a basic course, or for those who are able to demonstrate sufficient relevant and credible experience. Both courses would be delivered by a commercial training provider. The decision as to whether an individual has sufficient experience to enter directly through a refresher course would need to be overseen by an industry body representing the interests of freelancers.

> **Proposition 2:** The leading UK-based broadcast media organisations (BBC, ITN, Sky) should produce a list of preferred hostile environment training commercial suppliers – this should not be interpreted as 'mother (auntie!) knows best', but rather it places the onus on those who commission to agree to the minimum required standards that will enable a trained freelancer to get a commission. The list should seek to provide a balance of choice, quality (based on best practice), affordability and geographical dispersion. The list needs to be jointly owned by those who commission and those who are commissioned; it should be advertised through a range of industry representatives, for example the Frontline Club, INSI, CPJ and the Rory Peck Trust. The list (and associated policy implications for the commissioning organisations) should be reviewed on an annual basis.

Institutionalising Hostile Environment Training for Freelancers
It follows that if the industry has reached consensus on the shape, nature and type of hostile environment training for freelancers, it agrees that a demonstrable current and agreed hostile environment training qualification will enable the purchase of freelance material with an assurance that the material has been gathered as safely and as responsibly as possible. Secondly such a recognised and agreed qualification should allow media organisations to commission freelancers with an assurance that the individual has a minimum standard of skills sufficient for operating in a hostile environment. This does not preclude individual organisations in investing further in individuals by funding further hostile environment training for individuals if the organisation chooses so to do, particularly if that individual is going to work regularly for that organisation. Thirdly, and most importantly, there needs to be a focussed scheme that explains what has been put in place for freelancers, what benefits it delivers and how individuals can be participants.

> **Proposition 3:** The wider media industry agrees to purchase content from or commission freelancers who can demonstrate an in-date hostile environment training qualification that has been gained by attendance at either a basic or refresher hostile environment training course delivered by a training provider on the agreed list in Proposition 2. However, freelancers must be aware that sale of materials in no way encourages further

commission, unless explicitly expressed

Proposition 4: The freelance community would benefit from leadership, which, with the support of the wider media industry, could own, champion and oversee a Freelance Hostile environment training Scheme (FHS). This would include, amongst other aspects, the advertising of the scheme throughout the freelance community, liaison with the identified training providers, the prioritisation where necessary of individuals to courses (on the basis that demand may outstrip supply), arbitration over the required levels of training based on an assessment of an individual's experience, and the maintenance of a database of qualified freelancers that can be accessed, as necessary, by media organisations. The database would in effect provide freelancers with an eTraining Passport or Freelance Kite Mark that the news industry would agree to recognise.

Making Training Affordable and Accessible
There is already a model through which some freelancers receive affordable and accessible training. Some hostile environment training providers will deliver training for freelancers at cost, where that individual's costs are being met with grants from charitable institutions like the Rory Peck Trust, and where there is space on courses. FHS should build on this foundation. It will require the support and altruism of the hostile environment training providers. Other sources of charitable funding should be identified and/or developed that will subsidise hostile environment training for freelancers.

Proposition 5: Those commercial hostile environment training providers (whose courses are identified in Proposition 2) should be approached by the FHS to commit to each training twenty freelancers on both a basic and a refresher course at cost. On a working assumption that there could be ten such suppliers, FHS should aim for an annual training audience of up to four hundred freelancers (split equitably between a basic and a refresher course).

Proposition 6: A freelance organisational body, through its FHS, should identify where and how it can support fund raising for Rory Peck and other media charities to increase the level of charitable resource that can be used to offset the costs incurred by individuals.

Proposition 7: An FHS initiative and organisational body should publish deep e-learning tools, open university-style, and kite-marked, to support career-long freelance study of best practice.

Other Considerations

Personal Protective Equipment
A key component of risk mitigation for media workers in hostile environments is the provision of certain items of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – body armour and helmets. It is not the place of this paper to argue the benefits or otherwise of this equipment. It is not a panacea but neither is it a worthless fashion accessory. This paper lays out the means by which systems can be put in place that firstly demonstrate the commitment of freelancers to gathering content in as safe and as responsible manner as possible. The use of body armour and helmets in highly kinetic and challenging environments is but another means, and it may also save lives that would be otherwise unnecessarily lost. But again there are affordability and quality control issues for freelancers.

Proposition 8: As an integral part of the FHS, the freelance organisational body should examine the options for renting and/or selling standard PPE to those freelancers that opt into the scheme. This should also include the necessary advice on the quality and standards of PPE.

Safety Training at Journalism Schools
There is far more that can be done to highlight the wide spectrum of risks faced by journalists in the twenty-first century as part of journalism degree courses. There are a couple of nascent initiatives – for example, the University of Sheffield's Department of Journalism Studies and the Centre for Freedom of the Media are currently working with UNESCO to help develop journalism curricula for both undergraduate and postgraduate students that will include teaching and training on the safety of journalists, and raise student awareness of the increasing problem of attacks on journalists, which are often committed with impunity.

Proposition 9: Further work should be commissioned into how the basics and principles of hostile environment training can be invested into the curricula at journalism schools. For example basic security and first aid practices could be covered in a two-day module or extra courses could be run in holidays as an advancement of existing qualifications. This would be a natural follow on from the work being done by some universities already to introduce journalism students to trauma awareness, for example at the Media School at Bournemouth University in conjunction with the Dart Centre for Journalism and Trauma.

The Insurance Dilemma

By Colin Pereira
Head of High Risk for 1st Option Safety

Introduction
Freelancing has a long and respected tradition in journalism. Winston Churchill reported on the Boer War as a freelancer for the Morning Post. Ernest Hemingway freelanced from the front lines of the Spanish Civil War. Without such freelancers shining a light on these conflicts, they would have remained largely uncovered.

Today, freelance journalists continue to play a crucial role for any news gathering organisation. Freelancers offer news gatherers more opportunity to cover far-flung places and stories. They bolster the reach of a news company and keep them competitive, at a time when some organisations are reducing reporting budgets.

At any one time, a news organisation will have a significant number of contracted freelancers manning the desks and working on pre-agreed commissions. Organisations have similar duty of care obligations to contracted freelancers as they do to staff members and responsible companies ensure they are covered by insurance, professional indemnity and benefits.

'Speculative' freelancers live a more precarious existence. These are journalists who work without commission, approaching a news organisation with their footage already in the can and get paid on a case-by-case basis. Such freelancers traditionally thrive in conflict zones. The lucky ones can occasionally earn substantial fees, but there is no guarantee and generally little safety blanket.

However, in the last few years the increasing risk to journalists in the field (both staff and freelance) has forced news organisations to rethink when and why to send people into war zones. Freelancers covering conflicts have been particularly affected. News organisations are more aware of their legal and moral responsibilities when directly commissioning or more often, tacitly encouraging freelancers. Inexorably, this has led to changes in the commissioning process.

The days of commissioning editors not committing any money to a project upfront, but telling a freelancer "Go out and if you come back with something I will have a look" are on the way out.

Furthermore, news companies find themselves in a dilemma when it comes to purchasing copy or footage after it has been gathered and it is clear the freelancer has put himself/herself at great risk. If an organisation purchases copy or footage gathered dangerously and the freelancer does not even have insurance, are the news organisations encouraging bad practice?

Some organisations have felt morally obliged to take drastic steps. Following the death of Marie Colvin in Homs in 2012, The Sunday Times now refuses all photographs and copy of the Syrian conflict submitted by freelancers as they "do not wish to encourage freelancers to take exceptional risks". In a statement, The Sunday Times' parent company News International said to CBS: "The Sunday Times foreign desk does not believe that freelancers, many who have had no training and have no insurance or back up, are the best people to place on the front lines." The major UK broadsheets have revealed they back The Sunday Times' approach and all have initiated similar policies.

This stance has naturally caused controversy in the freelance community who have seen a source of income drying up. Many have also said the move is 'patronising' and it is up to the freelancer to make the decision whether to go to the war zone or not. However there is a general acknowledgement that there are a large number of freelancers operating without a safety blanket of any sorts.

The fate of Nigel Brennan, an Australian photographer kidnapped in Somalia in 2008 and held for fifteen months by pirates, sadly resonates with many freelancers who deploy with a similar modus operandi to Brennan. He had no insurance and his family had to negotiate and pay for his release. The experience reportedly left them $600,000 in debt.

It stands to reason that if news organisations are nervous about contracting freelancers because they are 'naked' of risk management practices, then freelancers need to adopt these practices if they want to win work. If freelancers are able to prove that they have the correct training, insurance and appropriate risk contingency planning to a similar standard of those of the news groups themselves, they are effectively addressing the stated reasons why some organisations are turning down freelance copy.

The Insurance Safety Blanket

Insurance should be a strong indication to a commissioner that a freelancer takes his/her safety seriously and is not recklessly plunging into a war zone.

News organisations should therefore be requesting and guiding freelancers to put the correct levels of insurance and professional indemnity in place. (This extends not just to freelancer operating in war zones, but all freelancers, but this paper is restricted to insurances for hostile environment deployments.) Freelancers ideally will have the following coverage:
  • Death and disablement or personal accident
  • Generally this is calculated at three times the individual's average salary over three years, or a pre agreed lump sum
  • Medical evacuation and repatriation including telephone assistance
  • Loss of earnings
  • Depending on the location, kidnap and ransom insurance may be considered
  • Although most freelancers are keen to insure their kit, it is important to note this is a personal decision and has no impact on safety. It should not be required by any news organisation.

Unfortunately however, for a freelancer getting the correct insurance is easier said than done.

The Cost

Insurance is notoriously expensive. It is probably fair to say that many freelancers are not currently traipsing around the hot spots of the world without insurance, because they want to or because they are ignorant to the need for insurance – most simply cannot afford it.

There are already insurance schemes available and brokers who are sympathetic to the freelance cause (see full list at the end of this chapter). Most freelancers have to take insurance out on a trip-by-trip basis. The length of trip and location to be visited all play a part in deciding the cost. A freelancer recently back from Syria revealed that her basic insurance package for a two-week trip came to £280. Others however, not satisfied with a basic package, can spend up to £1,000 for the same duration and location. Freelancers, who make multiple trips a year, can easily spend thousands of pounds in insurance.

Reporters Sans Frontiers currently runs a relatively affordable scheme (http://en.rsf.org/insurance-for-freelance-17-04-2007,21746). Even this scheme however, is beyond the reach of a lot of freelancers and since there is no obligation for them to be insured, many will go into the field without any coverage. Ultimately freelancers have a responsibility to themselves and their families to have the correct insurance. And in the long term, if news organisations begin to refuse to purchase any copy from a freelancer without the correct insurance, it will perhaps reduce the number of unprepared journalists on the battlefield. However, insisting on freelancers to have the correct insurance in place, will force many out of the market.

The Ideal

It is important to note that there is no such thing as cheap insurance for hostile environments. For professional freelancers working in danger zones, the best they can hope for is affordable insurance. But even providing freelancers with an affordable and accessible insurance scheme has been an elusive goal for many years.

There is perhaps a window of opportunity emerging. The insurance markets are currently extremely competitive and with brokers and underwriters keen to win new business, the appetite for launching a freelance insurance scheme is there. Such a scheme would be similar to one that issues travel insurance. Freelancers would need to visit a website and fill out an online form, with all the necessary personal details and description of insurance needs. An engine with pre-programmed algorithms behind the website would then generate a policy cost either on an annual or per trip basis and the freelancer would simply purchase the policy.

There remain however a number of hurdles. A vehicle to manage the administration of the scheme would have to be created, staffed and paid for. The engine generating the policies can cost up to £100,000 if not more and the money would have to be raised to purchase this engine.[1]

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1   The cost of the engines fluctuates depending on requirements and by the time the scheme become viable the cost may have

And most important of all, in order to generate realistic insurance polices the cost will ultimately be decided by the number of policies sold. To make the scheme work, the brokers consulted say they need to not only offset the start cost but also absorb potential loss. This means that, for this broker, by the five-year mark the scheme would need to be selling 5,000 polices a year at an average of £500.[2]

Therefore before any move is made to set up a scheme, the onus is on the freelance community to prove to the insurance markets and stakeholders that they are able to generate the level of sale required. Once a vehicle and scheme's feasibility is proven, the news organisations can drive numbers to the scheme by insisting that all freelancers they commission must have an insurance policy with the scheme or similar provision.

In the short term, freelancers are already trying to pool together to offer brokerages economies of scale sufficient to extract price concessions. However, at this stage the numbers remain small and any meaningful reduction in cost can only occur when large numbers of freelancers are involved. Expanding a policy to include freelancers or journalists who don't take significant risks would reduce the price but by seeing these others subsidise their risk-taking colleagues.

Summing Up

There is no doubt that freelancers continue to play an essential role in the journalism landscape. They allow news groups to retain a global reach at a competitive cost.

As the risks in hostile environments have increased and there is a growing awareness that commissioning or tacit encouragement of freelancers by news organisations carries responsibilities, news groups are being forced to reassess their relationship with freelancers. The parameters under which an organisation can engage a freelancer are being redefined. At the moment, the evidence points to a shrinkage of the use of freelancers in hostile environments and even if this is well intentioned, it will have consequences.

Most importantly, fewer journalists mean less scrutiny, and the policy may backfire on the news groups. Simple economics dictates that fewer freelancers will increase the cost of freelance copy, video and photography, which is not in the benefit of the news organisations.

If the reason behind the recent rejection of freelancer material is the belief that they are ill prepared and uninsured, the onus is on the freelancer to prove he/she is prepared adequately and to adopt better risk management practices. They will in all likelihood require the financial assistance and moral support of the news fraternity to achieve this.

Any attempt to provide freelancers with affordable insurance via a scheme, first requires the freelance community to demonstrate that they are able to generate the number of polices required to make such a scheme viable long term. Without this, the scheme would not survive and the seed cost would effectively have been wasted.

Once adequate numbers have been shown a concerted effort to introduce the mechanics of the scheme could be embarked upon.

The partnership between the freelancer and the news organisation has always been littered by difficulties. It is however an essential relationship. A world without reporters for hire is going to be a diminished one, with more ignorance and fewer held to account for their actions. It is in the benefit of all, that freelancers be enabled to continue their roles.

Both sides need to work harder to ensure this happens.

The Rory Peck Trust list of existing freelance insurance providers: http://www.rorypecktrust.org/freelamce-insurance

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        decreased substantially.
2   These figures are not exact, but are based on the expected level of payout currently exhibited by freelancer insurance
        policies.

Conclusion

By Richard Sambrook
Honorary President of International News Safety Institute

The news industry first started to take its safety responsibilities seriously during the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s. Equipment like helmets, flak jackets and armoured vehicles were piloted and introduced, sometimes even in the face of initial resistance from those they were designed to protect. Hostile environment training by experts was established, again in the face of some scepticism. And later, the need to recognise post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and offer support and counselling was established.

The broadcast industry in particular should take credit for making substantial progress in managing safety for journalists in the field. What is now common practise simply did not exist 20 years ago. However, while progress has undoubtedly been made we should recognise that anomalies remain. Circumstances change and it is the right time to debate again what is the appropriate response to the risks run by journalists and their teams in conflict zones and beyond. We have equipment, we have training, we have counselling – what next?

This paper identifies some of the issues that those in the industry, the freelance community and the organisations that support them, need to consider afresh.

The world has not got any safer. The current conflict in Syria – among the most dangerous most of us can remember – illustrates the challenge we face. It is unquestionably important that the world sees and hears what is happening in Syria. However, for professional news teams the risks are extreme.

Much has changed in 20 years. Technology is lighter and more flexible allowing reporting from anywhere in the world. It has allowed more people to report either as freelances, citizen journalists or simply eyewitnesses. The number of news outlets has grown online providing new opportunities to report – alongside a growth in online activism. However, the ubiquity of cameras, and the power of video, has also made those reporting in whatever capacity targets to a greater degree than ever.

Increased use of the Internet raises new issues of digital security which is just beginning to be recognised. A better understanding of the risks of digital operations and how to manage digital security is overdue. All news organisations need to take cyber monitoring and threats more seriously.

All of these changes call into question the training offered to journalists, duty of care responsibilities on organisations for those at risk, and the moral as well as managerial necessity to offer support to the freelance community.

So it should not be surprising that 20 years on from the first moves into improving safety in hostile environments there is a debate about whether what is now offered as standard industry practise is appropriate or whether it needs to adapt to the many changes running through the volatile business of newsgathering.

This paper sets out some considered thoughts from those actively involved in reporting from hostile environments and in particular seeks to strengthen the role and voice of the freelance community. This is to be welcomed. News organisations are relying on freelancers to a greater degree than in the past – a trend which seems certain to continue as western media contracts. Freelancers and the industry sometimes have a difficult and uneasy relationship. It is time to clarify responsibilities and roles in support of confident reporting. This encompasses training, clarity about duty of care,

and support for proper insurance provision. It is also time to review the model for hostile environment training and ask whether one size still fits all. Different training for different situations and roles, as David Loyn proposes, seems eminently sensible if it can be developed and afforded.

The establishing of recognised best practise standards is long overdue – and there is a role for industry – perhaps through its safety body INSI – to establish them. Developing and defining the role of safety advisors could certainly be part of that.

Safety management and our understanding of risk is not static. It has to develop and evolve as journalism, technology, and the world changes. It must be right for all stakeholders to review whether what is offered, and the way it is offered, needs to take another step forward. I believe it does – there is scope to further professionalise our approach and attitude to safety and in so doing offer greater support to those in the field, manage better the very real and sometimes heavy responsibilities that rest on news managers and strengthen the ability of independent media to report from the darkest corners of the world. This paper offers a considered and responsible start to that debate.

We share a common belief that telling the world about what is happening justifies the risks that have to be run. Mitigating those risks, and professionalising our approach to managing them, can only strengthen that mission.

As Marie Colvin memorably put it:

> "War reporting is still essentially the same – someone has to go there and see what is happening. You can't get that information without going to places where people are being shot at, and others are shooting at you. The real difficulty is having enough faith in humanity to believe that enough people be they government, military or the man on the street, will care when your file reaches the printed page, the website or the TV screen. We do have that faith because we believe we do make a difference."

FRONTLINE CLUB *London*