



Sergeant William Olas Bee has a close call when Taliban fighters open fire near Garmsir in Afghanistan's Helmand province. Bee was not injured

REUTERS/GORAN TOMASEVIC

2008 JOURNALISTS OF THE YEAR

PHOTO OF THE YEAR

The year's single best still photograph from Reuters

GORAN TOMASEVIC

For his photograph of a Marine fighting in Afghanistan

"Goran is an incredibly talented photographer who showed in this photograph not just how to capture a moment in time, but a split second. His breathtaking photograph captivately illustrates the drama and danger of war."

– David Schlesinger, Editor-in-Chief, Reuters

WINNER OVERVIEW

Goran's firsthand account of the story behind his award-winning photograph:

"If I hadn't already been pointing the camera at the Marine when the bullet hit the wall, there is no way I would have been able to react quickly enough to take those pictures.

Moments earlier I had been lazing around in Afghanistan's blistering desert heat, fending off waves of giant ants, wondering when I might get to test my new 24-mm lens.

Gunshots rang out from beyond the perimeter of the compound the U.S. Marines were guarding in the district of Garmsir, a Taliban stronghold in Helmand province, the biggest opium-producing region on the planet.

I grabbed my boots and cameras and ran to look. The Marines had spotted some Taliban moving around the compound some 200 meters away.

I took a quick look over the wall but couldn't see any Taliban. Then the gunfire began again. The Marines opened up with heavy machine guns. The Taliban answered back with single shots.

Having covered half a dozen wars, I was pretty sure the incoming fire hitting a wall near me was from a Russian-made Dragunov rifle.

I thought I'd better go back and put some trousers on. I also grabbed my flak jacket, helmet and some water. As soon as I got back outside, the firing erupted again.

Sergeant William Bee was there with his M-16 rifle. I asked him if the Taliban were shooting from the same compound as before.

He said yes and immediately stood up and aimed his rifle over the wall. Suddenly it seemed to explode from an incoming round and Bee was down.

I dropped my cameras and jumped towards him. I felt his head and neck expecting to find blood, but there was none. He was breathing, but unconscious.

The medics arrived, threw a smoke grenade, put him on a stretcher and took him away.

I picked up my cameras and shot a few more pictures, then went back to see how Bee was doing. When I found him, he was grinning from ear to ear. It was his lucky day. He hadn't been hit or seriously hurt."

Born in Belgrade in 1969, Goran Tomasevic started working for Reuters as a freelance photographer in 1992 during the Bosnia-Croatia war and subsequent political turmoil across the former Yugoslavia. He covered Kosovo and was one of the few journalists to remain in Pristina during the 1999 NATO bombing. He was based in Baghdad during the Iraq conflict (where his pictures of the toppling Saddam Hussein statue were featured in more than 200 newspapers and magazines worldwide), Jerusalem during tense times between the Israelis and Palestinians, and is now senior photographer in Egypt. Goran has covered a number of other important global stories, including presidential elections in Democratic Republic of Congo and Pakistan, the Kashmir earthquake, 2000 Sydney Olympics, 2006 World Cup and many embeds with U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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