

Overview

Haas Communications client [DeliverFund](#), a nonprofit that fights human trafficking, reached out to principal Christine Haas for strategic media guidance as an international rescue attempt from Taliban-controlled Afghanistan began unfolding. Mohammad Khalid Wardak, known to friends simply as “Khalid,” gave years of service to the U.S. military in Afghanistan, only to be trapped in his home country after American forces withdrew in late summer 2021. DeliverFund had been fighting for the safety of Afghan women and girls, and provided housing to 50 Afghan families in the United States, including Khalid.

Khalid had hoped to stay in his home country and fight to keep it from the Taliban’s tight fist, seeking



Afghanistan Police Weekend Reads Only on AP George W. Bush
Kabul Taliban

Afghan officer who fought with US forces rescued from Kabul

BY ALEX SANZ AND TAMMY WEBBER
Aug 19, 2021

Time was running out for Mohammad Khalid Wardak, a high-profile Afghan national police officer who spent years working alongside the American military.

Hunted by the Taliban, he was hiding with his family in Kabul, constantly moving from place to place as they tried — and failed — several times to reach a rendezvous point where they could be rescued.

only protection for his family as he fought with other brave defenders. Those efforts were no longer feasible after the Afghan president fled amid the Taliban’s swift control over the country. Khalid’s high-profile activities helping Americans and as a police officer put him in immediate danger. Once it became clear the Taliban would not allow Khalid to board any of the flights that were whisking away both American and Afghan citizens, rescue teams that included high-profile players such as former White House official Robert McCreary, sprang into action.

With timing of the utmost importance, and lives literally at stake, Haas Communications had to navigate a balance of media coverage with weeks of clandestine activities, and to include their client’s role in any coverage that was seamless while not competing with the importance of a highly visible event and other well-known players. The result was international coverage, starting with the [Associated Press](#), creating a rippling effect with headlines around the world.

Client Information

Dallas-based [DeliverFund](#) is a nonprofit intelligence organization that leverages cutting-edge technology in the fight against human trafficking in the United States. Its International Human Trafficking Analysis Center (iHTAC) serves as the central all-source, shared knowledge bank on trafficking activity, human traffickers and their networks. It is the central dissemination and coordination point for law enforcement, select nonprofits and other professionals working to end modern-day slavery. Founded by former Navy Seal Jeremy Mahugh and CIA and Air Force veteran Nic McKinley, the 501(c)3 organization also provides subject-matter expertise in victim restoration services.



Challenges & Goals

While the situation was inherently fraught with challenges, the two largest facing Haas Communications were:

- Timing – balancing secrecy and media coverage
- Crisis – developing crisis communications plan and media training for their client

The situation demanded balancing the delicate timing of preserving the necessary secrecy of planning and executing the rescue operation attempts with “breaking” the information to the right media contact within a media organization that would serve as a worldwide mouthpiece – at just the right time.

Haas Communications was also acutely aware that much could go wrong, either with the rescue operation itself or with a leak to the media. This necessitated a crisis communications plan including media training for DeliverFund spokespersons.

Approach

Haas Communications principal Christine Haas knew that the fastest way to maximize coverage with the greatest speed was to get it into the hands of the Associated Press, which “feeds” other outlets around the world. As a trusted, independent, non-profit global news organization, AP is known for its balanced and factual reporting. The right AP contact was critical for this mission, which is where Christine’s experience as an investigative journalist came into play. She also had to make sure her client was prepared with messages suited to any outcome scenario.

Results

Haas Communications was able to get AP to be the first to break the story of Khalid’s successful rescue. Several top-tier and localized outlets soon followed. The story generated news interest not for just days

Afghan officer rescued from Kabul starts new life in U.S.

BY ALEX SANZ
Sep 7, 2021

The dramatic rescue in Afghanistan happened under the cover of darkness. The Taliban were closing in, and Americans were running out of time to save Mohammad Khalid Wardak.

or weeks, but for months as Khalid and his family’s new life began in the U.S. Additionally, despite several failed rescue attempts prior to bringing Khalid home, news of those unsuccessful efforts never broke prematurely, preserving the necessary secrecy surrounding these critical operations that helped make the final attempt a success.

Finally, despite the international attention following the rescue and the high-profile players involved, Haas Communications client DeliverFund was also included in the media coverage as a key player in the rescue operations.

Some examples of the coverage:

<https://apnews.com/article/only-on-ap-kabul-7d9adb63dfed93b6d222a1e9ee902da5>

<https://apnews.com/article/police-afghanistan-only-on-ap-kabul-taliban-95cd2970fbc007111b9e54aeedbffdcb>

<https://www.usnews.com/news/us/articles/2021-09-07/afghan-officer-rescued-from-kabul-starts-new-life-in-us>

<https://www.clickorlando.com/news/national/2021/09/07/afghan-officer-rescued-from-kabul-starts-new-life-in-us/>

AP



About Haas Communications

Haas Communications was founded by veteran news anchor and investigative reporter, Christine Haas, with the mission of being THE premier marketing and communications agency, applying results-driven strategies to help clients achieve their most ambitious marketing goals and communications objectives. With her extensive background as an investigative reporter and on-camera experience, Christine quickly rose to become one of the most sought-after media training professionals in the country. Christine also leads the Haas Communications team as they offer strategic public relations services, media relations counsel, broadcast interview training and presentation coaching to a wide variety of clients around the world.