



A Life on the Line:
The *Christian Science Monitor* and the Kidnapping of Jill Carroll

Epilogue

The kidnappers' February 26, 2006, deadline came and went. The following day, the *Christian Science Monitor* posted an item on its "[Jill Carroll Update Blog](#)," which quoted Iraq's interior minister saying that he thought Carroll was alive and would be recovered safely. The paper continued to update the website and its coverage, including a March 6 article, "[Remembering Allan: a tribute to Jill Carroll's interpreter](#)," and a statement from Editor Richard Bergenheim on March 7 stating that the paper was unaware of any change in Carroll's situation.

Two days later, on March 9, the *Monitor* announced that it was renewing efforts to broadcast public service announcements (PSAs). Two announcements in Arabic, one 60 seconds long, the other 90 seconds in length, played free of charge on Kuwait's Al Rai, and Iraq's Al Sharqiya television stations. On March 29, Katie Carroll, Jill's twin sister, appeared on the Dubai-based Al-Arabiya satellite channel to appeal for information about her sibling.

Then on March 30, 82 days after she was seized, Carroll walked into the offices of the Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party in western Baghdad and handed them a note from her captors explaining who she was. The update on the *Monitor's* website that day read simply: "After being held hostage for nearly three months, Jill Carroll is free." [The Committee to Protect Journalists](#) announced that it was "overjoyed" that her ordeal had finally ended, and urged armed groups to "stop targeting innocent civilians."

Carroll reported that she was unharmed and had been treated humanely during her captivity. She returned to Boston on April 2, where she was reunited with her family. The next day she visited the *Christian Science Monitor* newsroom—the first time she had been to the paper's headquarters—and thanked reporters and staff for their efforts on behalf of "a lowly freelancer."

On May 8, the paper posted a notice on its website, calling for readers to submit questions "for Jill to consider and possibly answer." It continued: "Then check back in the next few weeks. That's when Jill will tell the story of what happened during her captivity."

On August 13, 2006, the newspaper began an 11-part series: "[Hostage: the Jill Carroll Story](#)." The multi-media package included a grainy picture of Carroll, with the word "Hostage" emblazoned to her left. On the right were links to each installment of the drama, which began with her kidnapping and ended with her family reunion. Other features on the website included slideshows, links to "Reporting from War Zones" and "Lessons Learned," and video segments featuring interviews with Carroll and members of her family. The series became one of the paper's most popular and profitable ever.

The *Monitor* editors felt that running the PSAs had contributed to Carroll's release. In its story about her kidnapping, the paper wrote:

[Editors] remain proud of the media campaign they helped mount, from the solicitation of statements on Jill's behalf to the public service announcements that ran in the Iraqi media. They believe it was targeted to the right audience—the Middle East—and well placed. They know the kidnappers saw some of it. It's presumptuous to say it led directly to her release, but "I do think that changed the mental climate," says Richard Bergenheim, editor of the *Monitor*.¹

In the fall of 2006, Carroll landed a fellowship to Harvard's Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, reserved for "distinguished experts to reflect on their discipline." Carroll spent the semester focusing on international reporting, and produced a report: "Foreign News Coverage: The U.S. Media's Undervalued Asset."

On November 2, the International Women's Media Foundation awarded Carroll a Courage in Journalism Award, given to "honor women journalists who have shown exceptional courage and bravery in the face of grave danger." Carroll's mother, who accepted the award on behalf of her daughter, told the audience at the Los Angeles ceremony: "I'm sure you wish Jill were here, but as journalists, you understand that Jill doesn't want to be the story."

Carroll returned to the Middle East for the *Monitor* in February 2007, where she reported briefly from Cairo. In August 2008, Carroll began five months of recruit training as a firefighter with the Fairfax (VA) County Fire and Rescue Department. Later that month, the U.S. military announced that it had captured Salim Abdallah Ashur al-Shujayri, also known as Abu Uthman, the al-Qaeda leader thought to have planned Carroll's kidnapping.

As of October 2008, the *Christian Science Monitor* was one of just a handful of US media outlets to maintain a full-time bureau in Baghdad. In October 2008, financial realities forced the *Monitor* to announce that starting in April 2009, it would move to a once-a-week newspaper publication schedule; its daily coverage would be available online only.

¹ Source: <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0828/p01s01a-woiq.html>.