

Dan Rather Reports

Episode Number: 616

Episode Title: The Best of the Best

Description: A look at the role of the United States military's Special Operations Command in the hunt for Osama bin Laden. Also, the revolution the Syrian government doesn't want you to see. And, behind the great firewall, the Chinese government trying to control information on the Internet.

TEASE:

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

TONIGHT, SPECIAL SOLDIERS...ELITE FORCES...THE STORY BEHIND THE TROOPS WHO GOT BIN LADEN.

COL. JAMES REESE

You know, the New York Yankees have one Alex Rodriguez; the Special Operations have hundreds of Alex Rodriguez's out there on their team.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ALSO, REPORTING A REVOLUTION...WITHOUT THE REPORTERS. THE LATEST FROM SYRIA...

NADIM HOURY, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

The Syrian government does not want this story to be told. They don't want the information to flow. They wanna control it. The problem is the time for that control is over.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND FROM INSIDE CHINA...THE INTERNET...AND GETTING THE TRUTH OUT FROM UNDER THE THUMB OF ONE OF THE WORLDS MOST REPRESSIVE REGIMES.....

NICHOLAS BEQUELIN, SENIOR RESEARCHER, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

China has the largest internet police in the world which is telling you something about what the threats the communist party thinks it's facing.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WE'LL BRING YOU THE NEWS, TONIGHT, ON DAN RATHER REPORTS.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND:

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

GOOD EVENING. AFTER NEARLY A DECADE AT WAR, WE'VE BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO SEEING AMERICA'S BRAVE MEN AND WOMEN FIGHTING FOR THIS COUNTRY ON BATTLEFIELDS FROM IRAQ TO AFGHANISTAN. BUT THERE'S A SMALL, ELITE GROUP OF SOLDIERS, SAILORS AND MARINES YOU'LL NEVER SEE... AND PROBABLY WON'T HEAR MUCH ABOUT...UNLESS THE MISSION IS BIG. THEY ARE TROOPS OF THE "SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND"...HIGHLY SECRETIVE COMMANDO TEAMS THAT ARE ONLY CALLED UPON FOR THE MOST IMPORTANT AND MOST DANGEROUS ASSIGNMENTS...LIKE KILLING OSAMA BIN LADEN.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT WHO ARE THESE SPECIAL WARRIORS? THEY TRAIN FOR YEARS ON MISSIONS THAT WILL MORE THAN LIKELY REMAIN SECRET FOREVER...WITH THE RARE EXCEPTION, SUCH AS THE HUNT FOR OSAMA.

COL. JAMES REESE

The operators that conducted the operation - my hat's off to them. They're the best of the best.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AS A MEMBER OF THE ELITE DELTA FORCE, COL JAMES REESE ONCE COMMANDED A SPECIAL OPERATIONS UNIT IN AFGHANISTAN...NOW THAT HE'S RETIRED IN PRIVATE BUSINESS, HE STILL USES WHAT HE LEARNED.

REESE

Special Operation Forces use these to learn how to breach through doors to get into buildings that have been hardened and barricaded.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HE TRAINS LAW ENFORCEMENT AND MILITARY PERSONNEL HERE AT HIS FACILITY JUST OUTSIDE FORT BRAGG IN NORTH CAROLINA...AND HE KNOWS BETTER THAN MOST HOW MUCH TRAINING AND PREPARATION WENT INTO THE BIN LADEN OPERATION.

REESE

They are the Alex Rodriguez's. And that's what you get with special operations. The New York Yankees have one Alex Rodriguez. The special operations have hundreds of Alex Rodriguez's out there on their team.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HE WON'T TALK SPECIFICS ABOUT MISSIONS HE CONDUCTED DURING HIS YEARS ON SPECIAL FORCES...BUT HE WILL SAY WHAT IT TAKES TO BE ONE OF THE ELITE.

REESE

They study. They research. They understand the environment where they are in. They are always conducting battlefield operational, prep of the battlefield and intelligence. It really is masters and doctorate level work that most people don't realize how cerebral an operation this type of aspect does.

SPECIAL OPS SOLDIER

In the mud! Start crawling!

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ONLY A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF APPLICANTS ARE ACCEPTED INTO SPECIAL OPERATIONS SCHOOLS TO BECOME NAVY SEALS OR ARMY RANGERS.

SPECIAL OPS SOLDIER

Are you sleepin'?

ANOTHER SOLDIER

Yes...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE AIR FORCE AND MARINE CORPS ALSO RECRUIT ELITE TROOPS. AND WITH AMERICA INVOLVED IN TWO WARS, THE NEED HAS GROWN....THOMAS LYNCH IS A RETIRED ARMY COLONEL SERVING AS A DISTINGUISHED RESEARCH FELLOW AT THE NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY.

TOM LYNCH, NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

Because of our intensive operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, I think it's fair to say that they number in the several thousands. And have consistently numbered in the several thousands from at least 2004, although again, that number can vary based upon the intensity and the tempo of operations they're being asked to conduct.

COL. JOHN GARRETT, RETIRED

Special operations is not so much a unit as-- as it is a capability.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

JOHN GARRETT IS A RETIRED MARINE COLONEL WHO WORKED CLOSELY WITH SPECIAL FORCES THROUGHOUT HIS CAREER.

RATHER

Who are these people who do this? Where do we get them?

GARRETT

That's a great question. But, you know, they are the best that we have in this country. They're what kept me going for-- for 27 years.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

COL. GARRETT LED A SPECIAL OPERATIONS UNIT DURING THE FIRST PERSIAN GULF WAR AND HE WAS IMPRESSED WITH WHAT HE SAW.

GARRETT

That's not to say they don't need guidance from time to time. But-- in terms of the quality and the dedication, and the-- the moral rightness of human beings, they're right at the top.

RATHER

It's still difficult to believe, I do believe. And-- and unquestioningly most Americans believe that this U.S. operation, operating in Pakistan, could get in, do the deed, get him, get the body out, all in what, maybe 40 minutes?

GARRETT

Uh-huh.

RATHER

Seems impossible.

GARRETT

Well it does. But that's what they trained to. That's the level they-- they work toward. And-- the proof of the pudding is in the doing, and they did it.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT OPERATIONS HAVEN'T ALWAYS BEEN THAT SEAMLESS. SPECIAL OPS IN THE U-S MILITARY CHANGED RADICALLY BECAUSE OF ONE EVENT IN THE IRANIAN DESERT IN 1980. IT WAS CALLED OPERATION EAGLE CLAW...A MISSION DESIGNED TO RESCUE AMERICAN HOSTAGES IN IRAN ENDED IN FAILURE WHEN HELICOPTERS CRASHED IN A SANDSTORM. LACK OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE SERVICES WAS BLAMED.

GARRETT

It-- illustrated unhappily all kinds of problems within our operability, communications-- just mission preparedness and training. And what emerged from that failure was advocates who said this has got to change. Not only with regard to special operating forces, but with regard to the whole rationale of our defense structure. And how we operate together or don't.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WHAT RESULTED WAS A SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND DESIGNED TO UNIFY ALL THE SPECIAL FORCES UNITS FROM THE DIFFERENT BRANCHES OF THE MILITARY. BUT THEN THE 9-11 ATTACKS CHANGED THE PLAYING FIELD AGAIN... SECRETARY OF DEFENSE DONALD RUMSFELD SAID HE WANTED TO STREAMLINE THE BUREAUCRACY.

LYNCH

There was a desire on the part of Secretary Rumsfeld and his team to find a way to better concentrate the planning and the management of the combat operators to help specifically focus and target them on Al Qaeda and Al Qaeda special operatives.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ACCORDING TO LYNCH, RUMSFELD'S PLAN WAS TO ALLOW SMALL GROUPS OF ELITE FORCES TO MOVE FAST...AND STRIKE QUICKLY...

LYNCH

And they could do it from helicopters; they can do it from-- sea-based operations. They launch from submarines to come in stealthy manners ashore. They can do it from high-level aircraft, being parachuted in. Just, you know, amazing operations. I mean

everything folks would see in terms of Hollywood, and then a little bit more, in terms of what these guys do.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT HERE'S THE THOUGHT TO PONDER. THESE TROOPS, THANKS TO ACTIONS BY THE BUSH AND OBAMA ADMINISTRATIONS, NOW HAVE A MUCH SHORTER CHAIN OF COMMAND....GIVING THESE HIGHLY TRAINED LETHAL FORCES MORE FREEDOM TO STRIKE QUICKLY IN SECRET... AND TARGET TERRORISTS, OR IN THEORY ANYONE ELSE AROUND THE WORLD.

RATHER

American citizens are very proud of what's happened. Proud in the sense that we kept our word. We got him. Should they or should they not be even a little concerned when you have this kind of elite force? That it could be misused for political or ideological purposes?

GARRETT

The first step in preventing something like that is awareness. I think it's okay to think about those things. I think you need to think about all the kinds of things that could go awry. And again, it's all part of the leadership in maintaining the balance. That's probably the key word, is maintaining the balance among everybody, about their roles and missions-- going forward.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT WHAT THE UNITED STATES PERCEIVES AS BALANCE CAN LOOK VERY DIFFERENT TO ANOTHER COUNTRY ... LIKE PAKISTAN.

SHUJA NAWAZ, SCHOLAR

Well, clearly Pakistan-- was not involved in the planning for this raid.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SHUJA NAWAZ IS A SCHOLAR AT A PROMINENT THINK TANK IN WASHINGTON, DC. HE HAS DEEP TIES TO PAKISTAN AND ITS MILITARY. HIS BROTHER WAS THE TOP COMMANDER OF PAKISTAN'S ARMY.

SHUJA NAWAZ

And there will be resentment on their part. Clearly-- Pakistan may not have been participating in planning the flight of the helicopters from Afghanistan into Pakistani territory, which is obviously without permission and therefore an invasion of sovereignty.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT THE U-S HAS ITS SHARE OF GRIEVANCES AGAINST PAKISTAN TOO. NAMELY, HOW COULD ITS MILITARY HAVE MISSED THIS? BIN LADEN WAS HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT, IN A TOWN TEEMING WITH PAKISTANI MILITARY OFFICIALS.

NAWAZ SAYS IT'S PERFECTLY PLAUSIBLE THAT THE PAKISTANI MILITARY DID NOT KNOW BIN LADEN WAS RIGHT UNDER THEIR NOSES...

SHUJA NAWAZ

Somebody would have to be looking in that area. And-- the question is-- why would they be looking there? Why not look somewhere else? My own guess would be that they were concentrating on the larger cities and relying on electronic surveillance and using-- intercepts from the CIA and other sources to see what kind of chatter was occurring, which is how the earlier people got caught.

LYNCH

And I think, even though one wants to give our Pakistani friends the benefit of the doubt, that our Pakistani friends are-- are gonna have to do a lot of explaining right now as to how this kind of a compound with this kind of a signature, in an area-- in a densely populated region. And an area quite frankly where lots and lots of Pakistani military and intelligence service operatives are known to work on a block-by-block basis, how you could have something of this magnitude develop in that town and there not be any independent reporting that, "Hey, we may have Osama bin Laden in our midst" in this type of an area.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

WHEN WE COME BACK, WE GO TO ANOTHER PART OF THE WORLD FOR A LOOK AT THE BRUTAL CRACKDOWN IN SYRIA SO DON'T GO AWAY.

INSIDE SYRIA ACT 2:

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

WELCOME BACK. ONE OF THE BASIC TENETS OF JOURNALISM IS THAT YOU REPORT ONLY WHAT YOU SEE AND KNOW TO BE TRUE. BUT WHAT HAPPENS IF THERE'S A STORY, A BIG STORY, AN IMPORTANT STORY THAT NO REPORTER CAN GET TO?

THAT'S WHAT'S HAPPENING IN SYRIA, WHERE BY ALL ACCOUNTS THE AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENT IS ENGAGED IN A BRUTAL AND BLOODY CRACKDOWN OF DEMONSTRATORS. ALL FOREIGN REPORTERS HAVE BEEN

KICKED OUT -- AND THERE IS NO INDEPENDENT PRESS IN SYRIA. IT'S CLEAR THAT THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT HOPES TO HIDE THEIR ACTIONS FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD. BUT TONIGHT YOU WILL MEET SOME BRAVE SYRIANS, RISKING THEIR LIVES TO MAKE SURE THE STORY DOES GET OUT. AND WE MUST WARN YOU, A LOT WHAT'S GOING ON IN SYRIA IS VERY DIFFICULT WATCH.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WE BEGIN OUR REPORT IN A SMALL TOWN IN LEBANON, NEAR THE BORDER WITH SYRIA... WHICH LIES JUST OVER THOSE MOUNTAINS. THIS IS AS CLOSE AS ANY FOREIGN REPORTER CAN GET TO ONE OF THE BIGGEST STORIES ON THE PLANET. SYRIA HAS TRIED TO SHUT ITSELF OFF FROM THE WORLD.

AND PERHAPS IT COULD HAVE... IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE BRAVE WORK OF A SMALL BAND OF SYRIAN REPORTERS WHO HAVE ESCAPED...AND GONE UNDERGROUND.

THIS IS WHAT THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT DOESN'T WANT YOU TO SEE... FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY...VIDEOS ARE BEING COLLECTED...AND TRANSMITTED ... MOST ANONYMOUSLY ... TO A HANDFUL OF REPORTERS AND ACTIVISTS WHO GATHER AND DISTRIBUTE THEM ONLINE...THE IMAGES SHOW UNSPEAKABLE VIOLENCE...SIX WEEKS OF WIDESPREAD PROTESTS HAVE BEEN MET WITH AN INCREASINGLY BRUTAL CRACKDOWN. THE ESTIMATED DEATH TOLL IS ALREADY NEARING 600, AND THOUSANDS MORE HAVE BEEN BEATEN, DETAINED, OR JUST HAVE SIMPLY "DISAPPEARED".

WE MET WITH SEVERAL JOURNALISTS WHO FLED SYRIA THREE WEEKS AGO ...HERE IN BEIRUT, LEBANONIT'S THE ONLY WAY THEY COULD CONTINUE THEIR WORK INFORMING THE OUTSIDE WORLD OF WHAT IS REALLY HAPPENING IN THEIR HOME COUNTRY.

"SHAHEEN," SYRIAN JOURNALIST

For me right now, the priority is like to-- to give the people the voice. To speak up. You know, it's like, you know-- I'm doing my best on that. Like just give 'em a chance to express themselves.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SHAHEEN -- NOT HIS REAL NAME -- INSISTED WE HIDE HIS IDENTITY. EVEN BY SPEAKING AT ALL, HE'S RISKING HIS LIFE. LEBANON IS CRAWLING WITH SYRIAN AGENTS, AND IF HE EVER DECIDED TO GO HOME HE COULD BE DETAINED BY SYRIAN SECURITY FORCES... OR WORSE.

"SHAHEEN"

I think I would be in trouble. I can tell like what could happen, but it's-- it's open like being kidnapped, being tortured. Being like wherever. I mean, they are capable of anything. Just like open fire on people in the street just, you know, speaking up.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BEFORE THE UPRISING SHAHEEN WORKED AS AN ONLINE JOURNALIST IN DAMASCUS...IT WAS A DANGEROUS JOB THEN... NOW IT'S IMPOSSIBLE. BUT WHAT SHAHEEN WANTS THE WORLD TO SEE IS HOW DESPERATE THE SYRIAN PEOPLE ARE FOR FREEDOM ... SO DESPERATE THEY ARE WILLING TO RISK THEIR LIVES TO DEMAND IT ...

“SHAHEEN”

What they're doing is really-- it's really amazing. The people who like are trying to-- to get the videos and the pictures from what's going on, dur-- during demonstrations and-- protests, just like-- trying to get a shot. Like-- a TV shot, or a like a video shot, or a picture shot. But at-- at the same time, they're putting themselves at risk, to get a shot, a bullet shot from the other side. Who are capable of doing anything. Just like they don't tell-- they-- they don't care. Because like-- recently, they've been aiming at people like who got-- cell phones and cameras and stuff like that. They could ask you for your phone. And if they find any video on that phone, like you're in big trouble.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HERE ... NOTHING IS CENSORED. IT IS OFTEN GRUESOME, GRAPHIC VIDEO SHOT BY CAMERA PHONES THAT IS UPLOADED TO YOUTUBE. SHAHEEN THEN USES FACEBOOK OR TWITTER TO RE-POST IT AROUND THE WORLD. BUT JOURNALISTS LIKE HIM ARE ALSO TRYING TO REPORT THE STORY. SINCE NO ONE CAN VERIFY THE AUTHENTICITY OF ANY ONE VIDEO, THEY TRY TO CONFIRM WHAT THEY'RE SEEING WITH INFORMATION THEY'RE GETTING FROM SOURCES WITHIN THE COUNTRY, SUCH AS TRYING TO MATCH NAMES TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN ARRESTED AND KILLED.

“SHAHEEN”

The core of the whole thing is like the people who are on the street. They are the best-spokesperson for what's going on.

NADIM HOURY, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

These are activists who tend to be quite savvy, who-- might have a lot of friends in the journalistic community.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

NADIM HOURY DIRECTS THE BEIRUT OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, AND SERVES AS THE SENIOR RESEARCHER FOR SYRIA. HE SAYS THE COUNTRY IS SUDDENLY FILLED WITH CITIZEN REPORTERS.

HOURY

Many of them are, you know, human rights activists or intellectuals. And what they're doing is they're taking that and putting it up and distributing it to-- other important outlets. And that's how it's making its way. So the-- you need the people on the ground, and you need the intermediaries. And these intermediaries-- are-- being, you know, persecuted right now by the authorities. They're trying to detain them. They're trying to figure out who they are. And many of them have had to leave their country and-- seek shelter in neighboring countries.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT DESPITE THE RISKS ...THESE JOURNALISTS ARE ON A MISSION ... A MISSION TO PREVENT HISTORY FROM REPEATING ITSELF ...IN 1982; THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT DESTROYED THE CITY OF HAMA, AND MASSACRED TENS OF THOUSANDS OF CITIZENS... WHILE THE OUTSIDE WORLD RECEIVED SANITIZED NEWS REPORTS AND LITTLE ACCURATE INFORMATION ABOUT THE BLOODBATH. TODAY'S PROTESTERS BELIEVE THAT IF THE GOVERNMENT HAS ITS WAY, THE SAME THING COULD HAPPEN AGAIN ...

HOURY

The Syrian government does not want this story to be told and even now, after six weeks of protest, if you look at-- Syrian State T.V., which is the main T.V., you would think you're in a different planet. Because they would be presenting things about, you know the-- agriculture yield this year. Or they would be talking about some municipal project to treat water or waste water. In the meantime, you know, this is the biggest crisis in the country for the la-- you know, since the early 1980s. They don't want the media in, and-- so they're not gonna allow you in. They don't want human rights observers in. If you apply for a visa, they're g-- they deny you. If you manage to get in on a tourist visa, and if they spot you filming, talking to people, they will detain you and kick you out of the country. They don't want the information to flow. They wanna control it. The problem is the time for that control is over. What worked for them in the 1980s is not gonna work for them in 2011.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT EVEN IN 2011... HOURY SAYS SYRIA IS STILL ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST REPRESSIVE COUNTRIES ... SO THE FACT THAT THERE ARE PROTESTS AT ALL IS NOTHING SHORT OF REMARKABLE.

HOURY

This is risky business in Syria, not just for the people going to the street, but also for their families. They are very brave. And I think if you had asked anyone looking at Syria three months ago, they would have doubt that could have happened, not because the Syrians weren't brave, but because that wall of fear that has been set up after, you know, 30, 40 years of emergency law, had seeped through. I mean I remember traveling and trying to talk to people in Damascus. You know, people would not talk about politics. Or if they do, they would talk in codes and signs, and would sort of, you know, avoid things. And suddenly now, that sort of wall of fear, it's starting to crack.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IF IT'S BEGINNING TO CRACK, AND THAT'S A BIG IF, CREDIT SHOULD GO TO PEOPLE LIKE MOHAMMAD ALI. HE IS ANOTHER ONE OF THE JOURNALISTS WHO LEFT SYRIA AFTER THE PROTESTS BEGAN SO HE COULD CONTINUE HIS WORK MORE FREELY ...

WHEN WE FIRST MET ALI, HE WAS AFRAID TO REVEAL HIS IDENTITY. BUT AFTER CONSIDERING HIS ULTIMATE GOAL -- TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE HUMANITY INSIDE SYRIA -- HE DECIDED HE NEEDED TO SHOW HIS FACE.

MOHAMMED ALI, SYRIAN JOURNALIST

Maybe if somebody looked in my eyes, from the audience, will-- keep thinking, you know, about what happened.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ALI IS AN INFORMATION BROKER OF SORTS... HE SAYS HE SPENDS UP TO 20 HOURS A DAY SIFTING THROUGH AS MANY AS 150 YOUTUBE VIDEOS; TALKING TO SOURCES INSIDE SYRIA TO CONFIRM NEWS REPORTS; AND SCANNING THROUGH DOZENS OF TWITTER AND FACEBOOK POSTS ... HE CONDENSES THAT INFORMATION AND EMAILS IT ... ANONYMOUSLY ... TO ABOUT 30 MAINSTREAM JOURNALISTS OUTSIDE SYRIA. AND HE DOES ALL THIS FOR NO MONEY...

ALI

It's-- the least I can do for my people. I'm journalist-- I'm journalist. I have to-- help my people with my job.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ALI SAYS THIS IS THE HARDEST JOB HE HAS EVER DONE ... HE BARELY HAS TIME TO SLEEP... AND WHEN HE DOES ... THE MEMORIES OF THE VIDEOS HE HAS SEEN GIVE HIM NIGHTMARES.

ALI

What if you see somebody capture the lasts, you know, breath. Okay? And shake and the soul-- went out. Okay? You can't forget about that.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT DESPITE THE GRAPHIC HORRORS OF SCENES LIKE THIS, HE FORCES HIMSELF TO KEEP GOING ... BECAUSE ALI BELIEVES THIS IS THE ONLY WAY THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT CAN BE STOPPED.

ALI

I think-- demonstrators count on - public opinion. Okay? To make pressure on Syrian government. Well, I have-- all of Syrian and Arab people and-- you know-- other-- human and-- all over the world, see that videos, I think-- that public opinion will make some pressure on Syrian government to be aware of killed people, you know.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE CRACKDOWN IS NOW IN ITS SEVENTH WEEK. THE REGIME SEEMS MORE DETERMINED THAN EVER TO SILENCE THE PEOPLE WITH GUNS. THESE PEOPLE...THESE SYRIAN JOURNALISTS ARE SAYING, IF THAT IS TO BE...THEN LET THE WHOLE WORLD WATCH.

HOURY

It's citizen journalism. And those photos are quickly being uploaded and making their way to, you know T.V. stations worldwide. There is one thing that has become very clear in these protest movements over the last three months in the region. People in the Arab world want their freedoms. They want their liberties. Exactly the same freedoms and liberties that people in the U.S. enjoy.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND THAT BRINGS US HERE, TO A QUIET RESIDENTIAL STREET IN HOUSTON, TEXAS — 7000 MILES FROM THE VIOLENCE IN SYRIA.

HOSAM HAMADAH

Freedom is priceless especially when you live in a free country; you really know how it is. In Syria, all these protesters, all those protesters, all those masses, they're not going back. They've tasted freedom.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HOSAM HAMADAH IS LIVING THE AMERICAN DREAM. HE LEFT SYRIA FOR THE UNITED STATES MORE THAN 20 YEARS AGO. ARRIVING WITH LESS THAN 400 DOLLARS IN HIS POCKET, HE MANAGED TO BUILD A SUCCESSFUL SMALL BUSINESS AND BECOME AN AMERICAN CITIZEN. NOW HE AND HIS WIFE HALA LEAD A SAFE, COMFORTABLE MIDDLE CLASS LIFE — FAR DIFFERENT FROM THE PROTESTERS WHO ARE RISKING EVERYTHING IN THE COUNTRY HE LEFT BEHIND.

HOSAM HAMADAH

How is the situation right now in datarm?

SOURCE

I don't know...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

NOW, HAMADAH IS DETERMINED TO BRING THE EVENTS IN SYRIA TO THE ATTENTION OF HIS FELLOW CITIZENS. IN EARLY APRIL, WHEN PROTESTS BEGAN, HAMADAH PUT HIS DAY JOB ON HOLD AND DEDICATED HIMSELF TO SPREADING INFORMATION ABOUT THE UPRISING — AND THE VIOLENT CRACKDOWN.

HOSAM HAMADAH

Consumed my life is the term I would use. Typically at 6, 7 o'clock I just go straight to my computer. Coffee, cigarettes, computer. And start getting information from Facebook, from friends, talking to friends. Just being online all the time, trying to get as much information, and spreading that information.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

EVERY DAY, HE CHECKS IN WITH CONTACTS IN SYRIA. THEY SEND HIM INFORMATION AND VIDEOS, WHICH HE POSTS ONLINE.

HOSAM HAMADAH

Are they going to cut off the internet or electricity, or anything? Or do you know anything?

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THEY SEND HIM INFORMATION AND VIDEOS WHICH HE POSTS ONLINE. THESE DAYS, HAMADAH CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT HE'S SEEING... AND WHAT HE ISN'T. ALL DAY ONLINE, HE SEES FOOTAGE OF BRAVE SYRIANS

CHALLENGING THEIR REPRESSIVE GOVERNMENT. BUT ON AMERICAN TELEVISION, THE STORY IS GOING LARGELY UNTOLD.

HOSAM HAMADAH

They showed a few images of protesters, which was -- I appreciate any exposure. But the actual murder that is happening in Syria. The murder committed by this regime. They're not really showing it. And people need to see this. Okay, you see a teenager in the street bleeding. Look at that, an eleven year old child, and that's his father carrying him. I'm showing you one of thousands of images.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HE TOLD US HE REGULARLY FORWARDS THE VIDEOS HE RECEIVES TO NEWS OUTLETS, BUT FEW MAKE IT TO BROADCAST. THE LACK OF COVERAGE IS EVEN MORE UPSETTING GIVEN THE RISKS PEOPLE ARE TAKING TO GET THIS FOOTAGE OUT.

HOSAM HAMADAH

If they catch him with this footage on his cell phone, he's gone. He's dead. I mean, they don't arrest him, he's dead.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THIS PAST FRIDAY, HAMADAH AND HIS WIFE WERE AWAKE EVEN EARLIER THAN USUAL. IN SYRIA, PROTESTERS WERE AGAIN TAKING TO THE STREETS. AND MANY FEARED AN ESPECIALLY VIOLENT DAY. IT WAS LATE AFTERNOON IN SYRIA WHEN HE WAS ABLE TO REACH A FRIEND HIDING AT HOME.

SOURCE

I see my eyes that people just came and they are fully armed in front my house. Between us only ten meters.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE MAN, WHO ASKED THAT WE CONCEAL HIS IDENTITY, WAS AFRAID TO GO OUTSIDE. STILL, HAMADAH URGED HIM TO RECORD WHAT HE WAS SEEING.

HOSAM HAMADAH

Get your camera; get your camera, quickly. Take a photo. We need a photo; we don't have a photo of these kind of forces. Please take a photo, just a photo.

SOURCE

Okay, okay, okay.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT AS THE DRAMA IN SYRIA WAS PLAYING OUT ON FRIDAY — THOUSANDS OF DEMONSTRATORS MARCHING INTO GUNFIRE, DISSIDENTS AND CITIZEN JOURNALISTS BRAVELY SPIRITING AWAY FOOTAGE — ANOTHER STORY WAS DOMINATING THE AIRWAVES.

HOSAM HAMADAH

I guess at some point they have to get married and they would lose interest. What, are they going to follow them to their honeymoon? But if it wasn't for this, it would be something else. Maybe we have to lose a million people. And they will say "Wow, a million people died. Let's cover this." Maybe.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ACCORDING TO REPORTS, MORE THAN 60 DEMONSTRATORS WERE KILLED IN SYRIA ON FRIDAY. BUT ON TV THAT MORNING, THESE EVENTS GOT ONLY A BRIEF MENTION AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SCREEN.

STILL, HAMADAH WASN'T DISCOURAGED. THE IMAGES HE SAW ON HIS COMPUTER OF THOUSANDS TAKING TO THE STREETS IN DAMASCUS WERE CAUSE TO CELEBRATE.

HOSAM HAMADAH

This is a great day for Syria, and a very bad day for Assad. All what he did could not stop these people from going out. I'm just filled with joy right now. So I'm not gonna worry about a royal wedding.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

NOW, WE RETURN THE POWER OF THE PEOPLE ON THE INTERNET SPREADS TO CHINA, SO STAY HERE WITH US.

THE NETIZENS ACT 3:

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

WE'VE LOOKED TONIGHT AT THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT'S BRUTAL CRACKDOWN AND HOW THE INTERNET HAS ALLOWED THAT STORY TO GET OUT EVEN THOUGH REPORTERS HAVEN'T BEEN ALLOWED IN.

WELL HALF-WAY AROUND THE GLOBE, ANOTHER AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENT IS WATCHING WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE ARAB WORLD WITH GREAT INTEREST.

WE TAKE YOU NOW ON AN INVESTIGATION BEHIND THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA, WHERE THE AUTHORITIES IN BEIJING HAVE SET UP ANOTHER WALL...A GREAT FIREWALL. RIGHT NOW IT'S BELIEVED THERE ARE 30-THOUSAND INTERNET POLICE MONITORING WEB TRAFFIC THROUGHOUT CHINA. HIS YEAR FOR THE FIRST TIME CHINA SPENT MORE ON INTERNAL SECURITY THAN ON ITS MILITARY. THINK ABOUT THAT FOR A SECOND. THE POWER OF THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL NETWORKING IS SEEN AS A FULL-FLEDGED THREAT BY THE COMMUNIST REGIME.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

NOWHERE WAS THAT MORE APPARENT THEN WHEN AUTHORITIES DETAINED WORLD RENOWNED ARTIST AND ACTIVIST AI-WEI-WEI. RECENTLY, WE BROUGHT YOU PART OF HIS STORY, INCLUDING ONE OF HIS LAST INTERVIEWS BEFORE HE WAS ARRESTED.

AI WEI WEI, ARTIST

I think the- the most powerful tool to this kind of authoritarian society is to let the truth out.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

AI HASN'T BEEN SEEN IN A MONTH. THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT SAYS THEY'RE INVESTIGATING HIM FOR QUOTE ECONOMIC CRIMES, BUT MOST BELIEVE IT WAS HIS CRITICISM OF THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT, PARTICULARLY ON LINE, THAT GOT HIM IN TROUBLE.

AI IS JUST ONE PLAYER IN A BROAD BASED ASSAULT ON GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY IN CHINA. AS THE INTERNET GROWS, SO DO THE NUMBER OF AVERAGE CHINESE CITIZENS WHO ARE REACHING OUT FOR THE FIRST TIME FINDING A VOICE. THE ANONYMITY OF THE INTERNET ALLOWS THEM TO SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS, POST VIDEOS AND PICTURES. AND THERE'S NO QUESTION THAT THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT IS WORRIED AND WATCHING CLOSELY

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WE BEGIN OUR REPORT HUNDRED OF MILES FROM THE BRIGHT LIGHTS OF BEIJING, IN A SMALL VILLAGE NEAR THE COAST OF THE EAST CHINA SEA. EARLIER THIS YEAR A TEAM OF VIDEOGRAPHERS, WORKING WITH ACTIVIST AND ARTIST AI WEIWEI CAME HERE TO INVESTIGATE INTERNET

REPORTS OF THE SUSPICIOUS AND GRUESOME DEATH OF THE TOWN'S MAYOR.

ON DECEMBER 25TH OF 2010, WHILE WALKING HOME, MAYOR QIAN YUN HUI WAS RUN OVER AND KILLED BY A TRUCK LOADED WITH ROCKS.

THE POLICE QUICKLY RULED IT A TRAFFIC ACCIDENT, BUT CHEN HAD BEEN A CONTROVERSIAL MAYOR WHO HAD BEEN FIGHTING THE TAKEOVER OF LOCAL LAND BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A POWER PLANT.

AND GOVERNMENT CRITICISM ISN'T THE SAFE THING TO DO IN CHINA. THE FATHER OF THE MAYOR SAID THIS WAS NO ACCIDENT, IT WAS MURDER.

FATHER OF QIAN YUN HUI (TRANSLATED FROM CHINESE)

The truck came this way and crushed his neck.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HE SHOWED HOW THE TRUCK HAD CRUSHED HIS SON. BUT WHEN OTHER VILLAGERS WERE ASKED ON-CAMERA WHAT HAPPENED, FEW WERE BRAVE ENOUGH TO SPEAK.

FEMALE VILLAGER (TRANSLATED FROM CHINESE)

I don't know anything. I'm an idiot.

MALE VILLAGER (TRANSLATED FROM CHINESE)

We can't talk about it because if we do, we'll be arrested in the afternoon.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT THE VILLAGERS DIDN'T NEED TO SPEAK FOR THE SHOCK OF THE STORY TO GET OUT. THERE WERE GRUESOME PICTURES LIKE THESE. AND WHEN THEY STARTED TO TURN UP ON THE INTERNET, IT BEGAN AN ONLINE FLOOD OF OPINIONS ABOUT WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED.

SOME WITNESSES CLAIMED INITIALLY THAT QIAN HAD BEEN HELD DOWN WHILE THE TRUCK CRUSHED HIM. AND THERE WAS WIDE CRITICISM ABOUT THE WAY AUTHORITIES HANDLED THE WHOLE INVESTIGATION.

IN RESPONSE TO THE ONLINE BACKLASH, AUTHORITIES RELEASED A VIDEO THAT WAS POSTED ON LINE -- ALLEGEDLY THESE STRANGE

IMAGES CAME FROM A VIDEO WATCH THAT CHEN WAS WEARING
...DURING WHAT WOULD BE THE LAST FEW SECONDS OF HIS LIFE.

THE VIDEO PROVES, ACCORDING TO CHINESE AUTHORITIES, THAT CHEN
WASN'T BEING HELD DOWN AGAINST HIS WILL...BUT MANY POSTED
SKEPTICISM ONLINE ABOUT THE VIDEO'S AUTHENTICITY, AND THE
DIGITAL BACK AND FORTH ON THE WEB ABOUT THE DETAILS OF CHEN'S
DEATH LED TO A VERY REAL CITIZENS INVESTIGATION.

INTERNET USERS FROM ACROSS CHINA WERE VOLUNTEERING THEIR
EXPERTISE LOOKING FOR ANSWERS. AND EVEN THOUGH EYEWITNESS
ACCOUNTS OF QIAN BEING HELD UNDER THE TRUCK WERE LATER
DISCREDITED, THE CASE BECAME A WATERSHED MOMENT FOR MANY IN
CHINA.

NICHOLAS BEQUELIN, SENIOR RESEARCHER, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Ultimately, doesn't matter whether it was murder or not. What it-- what matter is that-- it
becomes an incident that is emblematic of the distrust of ordinary citizens for-- local
officials.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

NICHOLAS BEQUELIN IS A SENIOR RESEARCHER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
WATCH IN CHINA. HE READS AND SPEAKS MANDARIN AND FROM HIS
BASE IN HONG KONG HE MONITORS CHINA'S INTERNET POLICING.

BEQUELIN

This is a case that also reflects the-- the fact that-- the government is under some kind of
supervision-- from its citizenry now, that people have the basic tools to do some sort of
monitoring. They can, you know, take pictures, write about it, circulate it, find an
audience.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND THIS IS WHY NEW TECHNOLOGY SO WORRIES THE CHINESE
GOVERNMENT. WHAT WOULD HAVE ONCE BEEN A TRAFFIC ACCIDENT
NEVER SEEN OR HEARD OUTSIDE THIS SMALL VILLAGE WAS NOW A
NATIONWIDE INCIDENT...BECAUSE OF THE MEGAPHONE THAT IS THE
INTERNET.

BEQUELIN

It is an information war because the Communist party sees the monopoly on the
information as the key to maintaining its power. China has the largest internet police in

the world. They are leading the way in terms of technology for filtering and censoring. They spend more money on potential domestic-- threats than on external ones which is telling you something about what the threats the communist party thinks it's facing.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

CHINA IS TRYING TO CONTROL ITS NETIZENS A NAME GIVEN TO INTERNET SAVVY CITIZENS WHO ARE USING THE WEB TO BE POLITICALLY ACTIVE, ASK TOUGH QUESTIONS AND SPREAD INFORMATION.

CHINESE AUTHORITIES CAN BLOCK FOREIGN WEBSITES IT DEEMS THREATENING LIKE FACEBOOK AND TWITTER. AND IT CAN AUTOMATICALLY CENSOR INTERNAL CONTENT. AS A RESULT IT IS A FAR DIFFERENT INTERNET IN CHINA THAN YOU FIND IN MOST OF THE WORLD. IN CHINA, SIMPLE WORDS LIKE "TOMORROW" HAVE BEEN BLOCKED AFTER ONLINE CALLS FOR STREET DEMONSTRATIONS. ONLY CHINESE VERSIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA CAN OPERATE IN CHINA, AS LONG THEY PRACTICE SELF CENSORSHIP. AND THE GOVERNMENT IS WORRIED AND WATCHING IT ALL.

BEQUELIN

And-- of course ultimately, they have the ultimate weapon, which is to-- flick the switch-- and-- and just ban-- access to these services

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

NETIZENS HAVE BECOME VERY ADEPT AT GETTING AROUND THE BLOCKS AND CENSORS. DURING CHINESE NEW YEAR A NETIZEN POSTED A CARTOON THAT PARODIED THE GOVERNMENT AS BULLING TIGERS WHO WANTONLY KILLED CUTE BUNNIES, THE CHINESE CITIZENS. IT EVEN REFERENCED MAYOR CHEN GETTING RUN OVER BY THE TRUCK. THE GOVERNMENT QUICKLY BLOCKED THE CARTOON.

IT'S BECOME A CASE OF CENSORSHIP CAT AND MOUSE - AND SOMETIMES THE GOVERNMENT CAT DOESN'T CATCH THE MOUSE -- AS WAS THE CASE IN THE PICTURESQUE, SEASIDE TOWN OF BAIHUTOU.

THESE IMAGES WERE CAPTURED BY A LOCAL RESIDENT... FOR YEARS THE VILLAGERS OF BAIHUTOU HAVE BEEN FIGHTING A PLANNED GOVERNMENT TAKE-OVER OF THEIR LAND.

LIU WEI, FORMER LAWYER FOR VILLAGERS OF BAIHUTAO (TRANSLATED FROM CHINESE)

The Beihai city government wants to build hotels, entertainment facilities and a shopping mall on this land

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

LAWYER, LIU WEI ONCE REPRESENTED THE VILLAGERS OF BAIHUTOU.

LIU (TRANSLATED FROM CHINESE)

They think little of the villager's interests, most of whom are fishermen and are used to a life at sea.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IT SEEMS THE FISHING VILLAGE WAS IN THE WAY OF THE NEW RESORT HOTEL AND DEVELOPMENT... LIU SHOWED US THE ROUGH AND DRAMATIC CELL PHONE IMAGES THE VILLAGERS TOOK WHEN THE BULLDOZERS AND A HUNDRED MUNICIPAL POLICE CAME TO DEMOLISH THEIR TOWN HALL TWO YEARS AGO.

LIU (TRANSLATED FROM CHINESE)

The villagers got together here and refused to leave. The police beat 6 or 7 people and one senior citizen died. This picture shows the senior citizen being beaten, down on the ground.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE FIGHT WAS JUST BEGINNING FOR THE LOCAL ELECTED LEADER, XU KUN SEEN HERE WITH HIS FAMILY. XU WAS LEADING A CAMPAIGN TO BRING JUSTICE TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY, CIRCULATING LEGAL DOCUMENTS SUPPORTING VILLAGERS' CLAIMS TO THE LAND.

IN RETALIATION, IN OCTOBER 2010, OFFICIALS SENT A SMALL ARMY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT TO DEMOLISH BAIHUTOU BUT THE VILLAGE CHIEF, XU AND THE VILLAGERS WERE READY WITH THEIR OWN ARMY - AN *INTERNET* ARMY. SIX PEOPLE POSTED LIVE UPDATES AND VIDEO AS THE BULLDOZERS TOPPLED HOMES...IN THE PAST, THE HEAVY HAND OF THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT COULD ACT WITHOUT NOTICE UNDER THE COVER OF DARKNESS, NOW THEIR ACTIONS WERE SUDDENLY BROUGHT TO LIGHT ON THE INTERNET.

NICHOLAS BEQUELIN OF HUMAN RIGHT WATCH SAYS THE INTERNET GAVE THE VILLAGERS A PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN POWER - THE ABILITY TO SHOW THEIR PLIGHT TO THE REST OF THE WORLD AS IT UNFOLDED.

BEQUELIN

The Bai Hu Tao dispute is really the last of a long series of example, where ordinary citizens-- not even urbanites, have been using-- the tools that-- internet offer in terms of communication, publicity, mobilization, denunciation of-- local authorities--

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE INTERNET BROADCAST CAUSED AN OUTCRY AND THE DEMOLITION STOPPED THREE DAYS LATER. IT WAS A BITTER SWEET VICTORY. MANY VILLAGERS' HOMES HAD ALREADY BEEN LEVELED AND THE VILLAGERS SAY THEIR CHIEF, XU KUN WAS ARRESTED AND TRIED ON TRUMPED UP CHARGES. JUST LAST FRIDAY, XU WAS SENTENCED TO FOUR YEARS IN PRISON, AND FINED \$30 THOUSAND.

BEQUELIN

It used to be the case that if you wanted to silence a dissident, all you have to do was to post a couple of policemen outside his home-- and cut or monitor his telephone. Now with mobile phones and internet and other phones of network-- the only way you can actually take someone off the grid is to kidnap that person, essentially.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE VILLAGE CHIEF OF BAIHUTOU IS JUST ONE OF MANY DETAINED BY THE GOVERNMENT. THE CRACKDOWN ON NETIZENS HAS INTENSIFIED IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS FOLLOWING ANONYMOUS INTERNET CALLS FOR A "JASMINE REVOLUTION" MIRRORING THE UPRISINGS IN THE ARAB WORLD. 40 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN CRIMINALLY DETAINED SINCE MID FEBRUARY, ACCORDING TO CHINA'S HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

BEI FENG, CHINESE BLOGGER (TRANSLATED FROM CHINESE)

Authoritarian rule relies on three things, lies, fear, and violence. Lying is almost impossible because of the internet's free flow of information...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BEI FENG IS A PROMINENT BLOGGER WHO OPERATES FROM THE SAFETY OF HONG KONG. HE TRIES TO KEEP TABS ON HIS FRIENDS AND FELLOW BLOGGERS WHO'VE DISAPPEARED INTO POLICE CUSTODY.

BEI (TRANSLATED FROM CHINESE)

This is Mr. Yunfei Ruan. Ran is a very good friend of mine. He is a very famous writer from Sichuan province. But he was arrested and has been in jail for 23 days. I think the

government takes measures in several ways; one way is to just kidnap certain active twitter users which is known as “forced disappearance.” We don’t know where the government detains them.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

MUCH HAS BEEN MADE OF HOW THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT IS CRACKING DOWN ON INTERNET DISSIDENTS BECAUSE OF WHAT IT SEES HAPPENING WITH THE UPRISINGS IN PLACES LIKE EGYPT. BUT THERE ARE MANY IN CHINA WHO SAY THESE INTERNET ACTIVISTS ARE JUST RABBLE-ROUSING MALCONTENT

JIAN LIAN, CHINESE BLOGGER

They only just contribute stability, unnecessary instability to Chinese society.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

JIAN LIAN IS A BLOGGER WHO SAYS THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOTHING TO FEAR FROM WHAT HE CALLS HANDFUL OF NOISY BUT POWERLESS INTERNET VOICES

JIAN

I notice that some foreign journalists based in Beijing describe these people as netizens. And they seem to treat them as representatives of the Chinese people. I think that is a very, very dangerous idea. They represent no one. Or I can say they only represent a small fraction of Chinese people.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

JIAN SAYS BECAUSE THE CHINESE ECONOMY IS BOOMING, THE PEOPLE ARE GENERALLY SATISFIED AND THE GOVERNMENT’S FEARS ARE OVERBLOWN.

JIAN

I think anyone who want to compare Egypt or any other Middle East country with China, the comparison is a joke. And there's no elements, no roots for any revolution disorder in China.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND A 2010 PEW RESEARCH CENTER POLL SEEMS TO SUPPORT JIAN 87% OF CHINESE POLLED SAID WERE SATISFIED WITH THEIR COUNTRY’S DIRECTION, WHILE ONLY 28% OF EGYPTIANS SAID THEY WERE, BEFORE

OVERTHROWING THEIR GOVERNMENT. BUT EVEN THE EXPERTS DIDN'T SEE THE REVOLUTIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST COMING. AND BEQUELIN SAYS THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN CHINA IS WARY OF A POWER THEY DON'T FULLY UNDERSTAND.

BEQUELIN

They can feel that they're sitting atop a volcano. And they don't really know how to read the signs. And that makes them very nervous.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

DESPITE THE THREATS, ARRESTS AND CENSORSHIP ACTIVISTS WE SPOKE WITH BELIEVE THE FUTURE BELONGS TO THE NETIZENS, CHINA'S CITIZENS OF THE NET. AS ONE BLOGGER TOLD US -- THE INTERNET IS A GIFT FROM GOD TO THE CHINESE PEOPLE.

AND JUST AHEAD ON OUR PROGRAM... A FINAL WORD FROM GROUND ZERO....

GROUND ZERO ACT 4:

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

...IT MAY SEEM OBVIOUS OR EVEN LITTLE TRITE TO END A REPORT ON THE DEATH OF OSAMA BIN LADEN HERE AT GROUND ZERO IN MANHATTAN. IT CERTAINLY WASN'T AN ORIGINAL IDEA, AS THE SEA OF TV SATELLITE TRUCKS WILL ATTEST...

BUT OF COURSE THERE'S A REASON WHY THIS IS AN OBVIOUS PLACE TO COME. BIN LADEN MAY HAVE BEEN KILLED IN PAKISTAN, HE MAY HAVE OPERATED IN AFGHANISTAN AND HE MAY HAVE BEEN RAISED AND CODDLED IN SAUDI ARABIA, BUT HE WILL BE FOREVER LINKED TO THIS NOW SACRED PARCEL OF LAND.

THIS SUNDAY NIGHT, WHEN WORD SPREAD THAT THE WORLD'S MOST WANTED TERRORIST WAS DEAD; AN ENTHUSIASTIC AND VOCAL CROWD CAME HERE TO CHEER THE NEWS. AND WHEN MONDAY CAME, PRESS FROM AROUND THE WORLD RETURNED, HOPING TO FIND THE PERFECT INTERVIEW OR VIGNETTE TO PUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS DAY IN SOME EMOTIONAL CONTEXT.

RUDY GIULIANI, FORMER NYC MAYOR

This is a sense of relief and a sense of satisfaction...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THERE WERE SOME FAMILIAR FACES IN THE CROWD...AND MANY OTHERS WHO JUST FELT THE NEED TO COME HERE... TO LEAVE NOTES...AND FLOWERS...AND TO SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS, LIKE THIS RETIRED MARINE.

CHARLES VALANO, RETIRED MARINE

When I found out Osama Bin Laden was killed, what great joy I felt inside, great joy for a scumbag that should have been killed in '01 or maybe even before that but we finally got him and it's good it's closure now.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

A RETIRED PORT AUTHORITY POLICEMAN TOLD US HE WAS WORKING HIS POST DURING BOTH TERRORIST ATTACKS ON THE WORLD TRADE CENTER. HE BROUGHT A FLAG THAT CARRIED A SPECIAL RESONANCE.

HENRY LALLAVE, RETIRED PORT AUTHORITY POLICEMAN, VIETNAM VETERAN

When I retired in 2004 I took the flag with me and I said that this flag is not going to come back to the world trade center its not going to fly again until Osama Bin Laden is dead and here she is flying back again for all the people perished over here, Shankesville Pennsylvania, the Pentagon. This flag goes out to all of them.

WOMAN

It's the best gift that he ever had...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THERE WERE VICTIM FAMILY MEMBERS FILLED WITH A DEEP AND UNDERSTANDABLE EMOTION. THEY OFTEN FOUND THEMSELVES CHASED BY A PACK OF CAMERAS AND REPORTERS.

THE TRUTH IS THAT IF YOU CAME TO GROUND ZERO LOOKING FOR PEACEFUL, POIGNANT MOMENTS, YOU WERE BOUND TO BE DISAPPOINTED.

IT'S A VERY DIFFERENT PLACE FROM THE WAY IT WAS A YEAR AGO, LET ALONE ALL THE YEARS EARLIER WHEN IT WAS A GAPING HOLE IN THE GROUND AND IN OUR NATIONAL PSYCHE.

GROUND ZERO IS NOW IS A FULL FLEDGED CONSTRUCTION ZONE, WITH THE FREEDOM TOWER ALREADY OVER 60 STORIES HIGH... AND SEEMINGLY GROWING BY THE DAY.

IT'S A REMINDER OF JUST HOW LONG AGO IT'S BEEN SINCE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001. SO MANY THINGS HAVE CHANGED, TWO BLOODY, COSTLY WARS, AN ECONOMIC RECESSION, THE HARDENING OF OUR POLITICAL DIVISIONS, JUST TO NAME A FEW.

HOPEFULLY, THE DEATH OF BIN LADEN WILL HEAL SOME OF THOSE WOUNDS AND INJECT US WITH MORE OPTIMISM WE DESPERATELY NEED.

THERE WAS SOMETHING COMFORTING IN THE HUSTLE AND BUSTLE OF NEW YORK ON MONDAY. IT SUGGESTED A NATION THAT KNEW IT NEEDED TO GET TO WORK TO START SOLVING THE MANY CHALLENGES WE FACE.

BUT AMIDST ALL THE DIN IN OUR LIVES, WE NEED TO CARVE OUT SOME TIME FOR INTROSPECTION. AT ST. PAUL'S CHAPEL RIGHT NEXT TO GROUND ZERO, THERE WAS A WELCOME RESPITE TO THE WORK-A-DAY WORLD OUTSIDE. A CHORUS PROVIDED HYMNS THAT HAVE SOOTHED SOULS FOR CENTURIES. AND THEN THERE WERE THE PICTURES OF LOVED ONES, STILL HEARTBREAKING, A REMINDER THAT THE LISTS OF THOSE WHO HAVE DIED ARE MORE THAN A STATISTIC, THEY ARE ROLL CALLS OF LIVES EXTINGUISHED FAR TOO SOON.

THE DEATH OF OSAMA BIN LADEN HAS MADE THE WORLD A SAFER PLACE. BUT WE ALL KNOW THAT THERE IS MUCH WORK STILL TO BE DONE.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

...GROUND ZERO...HERE IN MANHATTAN...AND THAT'S OUR PROGRAM FOR TONIGHT. FROM NEW YORK, FOR HDNET, DAN RATHER REPORTING. GOOD NIGHT.