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Bob Woodruff's long road to China

BY RICHARD HUFF
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ABC newsman Bob Woodruff says he's been talking up the idea of looking at China for years.

The conversations started long before 2006, when he was injured in a roadside blast while reporting from Iraq.

"We talked about doing a story on China," Woodruff said. "I said, 'Let's talk about China's globalization without going to China.'"

The result of his talks with producers Tom Yellin and Gabrielle Tenenbaum airs Wednesday at 10 in "China Inside Out: Bob Woodruff Reports."



Bob Woodruff in Cambodia

In the piece, Woodruff does go to China for part of the story, but a bulk of it is spent looking at how China influences the world. One segment, for example, covers China's huge financial investment in Angola in exchange for oil and more.

Another segment looks at how much China invests in the United States.

"I saw it as the most important story," Woodruff said. "People need to understand China. Not only what China's people are about, but what the government is about, and our relationship."

And how the rapid changes inside China are affecting the rest of the world. The piece airs the week the Summer Olympics are set to begin in Beijing, but that wasn't the goal.

However, the China project was back-burnered after Woodruff was nearly killed when an improvised explosive device went off while he rode in a convoy. He has returned to work but still has some side effects of the wounds he suffered.

"Physically, I don't have much of a problem anymore," Woodruff said. "With my mind it is much more about the memory of names and words."

Before the incident he had three to five synonyms for every word, he said. Now he has one or two.

"I think I'm pretty much to where I was, with less live reporting," he said. "I certainly was out of it [live reporting] for a good year because of my inability to come up with a particular word."

Now he's focused on longer, in-depth projects, such as China, or a weekly series he does for Discovery's Planet Green called "Focus Earth With Bob Woodruff."

His memory came into play with the China documentary, because gone were some of the words he knew in the language, either from not using them or because of the Iraq incident.

Woodruff got his start in journalism in China. In 1989, while there teaching law, he was called on by U.S. networks to serve as a translator. He then fell in love with journalism.

Since 1996 he has been with ABC, and has spent much of his career reporting international stories.

The China documentary is just the latest.

"We went to China, Cambodia, Angola and Brazil, which are not close and not easy to travel around in," he said. "These are the kinds of places I've been addicted to. I

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