



# Dateline: Afghanistan

Reporting The Forgotten War

## Guidebook



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## **TERMINOLOGY** **(in relation to DATELINE)**

Staff correspondent: full employee

Freelance: often interchanged with stringer, but implies an open field.

Stringer: often interchanged with freelance, but implies ties or “string” to an outlet.

Contract: in reference to photojournalists with minimum guarantee to magazine.

Independent: unattached.

Local Hire: picked up locally, as Amir Shah.

Deadline: due date.

Dateline: place where story was REPORTED, as opposed to written.

Byline: author or story or photo.

Pool vs. Embed: pool is representative group whereas embed is journalist inserted into military unit.

Day Rate: generally what photojournalists make.

Fixer vs. Minder: fixer is generally local hire but minder is government-assigned “assistant.”

Dispatch: the stories you file. Term made famous in Vietnam.

Retainer: monthly guarantee.

Firemen: journalists assigned to cover breaking story.

Parachutist: same thing.

Logs: system to check how an agency performs against competition.

Rockets: message from central office that the competition is ahead.

Specialist vs. generalist: Journalist focusing, for example, on vaccines/medicine work as opposed to journalist on general assignment.

Read –back: what magazine correspondents get on Saturday morning.

GMT: Greenwich Mean Time, the standard for clocks around the world.

**SOURCING:**

On the Record

Off the Record

Background

Deep Background

Western diplomat

Western diplomatic source

## **Anatomy of Coverage Or “Who Does What? For Whom? How?”**

- **Major national, international newspapers:** New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, Times of London, Le Monde, El Pais. Stories that set the record, trends, analysis, overview, perspective, what it all means, as well as news. The New York Times is “a paper of record.”

- **Television:** CNN, ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, BBC, Al Jazeera. Both news and overview. These outlets use fewer correspondents, allegedly because of cost.

- **Regional Newspapers:** Los Angeles Times, St. Petersburg Times, San Francisco Examiner, Miami Herald. Regional interests.

- **Local newspapers:** These might be following a National Guard unit to Iraq or Afghanistan, for example.

- **News Magazines:** Time, Newsweek, U.S. News & World Report. Friday deadlines with Saturday morning “read-backs,” or fact checks between New York home office and correspondents in the field. Increasingly aim at special slice or “take” on a story, to attract and to keep readership that is so inundated with information. More and more “info-tainment” to identify and hold onto audiences.

- **Radio:** Breaking news and some analysis relying on speed and story update. Natural sound. Interviews.

- **Wire services:** The workhorses of international journalism for stories, photos (and some times radio and TV) and updated versions of the same story as the story changes with time. Time is a critical factor. Associated Press is the premier global wire service, as it has worldwide structure that includes all of the above formats. Others are Reuters. Bloomberg. Agence France Presse (AFP) and United Press International UPI.

- **Stock photo agencies:** Corbis, Getty, Zuma, Polaris, VII. Serve mostly magazines, web sites, books, etc.

- **Trade magazines:** industry (which might include oil or steel), agriculture, construction, marketing, mining and telecommunications.

- **Financial publications.**

- **Specialty publications:** foreign affairs, the environment, yoga magazines, commodities, etc.

- **Independent documentaries.**

## Sources

1. Other foreign correspondents (your colleagues).
2. Your airport cab driver. (assuming you are not being met.)
3. Embassies. The Press Attache or Public Affairs officer at each embassy will point you toward the Ambassador, the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) who is No. 2, and others, including the political officer, who (at American embassies) often is CIA.
4. Local media/local journalists.
5. Local and foreign businessmen.
6. Civilian government officials.
7. Military officials.
8. Religious officials. (human rights, government corruption. Obando and post-mass news conferences.) El Salvador's Archbishop Romero.
9. University professors.

9. Mouth pieces of the state: In Mexico we had Notimex. In the case of Cuba it's Prensa Latina. In Iran it's IRNA. (Islamic Republic News Agency.)

Story from India on the killing of woman by member of elite. The story uses society pages as sources and points of reference to illustrate its Controlling Idea.

10. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) These include Think Tanks and Watch Dogs. (Brookings Institution, Amnesty International.)

11. Populace associated with your story: Taxi driver should be the first person you interview in the country. Especially for pieces about how certain policies affect the people.

Chris Dickey: "Something terrible happened here."

12. Civilian groups, such as labor organizations, unions.

13. Opposition political groups.

**MAKE SURE YOUR SOURCES UNDERSTAND WHAT "ON THE RECORD," "OFF THE RECORD," AND "BACKGROUND" MEAN. GIVE EXAMPLES.**

“Background” is information you cannot publish or source. You just build on it.

The issue of TRUST is a major component in your relationship with sources. If a source doesn't trust you, you will never get any information from him/her. Never “burn” a source. The key is to develop long-term sources, not short-term hits.

Ultimately, it is you who has to decide which sources are valid and which are not. Which are telling you the truth and which are trying to play you.

## Types of Stories

- **Breaking news.** (local news sources.)
- **Feature.** (your own perception).
- **Reaction.** (mostly to Washington policy and prompted by your own perceptions or those of your editors.) This is the echo chamber of international politics.
- **Analysis.**
- **Matching.** (the competition).
- **Investigative.**
- **Rockets:** fired from home office at correspondents who seem to be out of the loop.

## Questions on “DATELINE AFGHANISTAN”

1. Using the film, “DATELINE AFGHANISTAN: Reporting the Forgotten War,” as your point of reference, please give me an example of which character you would refer to as a “fixer.” Please discuss the difference between this fixer and a “minder.”
2. In the film DATELINE AFGHANISTAN, please identify at least one staff correspondent.
3. Please describe the difference between a “pool” arrangement and an “embed” arrangement. Which of these arrangements did you witness in the film?
4. Of the various types of stories, including breaking news, matching, reaction, feature, analysis and investigative, which would a Time Magazine correspondent be LEAST likely to work on, and why?
5. Which of these would an Associated Press correspondent be MOST likely to work on, and why?