

A Sensitive Publication

You've spent the last months working on the Roile River Delta story. It was a tough investigation but you now possess sensitive information that proves criminal collusions between the government of Petronia and the petrochemical industry. You now understand why the government tried to obstruct your research and questioned your credibility at every twist during the investigation. You are ready to publish.

Given the roadblocks that you've had throughout your investigation, you know that you should be prepared for this publication. Make a plan – based on the case – and document all the necessary precautions that you need to take ahead of publication. What are the minimum precautionary measures to take? Which situations might you expect if this turns into a worst case scenario? How might you prepare for that? Think about the safety of your team, your sources and your assets.

Your foreign collaborator joins you

After working online for a long time, one of your most important collaborators and team members come to Petronia to help you with your investigation. The foreign journalist is aware of dangers, and although (s)he has agreed to this trip, you don't want to run any unnecessary risks. It is time to prepare this journey of a lifetime for your collaborator.

Make a plan – based on the case – and document all the necessary precautions the team members in general, and the foreign journalist in particular, need to take ahead of this trip. Make sure (s)he can travel to and remain in the country safely. What are the minimum precautionary measures to take? Which situations might you expect if this turns into a worst case scenario? How might you prepare for that? Think about the safety of the foreign journalists and your assets.

Experience of the people in the delta

After all of the desk work and online investigations it is now time for some field work. Word has it that some inhabitants of the northern Roile delta are willing to share personal stories of their life in the area. Of course this offers opportunities, but it is important to prepare thoroughly. Where to start?

Make a plan – based on this case – and document all the necessary precautions to take before you can safely interview people on the ground. What are the minimum precautionary measures to take? Which situations might you expect if this turns into a worst case scenario? How might you prepare for that? Think about the safety of your team, your assets and your sources.

Your anonymous source agreed to meet

Your anonymous source, who's really been a gold mine to you, is willing to meet you in person to share the story with you. You suspect that this information is very valuable because this source claims to be under constant threat of surveillance. How do you proceed?

Make a plan – based on the case – and document all the necessary precautions to take before you can safely agree to this meeting. What are the minimum precautionary measures to take? How do you communicate with the source and how do you set up a safe meeting? Think about the safety of yourself, your assets and your source.

Look who shows up when you look into the books

Your research is progressing smoothly. You were able to put your hands on a lot of corroborating evidence. When you look at the books of the oil company which is the focus of your investigation, one name screams out at you. Your external consultant, who you thought was in your camp and who provided you with valuable background information on the petrochemical industry in Petronia, is taking money from the industry. The consultant is playing both sides!

Make a plan – based on the case – and document all the necessary precautions to take before you can safely continue to communicate within the team. Think about the safety of your assets and your sources. How are you going to structure or restructure your communication? How does this affect internal information sharing?

Long wait at the airport

The foreign journalists who has been instrumental to your investigation with his/her research abroad, has agreed to pack his/her bags and join the team in Petronia. His/her flight landed at the scheduled hour and you've seen many people from the flight exit the terminal. Not him/her though.

Two hours later (s)he appears at the arrivals gate with a dishevelled look. (S)he explains (s)he was picked out of the line at security. Carry-on luggage and passport were confiscated and (s)he was interrogated by two immigration officers who knew a creepy amount of detail about the ongoing investigation. It took close to two hours before carry-on luggage and passport were returned to him/her and (s)he was free to go.

What might you have done to mitigate against the possible impact of such a scenario? Make a plan – based on the case – and document all the necessary precautions to take to ensure the integrity of your investigation. Think about the safety of your team, its assets and your sources. How does this affect internal information sharing?