

## *JAMES GORDON MEEK*

James Gordon Meek is a towering 6'7", gregarious punk rock art student-turned-investigative reporter, once described by journalist Catherine Herridge in her book as "a mountain of a man." James is known for news scoops such as the killing of ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and the hostage rescue of an American in Nigeria, as well as his deep dive investigations of friendly fire incidents, military cover-ups and cases of Americans held hostage by terrorist groups and rogue regimes. He began his career as an online reporter covering national campaigns and politics, but he pivoted to the threat of terrorism in 1998, as his hometown of D.C. became more fortress-like in the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing which had also claimed one of his cousins among the 168 victims.

James trekked across Panama into Colombia in 1993, aided at one point by several American missionaries who were kidnapped days later by the notorious Colombian narco-terrorist group FARC and later murdered, which he reported during their families' long ordeal. Reporting on hostage cases such as Caitlan Coleman held by Taliban in Pakistan and Kayla Mueller's captivity by ISIS and the death became a hallmark of his career over the next three decades as he focused more attention to covering international terrorism, counterterrorism and special operations. Besides reporting developments, he also shared information from a confidential network of sources to families in duress about loved ones in captivity.

He was outside the Pentagon interviewing survivors a half hour after a plane hit on September 11, 2001. That day that changed the course of his life as he followed al Qaeda along the 9/11 trail through multiple government investigations and traveling overseas to Afghanistan for combat media embeds with 3rd Special Forces Group, the 82nd Airborne Division and 10th Mountain Division between 2005 and 2010. James saw the 9/11 plotters brought into court for the first time aboard the U.S. Naval Station Guantánamo in 2008.

In 2011, James left the New York Daily News as a Washington correspondent after his last special operations embed in Afghanistan and was asked to serve as the senior counterterrorism adviser to the chairman of the U.S. House Homeland Security Committee. During that three-year period, Osama Bin Laden was killed by SEALs in Pakistan, but the homegrown terrorism threat also grew rapidly. He

worked with U.S. Special Operations Command to bolster security of operators and their families inside the U.S. homeland while also investigating extensive al Qaeda recruiting networks in the U.S. tied to a Somalia and Syria pipeline of foreign fighters.

As an ABC News Investigative Unit reporter and producer, James has been nominated multiple times and won an Emmy for national investigative reporting, as well as Society of Professional Journalists and Overseas Press Club awards. James produced, reported, and appears on camera in "3212 UN-REDACTED," an ABC feature documentary on Hulu.

With the fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban in August 2021, James succeeded in a year-long effort to evacuate his close friend Nezam, an Afghan Special Forces operator hunted by the Taliban, with the help of their friend, retired Green Beret Lt. Col. Scott Mann. James and Scott expanded the effort by creating an underground railroad they called the "Pineapple Express" -- named for the codeword Nezam had used to enter the Kabul airport -- into a larger effort to clandestinely evacuate more than 700 other Afghan special operators and their families from the Taliban-occupied capital. They are now writing a book about the evacuation efforts for Simon & Schuster, to be published in August 2022.