



JAMES LAWLER DUGGAN

## Training Journalists to Save Colleagues on the Front Lines

**T**HE SOUNDS of explosions and screaming combatants blast loudly. Smoke bombs cloud the air. The chaos is familiar to war reporters. But here, they're safe, learning to protect each other thanks to Reporters Instructed in Saving Colleagues. The nonprofit provides free, four-day medical-training sessions for freelance combat journalists, with a goal of preventing reporters' deaths on the front lines.

RISC was started by journalist Sebastian Junger following the deaths in April 2011 of photojournalists Tim Hetherington and Chris Hondros, who were covering the civil war in Libya.

Mr. Hetherington's injury to his femoral artery didn't have to be fatal, but none of the journalists or rebel fighters around him had the right equipment or knew how to respond in the critical first minutes. He bled to death during the 15-minute ride to the hospital.

Mr. Junger realized that if he had been there, he wouldn't have known how to help his friend, either. He saw the lack of emergency training as a systemic problem in journalism — and he wanted to fix it.

RISC's training incorporates military research on the most common types of preventable deaths in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. Three days of classroom lectures and drills culminate with a combat simulation where journalists apply tourniquets to injured dummies. Instructors throw small fireworks to mimic sniper fire, while RISC staff distract participants by shrieking loudly.

"They're really stressed, their hearts are beating," says Lily Hindy, RISC's deputy director, of training participants. "It's a pretty intense experience."

More than 260 journalists have completed the program, held since 2012 in locations ranging from Brooklyn and the Bronx to Nairobi and Kiev. So far, the majority of participants have been Americans and Western Europeans, but reaching more local journalists is a goal.

"We bring these people together who have been in very intense situations, working on their own," says Ms. Hindy. "For these four days they're actually talking about saving each other's lives. They realize how much they depend on each other in conflict zones."

Here, journalists practice providing care during a simulated firefight.

— EDEN STIFFMAN