



Jeff Widener, *Tiananmen Square*, June 4th 1989

The Picture / The Story

Today, marks the 27th anniversary of the June 4th massacre, as Chinese Troops killed unarmed civilians trying to block the military's advance towards Tiananmen Square. American photojournalist Jeff Widener made his way into Beijing, and documented the civil unrest that was occurring in the city. He has a unique story that describes how he made this iconic photograph, nominated finalist for the 1990 Pulitzer Prize, which has come to represent the single individual alone, standing up against the power and force of a determined military action.

In his own words, Jeff Widener describes the story behind his photograph, made on this fateful day in Tiananmen Square:

“My picture of a lone man stopping a column of tanks is a classic example of being in the right place at the right time. In fact, the photo almost didn't happen. I had a bad case of the flu and on June 4th, 1989 I suffered a serious concussion from a rock that was thrown by a protester. To top it all off, I almost blew the shot due to the shutter speed of the camera being too slow. The Chinese did not want me to enter the country as a journalist, so I entered the country through Hong Kong as a tourist. The picture was made possible with the help of an American student named Kurt, who allowed me access to his hotel room. He then smuggled the film back to the AP Beijing office in his underwear. The next day, I received telegrams from all over the world that my picture was fronting newspapers [on the cover of newspapers] in every country. To this day, the fate of that lone man is unknown.” -- Jeff Widener, February 26th, 2006.