

MY
STORY

CHRISTOPHER
SIMOVICH
Global
Strategies

THREE-
YEAR
GROWTH
1,470.4%

2010
REVENUE
\$4.9
MILLION

MEXICAN DRUG CARTELS AND OTHER HAZARDS

Most CEOs find themselves in the line of fire at least occasionally. For Christopher Simovich, CEO of Global Strategies, a boutique security agency based in Aliso Viejo, California, that is no metaphor.

We were driving northbound on Highway 85 in Monterrey, Mexico, guarding two executives. It was a typical hot Mexican day, with typical traffic. There was a lead and a follow car, each with a security driver and a protection agent. And me. We were driving Honda Accords—armored vehicles tend to stand out in this area. Somehow, they still spotted us.

Two Dodge Rams emerged behind us. The men inside—there were about six altogether—wore camouflage uniforms and held fully automatic weapons. We think they were Los Zetas, a drug cartel known for kidnapping wealthy foreign travelers.

Once they began shooting at us, we floored it. We probably hit speeds of 90 miles per hour. We were literally up on sidewalks and swerving in and out of traffic. It was the whole Hollywood-style hail-of-bullets type of thing. People in their cars tried to duck down as fast as they could.

We had the two executives take cover on the floor of the vehicle.

It's funny. In the middle of the chase, one of the principals looked up at me and said, "Can you turn down the air conditioning?" He was most likely in shock.

At some point, a luxury vehicle merged into the middle of this, and the Zetas turned their attention on them. I can't tell you what happened from there. All we know is that that vehicle was fired upon and literally taken off the road. They were either kidnapped or killed; I'll never know.

The chase lasted for about a mile and a half. In the end, we got out safely. But we also got lucky.

Some people ask me why I still do this. I suppose it's a bit of an addiction. I travel about 230 days out of the year, and I make several trips to Afghanistan, even though my executive vice president would really like me to stop. I guess there

are just certain people who have an internal barometer that inclines them toward protective services. I spent 10 years in special operations; that's something that becomes ingrained within you.

There's a great quote by Nelson Mandela. He once told his security detail, "I don't have you here to tell me where to go and where not to go. I have you here so I can go wherever I please." Ultimately, that's what we have to be able to provide our clients. The folks that we work for are huge risk takers. They're going to places where things aren't always so safe. And they don't want us to stop them.

It can be a thankless job. When we got back to the U.S., one of the principals turned to me while he was on the phone and said, "My wife says to say thank you for getting me out of Mexico alive." He never thanked me himself. But his wife did. **Q**

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213

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