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From:

Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov> Saturday, June 20, 2009 1:31 PM

Sent: To:

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Subject:

Fw: (New York Times) Times Reporter Held by Taliban Escapes

Story is out. Richard called again to talk to you about it. Statement is being drafted for your review.

From: Diaz, Rafael

To: NEWS-Mahogany; NEWS-Pakistan; SSRAP\_StaffAssistants

Cc: SES-O\_Shift-II

Sent: Sat Jun 20 12:44:23 2009

Subject: (New York Times) Times Reporter Held by Taliban Escapes

June 21, 2009

## **Times Reporter Held by Taliban Escapes**

## By THE NEW YORK TIMES

A New York Times reporter who was kidnapped by the <u>Taliban</u> has escaped and made his way to freedom after more than seven months of captivity in the mountains of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

David Rohde, along with a local reporter, Tahir Ludin and their driver, Asadullah Mangal, were abducted outside of Kabul on Nov. 10 while Mr. Rohde was researching a book.

Mr. Rohde was part of the Times reporting team that won a <u>Pulitzer Prize</u> in May for coverage of Afghanistan and Pakistan last year.

Mr. Rohde told his wife, Kristen Mulvihill, that Mr. Ludin joined him late Friday night in climbing over the wall of a compound where they were being held in the North Waziristan region of Pakistan. They found a Pakistani army scout, who led them to a nearby army base, and on Saturday they were flown to the American <u>Bagram military base</u> in Afghanistan.

"They just walked over the wall of the compound," said Ms. Muvihill.

Mr. Mangal did not escape with the two other men.

The initial report was that Mr. Rohde was in good health, while Mr. Ludin injured his foot in the escape.

Until now, the kidnapping has been kept quiet by The Times and other media organizations out of concern for the men's safety.

"From the early days of this ordeal, the prevailing view among David's family, experts in kidnapping cases, officials of several governments and others we consulted was that going public could increase the danger to David and the other hostages. The kidnappers initially said as much," said Bill Keller, the executive editor of The Times. "We decided to respect that advice, as we have in other kidnapping cases, and a number of other news organizations that learned of David's plight have done the same. We are enormously grateful for their support."

Since the men were abducted, there has been sporadic communication from them and from the kidnappers.

Ms. Mulvihill expressed relief at the end of the ordeal and gratitude to the many people — official and unofficial — who offered information, advice and support.

"The family is so grateful to everyone who has helped — the New York Times, the U.S. government, all the others. Now we just hope to have a chance to reunite with him in peace," she said.

"We've been married nine months," Ms. Mulvihill added. "And seven of those, David has been in captivity."

Both Mr. Keller and Mr. Rohde's family declined to discuss details of the efforts to free the captives, except to say that no ransom money was paid and no Taliban or other prisoners were released.

"Kidnapping, tragically, is a flourishing industry in much of the world," Mr. Keller said. "As other victims have told us, discussing your strategy just offers guidance for future kidnappers."

Mr. Rohde, 41, had traveled to Kabul in early November to work on a book about the history of American involvement in Afghanistan when he was invited to interview a Taliban commander. Before setting out, Mr. Rohde instructed The Times's bureau in Kabul on whom to notify if he did not return. He also indicated that he believed the interview was important and that he would be all right.

Mr. Rohde joined The Times staff in 1996 after winning a Pulitzer Prize in international reporting for documenting the massacre of Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica.

Rafael Diaz **Operations Specialist State Department Operations Center** S/ES-O (202)647-1512