

# The US Army and the Media in Wartime: Historical Perspectives

The Proceedings of the Combat Studies Institute  
2009 Military History Symposium

Kendall D. Gott  
General Editor



Combat Studies Institute Press  
US Army Combined Arms Center  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas





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## Foreword

These Proceedings are the seventh volume to be published in a series generated by the annual Military History Symposium hosted by the Combat Studies Institute. Each year, these conferences bring together both military and civilian historians, as well as formal and informal students of military history, literally from around the world, for the purposes of presenting ideas and points of view on current military issues from a historical perspective. The 2009 symposium was sponsored by the US Army Combined Arms Center (CAC) and was held 25–27 August 2009 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

This symposium explored the relationship between the US Army and the media within a historical context. The panelists also examined current issues, dilemmas, problems, trends, and practices associated with the US Army and its coverage by the American and international media. This year we were fortunate to have five distinguished featured speakers who have built exceptional careers in journalism spanning decades. Our panelists were also experts in their fields and enriched the discussion with their insights.

This seventh volume of proceedings contains the papers or the presentation transcripts of the participating speakers and panelists. It includes transcriptions of the question and answer periods following the presentations as well. These materials can also be found online at the CSI Web site at <http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/CSI/>.

These annual symposiums continue to be an important event for those within the Army who believe that insights from the past are relevant to current military challenges. The attendees have uniformly found them to be of great benefit. We hope that the readers of this and past volumes will find the experience equally useful. *CSI—The Past is Prologue*.

William G. Robertson  
Director, Combat Studies Institute



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## DAY 1—KEYSTONE ADDRESS

### **Mr. Bill Kurtis Kurtis Productions**

(Transcript of Presentation)

I thought you'd say, "Hoorah!" Woop, woop. That's right. A diverse group. Thank you. I'm pleased to be here. If I weren't here, in Chicago I would be in an IRS appeal hearing. So I put it off until tomorrow and said I've got to go down and talk to our men in uniform. Which reminded me of the young agent who wanted to get ahead with the IRS and he went to his director and said, "Let me do the rabbi. Let me do the rabbi." Now, the rabbi had a reputation of doing something wrong, but they just couldn't put their finger on it. So he said, "Okay, dress up in your suit and go down and you can interview the rabbi and see what you can find." So he knocks on the door, rabbi answers, he goes in and he said, "Well, I have a few questions. You've been taking a lot of deductions for a number of things that I find questionable. First would be the candles. Now, you use a lot of candles and you write off that deduction." The rabbi said, "We're very frugal. You know, candles melt, the wax goes on the table, we scrape up the wax, we put it in a box, and after we have enough we send it back to the candle maker and he sends us a new set of candles. They last largely for a year." "Well, what about the matzah, the crackers?" He said, "Well, the same principle applies. We don't eat all the crackers and we have a lot of crumbs that go down on the table. We scrape them up, put them in a box, save them, send them back to the baker, and once a year he sends us a box of new matzah." He said, "Well, you do a lot of Bris ceremonies and circumcisions. What about the foreskins that you collect?" He said, "Well, the same principle applies. You know, we save those, we put them in a box, we send them out once a year back to the IRS and once a year they send a little prick like you."

So I know why you asked me today. I'll be with you until 10 o'clock. I'm going to set aside enough time so that you can ask questions, so you can be thinking of it. That's my last real joke today, I think, unless I go through my best commercials with Floyd Mayweather and Andy Roddick for AT&T.

I was born in the Marine Corps actually. I was 13 before I realized there was a world outside the utility fence that surrounded Cherry Point and El Toro Marine Base and points in between. My dad was an aviator in World War II. I knew the Marine Handbook before I knew the Boy Scouts Handbook. I could field strip an M1 by the time I was nine. Of course, when you live on base, all the kids get all the weaponry without the firing pin and so we really had a good time. We went through our cavalry stage, our first cav, and then really on horseback, and then we went into infantry and trench warfare in World War I. It's good to be back on a military base. I went into the Marine Corps Reserve, wanted to be a lawyer, got out, went to law school at Washburn, passed the bar in 1966. Then I was studying for the bar and a friend of mine, working at the local TV station, asked me if I wanted to fill in while he left early on vacation. So I went out and did the 6 o'clock news, and about 6:30, we got a bulletin from Manhattan that a cold front was coming through and "you'd better

stay” because we took it very seriously. Much more serious than the big metropolitan television stations. So it was about 6:45, then 7:00—it was a CBS station. “Lost in Space” was the television show, and they said, “Well, why don’t you go on and give the all clear because it’s coming through, but we don’t think we have any problems.” So, as I’m on the air, I’m 26, I get a two-way cut in off camera, I mean off—yeah, off the camera, actually from the other room, the newsroom, and I could hear Ed Rutherford, our film cameraman say, “We have a tornado on the ground; it’s approaching Burnett’s Mound.” Burnett’s Mound was the Indian burial mound that the old legend said any tornado that comes from the southwest or the northeast, it would hit the Mound and dissipate. It had a logical basis to it. Only this was so big, it was about a half mile wide. It hit Burnett’s Mound all right, and came crashing down on top of Huntington Apartment Complex. The next transmission we heard, “Well, the Huntington Apartment Complex was gone.” There were 200. Now, if I draw a line in my head—I’m on camera—from the first sighting to Huntington Apartment Complex, it pointed for the capitol building and all points in between—Topeka State Hospital, Washburn University campus where my wife and baby were in married housing. They, in the meantime, had been getting the word and ran up to the Science building. Everybody parked, of course, in the parking lot. I didn’t see a thing because I’m looking into a television camera. Gave the word, “For God’s sake, take cover.” Everybody headed for the basement. You may know the story. The 1966 tornado in Topeka wiped out the university—8 out of 10 sandstone buildings, wonderful old buildings, crumbled. Hit the Science building; a sucking sound came up the elevator shaft. It took the cars in the parking lot and wadded them in little balls and put them in the tree and in the light space leading down to the basement of the Science building. My law school class that I should have been studying with, it sent them into the basement. They said, “We could see this black front that was coming toward us across the golf course and we thought it was birds up in the air, then we realized it was debris from houses that had been churning up.” I was all set to go practice law, but I say an act of God saved the law profession from my participation. Within 3 months I was in Chicago working for CBS and a 30-year career. I would not change it at all because it’s the best seat in the house for history as it unfolds before you—an interactive kind of participation because usually you are there.

I want to go back to a specific part of history in this symposium of the military and the media. We’ll save that for the question and answer session. But to give you a slice of history that I think might be relevant today, and that’s the Vietnam era and the specific part of it that starts in 1975.

The North Vietnamese were coming down Highway 1. Bruce Dunning, a CBS news correspondent was on a 707 I believe taking off from Da Nang Air Force Base when the . . . and shot out the back. It must have been a 727 where the stairs go down. As Vietnamese forces, South Vietnamese forces, were running along trying to get on the stairs and out of the way of the North Vietnamese as they progressed, I was doing a standup in the central square, the marketplace in Saigon. From out of nowhere, someone came up and whispered in my ear, “They’ll be here in 2 weeks.” It was 2 weeks to the day that the North Vietnamese entered the city. My dad, I took my dad with us. We were the only ones. I was shooting my own film. He was my muscle on the side. I knew he would get a kick out of it, and it was something he talked about for the rest of his life. Still back in the action. I had to find a peg,

an angle, connected to home because I was working for CBS, but primarily at Chicago. There was a flight engineer from Hammond, Indiana, who was flying volunteer flights with freighters, 707s, that were lifting rice from Tan Son Nhut in Saigon to Nam Peng. Nam Peng was being surrounded by the Khmer Rouge and it was kind of a Berlin air lift. The distance was only Chicago to Peoria, less than an hour's flight. I went out and had a beer with the flight crew the night before and talked my way onto an empty seat right behind the pilot. They liked to have the company. I was there. It took 2 hours to load the rice sacks onto the 707, a great plane, and we took off. There was no air traffic control at that time. The US forces had really pulled out except for security around the Embassy. I looked down at the countryside just pocked with shell craters. We came in over Nam Peng, one circle around—they didn't want to do more than that—and noticed a ship in the Mekong River had turned over on its side and the Communists were up on the side trying to get some of the supplies. Landed. They had lost a plane to the left—it was burning. Taxied up to the offloaders who were waiting for us, and what had taken 2 hours to load took 9 minutes to unload. Salty Walz was the flight engineer's name, and he said, "Don't get out of the plane because we won't wait for you." So the door closes and we are taking off, and they said, "Have you ever seen a rocket before because there's one right there with a little plume of dirt." I swear to God he took it off like a Piper Cub, just threw the throttle forward and we were off. Climbed to probably 20,000 feet for the flight back to Saigon, and as we're coming into Saigon, I said there was no traffic controller, there were still sorties that were coming out, a propeller flown by Vietnamese pilots, trying to support as best they could the delaying action. I, in the meantime, had unbuckled and gone into the back to shoot the empty hold. I got the rice there, but I wanted the aftereffect. As I'm there, my plane had to dive very quickly to avoid a midair collision. I hit that centrifugal curve and floated up into the air and literally grabbed the loading net that was there. I pulled myself down and I thought, "Well, that's it. I've had a good life. I've been 30 years old and got some excitement." I sheepishly crawled back to my seat, and the pilot looked back and said, "I told you not to unbuckle your seatbelt." There were a hundred of those little stories.

Saigon was panicked. There was the look of terror on the faces of everyone there because Kissinger said there will be a bloodbath when the Communists come in. There was an errant South Vietnamese pilot who bombed the Presidential Palace, which caused more panic. And so everybody, as you know from the news reel photos of trying to get on the helicopter on top of the Embassy, was trying to get out. I got out on an Air France flight and was not there for the liftoff from the top and of course the movement over to the carriers.

What happened when the Communists came into Saigon? What happened was a graduate study. They had been to Revolutionary University in Moscow preparing exactly for this moment. I went back in 1980. I was the first US reporter back in Vietnam, and you will see in a little bit going out on the Mekong Delta with a professor from Saigon University, then in 1980 Ho Chi Minh University, who detailed all the steps. Cadres entered the town; tanks went immediately to the Presidential Palace. The first cadres took the radio station, the electric utility, sewer, and water. The town didn't miss a beat. It just kept going. It was 15 seconds of dead air between the time the South Vietnamese announcer on the radio station stepped away and the North Vietnamese announcer stepped in. The announcement was, "There will be no bloodbath. Stay in your homes. We will tell you what to do." It was quiet.

Slowly, the North Vietnamese filtered in. There were soldiers, but there wasn't a heavy presence. Within a week, they said, "We're going to divide the blocks into information centers because this is now your country. We are uniting the country rather than taking over a country, and we want to know what kind of government you want. Our representatives will be coming door-to-door. You will have a meeting in every block and we will tell you this." Then the cell leaders, who had been either working for or were Viet Cong, gathered those on the block together and handed out papers. They said, "Tell us your experience so we know where to place you in the new government. We want you to be honest, tell us your feelings." At that point, everything was rather friendly and the mood was pretty good, so people actually told the truth and wrote down on their dossiers their history. Those were collected, sent to a block, a region, a central command point if you will, and the country was then shut down. Six hundred thousand people were sent to reeducation camps. Those reeducation camps were to familiarize them with how the Communists do business and that kind of government. So suddenly they had poured out their feelings, their history, and they knew everybody who had worked for the US Government, knew the girlfriends, knew the wives, knew the children. A lot of the girlfriends, all the girlfriends of US servicemen were sent to the reeducation camps, considered prostitutes. There they learned black lacquer, which is a wonderful national craft. They learned silk, how to sew. Some high-ranking people, let's say either in the military or in the echelons of the community, were given a bag of rice and sent out to the forest to soil that wasn't particularly suited for rice paddies or growing and said, "Okay, you have 6 months, grow your food." This is a peasant revolution. You're no longer in charge. You live if you can grow your own food. If you can't, then you won't live.

We don't really know how many citizens were killed. There isn't a lot of stories, aren't a lot of stories that are coming out of the Vietnam takeover. Most of our attention was in Cambodia where a similar takeover took place and, of course, the imposition of a new kind of communism, the Pol Pot idea, which went over and studied for awhile. The years after, prior to the tribunal that I believe is still going on to try and find justice in the country. The Vietnamese actually went into Cambodia to stop the slaughter—the holocaust at our best guess two million killed.

I was doing a nature documentary in Cambodia and we went into an area near Cambodia and the Vietnamese border where the Khmer Rouge had sort of taken the area and lived/camped. They said a conservation group, sort of like *National Geographic*, is coming through. We were the first ones in, film crew. They didn't really know exactly to give us a forest ranger, so they assigned a squad and we had Chinese rockets and a machinegun, 30-caliber machinegun, and AK-47's leading us into the forest, getting on elephants to ride in. I realized, my God, these are the guys who carried out the holocaust. About 3 or 4 days in, I get word that they wanted to talk to me. I wasn't going to ask any hard questions in the middle of the jungle when they were the only ones who knew the way out. They said, "You know, we've gone to our priest and we're feeling bad, remorse, guilt." I say, "For killing all the people?" They said, "Yes, we were ordered to do it." I said, "Well, how did you do it?" They said, "We were very young. Some of us were 10 years old, child soldiers. Some of us were 15, teenagers. First, they took us aside and they trained us to kill insects. Step on an insect. Then we graduated up to birds, and then small rodents, and within our religion we'd

sacrifice animals, so we'd kill a bull, kill a cow. We would take a machete and we would cut the head off so that we became used to blood and swinging a machete. Then it became very easy to jump to human beings. When the word comes down within a democracy—not a democracy—but within an apparatus, a bureaucracy, so that the top leaders are far removed from the guys who actually carry out the orders on the ground, we were afraid we would be killed if we didn't. So anybody who wore glasses, the intelligentsia,” and you've heard these stories, “anyone who hinted that they could read a book or could read at all or had education or worked for the government or had a good job, we would separate them out and we would hit them right in the back of the head with either a baseball bat or a hoe or a shovel and that's how we killed them all. Two million people. We didn't shoot them. They lined them up and we just piled them in the rice paddies.” That was Cambodia, roughly the same time, '75 to '78.

Back to Vietnam. Once they had control of the city, they could build it the way they wanted. There were South Vietnamese, especially military, that were there 20 years later, 25 years later. But for the most part, they didn't have to have their holocaust, their slaughter. They came out of a civil war. In '75, '76, '77, the US servicemen, we were glad to get out of Vietnam. We had had enough. Protesters up to our chins and just hating everything. The relationship between the military and the media really started going bad in '65–66. Marines landed in July, the first, the real buildup of boots on the ground started. Everybody believed we were coming out of an era where we believed everything the government said. Then the reporter, never let a reporter in because he'll actually report what he sees, he got into the country and began seeing this big contradiction between what was happening at MACV, where the word was in press conferences in Saigon, and what was actually happening in the field. So Tet comes along in '68 and Walter Cronkite happened to be there. Nobody knew that it was going to hit. So Cronkite, famous and made more famous as we looked at his obit over the last few weeks, said, “This is going to be a long struggle and we're not going to win it.” And LBJ said, “Well, if I've lost Cronkite, I've lost the war.” But what he was really saying is that it's much worse than we were being told. The minute you lose the trust of the media, you're dead, because they'll never trust you again. It's like a coverup, a lie. So you don't want to do it, and there's another way that you can communicate with the media and everybody is truthful. All they want is a straight story. I've never met a reporter—there are reporters out there and maybe I have met one or two—but most reporters want to do a good job and they're there and they'll see it and they'll report it. They won't shape it for you or against you, but you have to have that relationship.

I think with the Gulf War and post-Vietnam, I've seen a lot of changes. But, nevertheless, let's get back to '66–67. When the veterans got home, they couldn't wear their uniforms going back into the neighborhoods because they would be spit on. They were called baby killers. They were blamed for the war. There was this lash out, illogical and unreasonable, as if they asked to be over there so they could go and kill Vietnamese and be baby killers. It was a terrible time for the military and for veterans especially. There were no homecoming parades, not even a thank you. And they were feeling bad. I was in the newsroom at Channel 2 in 1978. It was around November, late November, and a fellow who taught at Columbia College nearby in Chicago came in and said, “Maude DeVictor wanted me to give this to you.” It was a manila envelope, and if you're a reporter, I mean,



you cannot—I was in the middle of—there were a couple of stories breaking and I was trying to type them up, but I got this manila envelope and was wondering what that is. Curiosity will kill the cat. So you open it up and there were 12 names and a very short tip that said, “I’m a regional veteran’s representative at the local office of the Veteran’s Affairs down around Congress in Chicago. These are names of 12 men who served in Vietnam with symptoms that can’t be explained by doctors. They were all exposed to a defoliant in Vietnam. I saw a story that you did 6 months ago on a defoliant called Agent Orange and I thought there might be a connection and you might be interested.” I swear to God, in one second my mind flashed ahead and said, “Biological and chemical warfare, backlash on our own troops. This may be a story that will never go away.” So I went out to do my ground work and I went first to Sergeant Owens who was an Air Force sergeant and he lived, at least his address was on the south side of Chicago. I knocked on the door to just try and confirm his symptoms. His wife came to the door, and she said, “Well, my husband died 1 month ago.” I said, “Well, can I come in and talk?” I said, “Did he ever talk about Agent Orange? Have you ever heard that phrase?” “Oh yes. Well, he was with a spray unit/squadron and they were up around the DMZ, Plaku, Special Forces, and he said some days it was as thick as the Los Angeles smog.” Little things like that will catch your attention.

So I went ahead and interviewed the second. It was Milton Ross who lived in Mattoon, a little further south of Chicago. He was having trouble with his marriage sexually, sexual dysfunction, psychological problems, PTSD, although at that time, we really didn’t even have the PTSD name. We were still working on World War II shell shock to describe this psychological disorder coming out of combat and service. And as we were lighting up the living room to do an interview, his young son came in (he was about 5 years old) to sit with daddy and the family. He put his hand up on daddy’s leg, and we looked down and his fingertips were hanging, congenitally deformed. We zoomed in, of course, and got a big close up and I said, “Well, tell me about that.” He said, “Well, I think that it was caused by my exposure to the defoliant in Vietnam. We had it all over the place. We would clear areas around firebases to take out the cover. We didn’t want the enemy coming in so close.” In fact, the more I learned about Agent Orange, the more I realized that I had sprayed with my dad on the pastures the same combination of chemicals 24D and 245T. I did not know at the time that 245T contained a little ingredient, a manmade substance that’s the most toxic we make called dioxin. And there were four, there were stacks of research papers from tests on farmers that showed no effect. It’s absolutely safe.

Well, I’ve got a problem here. Now, we have a story. Now, this is the part of the media that is not a quick headline. It’s an investigative report. I was going up against the chemical companies who were already out there saying there’s absolutely no problem here. But, as my research showed, the National Association of Science had gone to Vietnam to study the problem because they were getting reports of deformities among the Vietnamese. And in 1970 and then ’72, Richard Nixon banned the use of it as a defoliant in Vietnam. So something was up. But it’s very difficult to show that a chemical that passes through a male can cause deformities. Usually, you just lower the sperm count and abort a birth. So we had to find a scientist who believed that yes you can pass deformities through the male. So we had to prove that and we had to prove that in fact Agent Orange was applied as it had not

been intended. Why? It's war. If it doesn't cause any human problem to us or to those on the ground, then we don't have to mix it to 50/50. We can mix it really heavy. Now, it's a hormone that causes leaves to grow fast, to essentially take a life cycle and squeeze it into 2 weeks. There were some guys who said, "We saw the leaves falling off the trees in 2 hours." So we knew that we had a concoction here that was war grade and was really potent. The reason for using it is probably very good and very sound. Admiral Zumwalt said he would do it again even though his son died of what he felt was exposure to Agent Orange.

We prepared an hour show that laid out our case, local television station, 10:30 at night. It ran once, and AP picked it up. Cronkite show picked it up, it was a pretty good story. Still, it really didn't have legs until the Vietnam Veteran picked it up. Took the 3/4-inch videotapes and began sending them around, and they said, "You know, we're not crazy. We shouldn't be blamed for the war. There really is something wrong with those of us who have been exposed." So it was a catalyst among the veterans groups. They carried the ball. It led to the wall, the Vietnam Wall, because they said, "We need a memorial," and the veterans built the wall themselves with Maya Lin as the designer. So they had to take control of history and their own destiny.

So I got a call from a representative, Abner Mikva, who is still around, and he said I want you to come back to Congress and show it there because the VA is resistant. We got back to Congress and it was the Armed Forces Subcommittee. I thought we'd just go in and maybe show it to the committee members, House members, and walked into the room and it was full. Sort of like this. They're standing around because they had heard of this growing snowball of a story and those who were involved like the VA wanted to come in and give it a knockout punch. "It's just a local station; it really doesn't have legs. If it were big, why, the networks would be running with it." So we started the screening and about 10 minutes in—I'll never forget it; I choke up every time—the camera zooms in to the son of Milton Ross and I heard, "Oh my God," and there was a quiet that spread across the room much like this for the rest of the show. And when it hit, the VA representative was on his feet saying, "Here are 10 things that we will do immediately to reach out to the veterans even though we can find no connection. At this point, we must give them treatment."

Well, it lasted for 10 years. The VA did the best they could I think. It's very difficult as it is difficult for cancer to trace back to that pollutant that may have been a trigger for uncontrolled cell growth. Eventually, within 5 years the chemical companies all settled for what seems to be a pittance today, \$180 million, sent to the veterans. It really didn't do much good. But 100,000 men and women were tested, an epidemiological study that resulted in a finding of elevated soft tissue sarcomas like lymphoma among those who had been exposed to this defoliant in Vietnam. Still going on. It's become a household word. It's become part of our culture and when you get right down to it, if any of you know the history of it, a lot of illnesses are lumped into it. But very often, these very powerful tools that we use to make war, we really don't know the unintended consequences of them, especially biological and chemical warfare. So that's history. I don't know that it's any guide, but at least you know a piece of history from Vietnam that involved the media. We were right. We had to be right. We're as good as our last story essentially, and I'm proud of that contribution in my career and will stand as sort of the, I think, the right way to do a story.

As far as the rest of the military is concerned, I know I'm proud of you. I'm proud of our efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Let me just give you a little insight on what an old veteran feels. It started with the first casualty and the first death from an IED in Baghdad. I felt this kind of ghost inside of me, even though I have a very comfy life. I like my job, and I like going to work. I like going back to my garden. But for some reason, I wanted to be there. I wanted to go and support—couldn't walk more than a block I'm sure—but that's the kind of feeling that wells up in millions of guys who have touched the military. So if you ever think that you're out there alone, you're not. Just ask.

I'm going to open up to questions and try to find something intelligent to say.



## DAY 1—KEYNOTE ADDRESS

### Questions and Answers

(Transcript of Presentation)

**Mr. Bill Kurtis**  
**Kurtis Productions**

**Moderated by Major Dex Davis, Section 12 Bravo**

#### **Major Davis**

As the moderator, I get the privilege of asking the first question. Sir, with today's ever-changing media and technology advancements, what would you recommend to universities handling curriculum and instructions to avoid producing students with knowledge and skills that may not be the most current?

#### **Mr. Kurtis**

Oh boy. You know, the media is changing just like so many businesses in these economic times. My old station, CBS in Chicago, is losing money. Unheard of in television. It was a license to steal. Westinghouse wanted 50 percent, 50 cents on every dollar they brought in as profit. We were down around 20 or 30 percent back in the good old days. The *Tribune* is in bankruptcy; the *Sun Times* in Chicago is in bankruptcy. Don't know about the *Kansas City Star*. *New York Times* maybe not quite in bankruptcy, but they're close to it. Their revenues have fallen because they're advertising driven. And when advertising falls, when nobody is buying, no banks are lending money, then you have a crash and the media has really taken it. So, a 400-person newsroom in the *Chicago Tribune* is down to 180. So it's kind of hard to say to a J-School, the Journalism School graduate, okay, go get a job as a reporter because there are none out there. So how do you train? You've got to be computer proficient. Bloggers have in many ways taken over the communications business. Where will we get the Agent Oranges? The people who can devote the time and the resources to it? Bloggers don't get any money for the most part, but they also don't have any editorial checks. So we run the risk of relying too much on blogger information and then not enough in testing over and over everyday a news organization that is as good as its last story, where you can judge the truth. So you have a good job. Don't lose your day job. We're headed toward the one man—first of all, the communication is interactive. People want to test it. People want to hear from other people who have used, and write a review on a restaurant. It's a new day. And so you need to be able to shoot, edit on your laptop, then it's all there, report. What I think is difficult is the 5 years covering the police blotter, checking out stories, finding out who's lying and who is not, gauging your choice of words against the more experienced people, and working with an editor to guide you. That's not around a lot. So good luck. Long way to kind of sum up the state, the bad state of the media. There are still

a few big organizations left, but there are fewer and fewer people who are covering, let's say, Iraq and Afghanistan. It costs money. It's tough.

### **Audience Member**

Sir, Major Chuck Ziegenfuss, Small Group 21B. You say that bloggers don't have editorial control, don't have the resources available. I remember during the last election runoff, something going on at CBS news about some documents about President Bush's early years in the military, and bloggers were the ones that exposed that to be complete and utter BS and CBS fell flat on their face for it. The last media panel we had said that the media was there as an organization to make money and the blogosphere is not. How does an organization that is there to make money also claim to be self-policing? How does that work? If you're there to make money or are you there to tell the truth?

### **Mr. Kurtis**

Both. You have to make money to be able to marshal the crews to go out and actually visit the sites where the news is, but you also have to be dedicated to the truth. Dan Rather—boy, he had a fall from grace, he certainly did, and couldn't stand up to the story. We're all subject to examination like that. The producer said that she did not know that we are now subject to a jihad from the bloggers, a blogger jihad. But you know, if they find a niche and if you can't back up your story, you deserve to go down. So we're dedicated to the truth, but look at the newspapers? It's always been this dual role and advertising makes it possible for the reporters to go out and bring it in.

Now, you bring up another issue and that is whether or not the big media, the networks, the larger newspapers have an agenda and are politicized. In my 30 years with CBS, unlike Bernie Goldberg, the conservative voice now, I never saw anybody who was slanting the news contrary to facts in a situation. You know, it's difficult—I would see opinions perhaps, and feature stories perhaps. But it's hard enough. One thing it's difficult to realize—in the coverage of the Vietnam war, today we take for granted satellite feeds out of your hotel room. There was no satellite during the Vietnam war. There was no satellite transmission beaming up from Saigon ever. The closest it ever got was Bangkok and that wasn't until the '70s, in the latter part of the war. So you had to fly your film—and it's film which must be developed, then edited, not instantly like we can do it on a laptop—you had to fly it to first Tokyo, then they got one to Hong Kong, so there are cases of guys who would carry \$7,000 around in their pocket, go up to the pilot and they would charter a 707 to get film into Hong Kong so they could beam it back. In the early stages of the war, they had to get it all the way to San Francisco, so they set up a bureau to cut the pieces in San Francisco to put it on the coax cable to get to New York—that kind of effort is so difficult just to get a few facts out. You don't have time to slant it. But let's put that aside. And incidentally, slant is built in. Slant is built into the time condensation. I covered the Angela Davis trial in California and was asked to sum up a 4-week prosecution's case in a minute and a half. I said more talent goes into choosing words to represent whole stories and thoughts than in really communicating information like that.

Now, we have four 24-hour cable channels. Something happens and we expect to see it within an instant. And it's all opinion. It's all opinion. So we divide that between MSNBC,

which is a more liberal view to counteract Fox, a more conservative view, and CNN that tries to go down the middle. So that too has changed.

### **Audience Member**

Sir, Major John Busa from Section 12 Bravo. I was listening to an NPR report yesterday that stated that only about 2 percent of the media coverage or total media coverage since 1 January has been on the war in Afghanistan. The report said, as you stated earlier, that one of the reasons is that the media agencies don't have the resources to fully cover the war. How would you, what tips would you give us as the military to field that gap and make sure that our stories get the national attention that they deserve?

### **Mr. Kurtis**

Go local. You know, the Illinois National Guard was there for a year and there were a few local television reporters who went over, paid their own way incidentally. I paid my own way when I went to Saigon in '75. So they will go and do—it's a great story for a local home town. But you know, I hate to say it, but it's kind of old news. This war has been around a long time and people are just tired of seeing the same old thing, which is usually the aftermath of a car bomb. That takes up the bulk of coverage of the Iraq War. There was never a lot of time for building schools, which is a shame, and for those kinds of programs. But straight tip—contact local reporters and you think of the story over there. Here we are, instead of going to the Cubs game, our men are walking patrol everyday facing snipers on the streets of Baghdad. That's a great story. Afghanistan may be a little more difficult because it's harder to get in. But again, WGN Superstation embraced this reporter and took him right with them. So that is great.

You know, Mayor Daly's son, Patrick, went to Afghanistan. He was with a PSYOPs group. I don't think he wanted coverage, but again, there are some individuals with stories to tell. We were looking at the Battle of Fallujah and wanted combat footage. It was difficult to have it released and unclassified to come to us. So you could make it easier. You almost have to be the reporter and call me. I'll tell you, because someone like me or a reporter likes nothing more than to hear, "I have something you should see. We haven't shown it to anyone else."

### **Audience Member**

Sir, I'd like to come from the standpoint of the present and how they deal with the families on the backside. My husband was recently deployed—a battalion commander, 14 months in Iraq. During that time, we had a child killed. The news picked up that we weren't doing anything for the family. I called the press and told them what you said, just said, "I'll give you the real story if you'll report it." We were trying to protect the privacy of the family who had just lost a child and had another child abused in a dual military family. They wouldn't report it and they didn't—there was no print afterwards on what was done for that family. So if we're trying to create a relationship, a symbiotic relationship, then how do I work with the press, or how do all these people work with the press when they're in situations where you may get information that is biased from a neighbor who doesn't know what in the world's going on? When we want to help you report the truth, how do you want us to get that through to you?

**Mr. Kurtis**

It's all in communication. You know, communication with the family, communication with the neighbor, communication with the press, developing a relationship with a reporter who will believe you and you believe them—it's all in relationships. I'm just backstage. Had a 3 second conversation and I think a next phase—see, I see an awful lot. I've been out of the front line news coverage doing my commercials and running my grass fed beef ranch for a number of years. And I'm like an old fire horse. You know, you smell the story and I can see them all over the place. But in my little 3 second conversation, to me that's the next phase, is we know there's PTSD from guys coming back. What about PTSD in the families? We know the guys will want to be and serve in Iraq, one to advance their career, two because they are serving their country, three because it's made a lot easier than a guy who's on the other side of the world and finds it difficult even to call home, now you're in daily touch, that whole process is so new. Now, I don't know whether that's being censored or not. That's really something to kind of open up. But . . .

Well, yeah, back to the family story. To me, that's a very good start, especially for a local newspaper. But you got to get into the facts and kind of work them out. I'd be happy to talk to you about it. PTSD among the families, that's great. Just like we are learning more and more about concussions and head injuries that have an effect on football players, boxers. You know, what does that blow to the head really do? It's much more serious than we think. There's Natasha Richardson. You know, just fell on the back of her head and died. So now, because of that story, all of us, very first thing we think of is, is there a problem if somebody is hit in the head. So that—we all learn from that. But that's a good peg. You see, you need something new like that. We've seen, we've been saturated—I mean, just to be very crass—with our presence in Vietnam and all the problems. The next story is, okay, when are we getting out? Now, back to Afghanistan, access to those marines or Special Forces groups that are really on the front line, and the next big story, finding Osama Bin Laden. Call me when you do.

**Audience Member**

Sir, my name is Major [*inaudible*] from Pakistan and part of Staff Group 19 Delta. You talked about the contribution the media made to the national war effort during the Vietnam war. I wanted to bring in an international perspective and ask you that in times of war, both the national military and the national media are expected to preserve, promote, and protect the national interest and that is quite natural. But with such kind of convergence in terms of expectations, how is the objectivity in reporting affected in an absolute sense, not in a national sense?

**Mr. Kurtis**

We don't see ourselves as the mouthpiece for the government. It has its own mouthpiece called "Voice of America" and that's fine. But to maintain objectivity, while we will take the official statement, we'll want to check it out just like anything else. So I can imagine the chaos that seems to be coming to a foreign country and they must sit there and say, "What's happened? Do they know what the hell is going on there? One person says this,

another person says that.” In many ways, it’s kind of a great smokescreen for anybody listening on the other end. Instant communication around the world. You have to kind of sort through and find the good sources. That’s what the intelligent reader or viewer does. It finds a *New York Times* or *Washington Post* or a Fox News—people that they believe—and then they go to fill in with bloggers. It requires more intelligence of the viewer, of the listener, to go through this information barrage, and you find little snippets that come out.

### **Audience Member**

Benjamin King. I’m a historian for the Army. In 1969, I was a fire direction officer in the A Shua Valley, a little place called Hamburger Hill. Yeah. We fired approximately 300 tons of ammunition in support of the infantry going up the hill and when the *Time* and *Newsweek* reporters came in, they published the story that the troops went up unsupported. So I really have to take exception with some of the stories about accuracy. Not only did they report that, but they also got a bunch of barracks room lawyers who supposedly said they had a reward for whoever was going to frag their battalion commander, which was not true. They’re the ones that coined the term “Hamburger Hill,” because everybody at the time called it Dong Ap Bia which is Ap Bia Mountain in Vietnamese, that’s what they called it. I had some other instances with the media after that, and I have to question whether everybody was really concerned with accuracy or whether they were concerned with sensationalism.

### **Mr. Kurtis**

If it bleeds, it leads. But what was the motive for somebody to say they went up the hill unsupported? I can’t quite—yeah, I can’t quite figure that one out. What was the source of the news? Was it the PAO who led them there, or did they have the PAO story and they ignored it and went the other way?

### **Audience Member**

[Inaudible].

### **Mr. Kurtis**

I know the Navy got credit at the Battle of Midway and the Army claims that they were the ones who landed the first bomb on the aircraft carrier, on the four Japanese aircraft carriers. That was later corrected in history, but not on the headlines. I’m sorry. There’s no way for me to answer that. I just don’t know. But I can’t imagine—I just—I choose to believe that the reporter just either made a mistake or was sloppy or was being shot at. I can’t imagine a motive of—unless he really likes grunts and hated the artillery. Which you may find to be the case. Well, ladies and gentlemen, it’s been a pleasure spending a few minutes with you this morning. Have a great symposium. Hoorah!

### **Mr. Gott**

Sir, thank you so much for coming. It has absolutely been an honor. Your experiences and your insight are as relevant today as they ever were and much is to be gained and learned from this. Sir, on behalf of the Combined Arms Center and the Combat Studies

Institute, I'd like to give you a small token of our appreciation for coming—a book on the history, historians that we are, a book on the history of Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, *Three Centuries of Service*. Again, sir, thank you so much for coming.

**Mr. Kurtis**

I just realized, you know, I didn't play the clips. I brought some video actually. Can you imagine? You know, I've got 15 minutes left. Actually, unless you have to . . . I will play them. Why don't you roll—how to screw up a symposium, right? Here is the initial stage of the Vietnam, of the Agent Orange story, so you can see exactly how we did spread the defoliant. Let's roll our first clip. And thank you very much. He's probably gone home.

*Video*

*. . . its estimate that the huge trees will grow back in 100 . . .*

**Mr. Kurtis**

No, it's the other one. It's the other one first. Oh, you're going through them, good for you. Good, good, good.

\* \* \*

**Video**

*It became one of the most powerful defoliants ever created. It was sprayed from helicopters and C123 cargo planes flying 150 feet off the deck, emptying one thousand gallon tanks and a white mist over the targets. Ten million gallons of Agent Orange dumped again and again from 1962 to 1969 withering the leaves like a deadly rain.*

*Two hundred sixty thousand acres of mangrove trees destroyed, estimated to take 100 years to grow back. Two million cubic meters of timber South Vietnam could have sold—destroyed. Another eleven million cubic meters of jungle timber destroyed. Two hundred sixty thousand acres of crops destroyed.*

*The government avoided calling it chemical warfare, but as the antiwar protests increased, so did pressure against Agent Orange. In 1969, reports filtered out of Vietnam that defoliation was linked to birth defects among babies born to women in the spray area. Grotesque pictures were spread, though they were dismissed as propaganda. But laboratory tests in the United States did show that 245T caused birth defects in rats and mice, and so the US Government restricted its use of Agent Orange in Vietnam. That was 1970. The millions of gallons on supply was stored, eventually to be burned at sea in 1977. It was considered too deadly to be used again as a herbicide. Too deadly because of a high amount of a lethal contaminate inside—dioxin—or TCDD. Dioxin is produced when 245T is manufactured, a contaminate that can't be avoided. It is one of the most toxic substances made by man. Some 360 pounds were in the ten million gallons of Agent Orange sprayed over Vietnam. Concentrations of dioxin were found to range from 3 parts per million up to 50 parts per million, higher than ever previously mixed before in a defoliant. About 500 times higher than dioxin found in herbicides used in the United States today.*

*In Vietnam we collected samples from villages . . .*

\* \* \*



**Mr. Kurtis**

Let's go back to the first cut and I'll just ad lib here while you're queueing it up. One of the reasons that everybody didn't come down with some problem is because we would go home and shower, I mean, when I was in high school using it on the pasture and when the guys came off the planes, they would be soaked in it, but they would take a shower and then wash it away. The grunts on the ground couldn't do that and so they lived with it day after day and it would soak in.

This is 5 years later. I had been invited by Tan Tok Tung, a North Vietnamese doctor who had started studying the effect of the defoliant on North Vietnamese babies and people. Nobody seemed to be picking it up, so when it became a big story, he invited me to come back and that's how I became the first reporter back into Vietnam. This is the Saigon River and we got on an old fishing boat and headed out into the Mekong Delta and I'm going to show it primarily so you can see the effectiveness. You may want to use it again, the defoliant. Let's roll it.

\*       \*       \*

**Video**

*It was 1972 when a team from the National Academy of Sciences made this trip up the Saigon River looking for the effects of the aerial spraying of Agent Orange. Two Vietnamese scientists made that trip with them and returned there 8 years later with us. Both work as environmentalists here in the Delta area south of Saigon where the most graphic results of the defoliation can still be seen.*

*About 120,000 acres in this basin just below Saigon, one of the reasons it's so important is that the tankers would come up here to Saigon, tankers with oil and ammunition and the Viet Cong would be along here and fire on the ships as they came up the river to get to the city.*

*The mud is deep here and while we would gladly wade to shore, our Vietnamese escorts persuaded a nearby fisherman to ferry us the final 10 yards to shore.*

*The Saigon River dumps into this basin. For centuries mangrove trees as high as 60 feet grew in this Delta area. Well, they were a problem for the French because it provided cover for Viet Cong to infiltrate not only Saigon but entire South Vietnam. So when the United States came in, they made this an A-number one military target and defoliated the area. Time and time again they sprayed it with Agent Orange, 245T and 24D and the result is mud. The only thing that is left is a thick mud. There is no plant. There aren't even the roots that were left behind. Mangrove trees that may take 100 years to reforest. The Vietnamese have come in with small trees and hand planted them in this mud. They may do well. They seem to be doing well now. But it is very expensive and very, very hard work. They have another problem. The remaining stumps and what trees there are, one and two here and there, are targets of poachers who come in and cut them for firewood because they're easy to get to and easy to take into the Saigon market and sell. This is what Agent Orange has done for the mangrove forest of South Vietnam.*

*When the mangroves died, . . .*

\* \* \*

**Mr. Kurtis**

The people came in and actually cut for firewood the remains of the mangrove trees.

\* \* \*

*. . . so did the biological chain of support for wildlife—birds, fish, and shrimp that grew in the thousands of inlets weaving through the trees.*

\* \* \*

**Mr. Kurtis**

You can take the sound out, but let the video continue and I'll just fill in. Now, as the decisionmakers on whether or not to use a defoliant to take away the enemy cover, it's tough. How many lives are saved by taking out the cover? That has not been calculated or reported on I would think, and that's a real balance.

I'm going to do . . . here is a testing. I tried to . . . you know, Kendall mentioned that I'm a grass fed rancher, I tried to make a little joke with the Vietnamese who didn't get it when I said, "Well, you know, you have great grass here for cattle. You know, you take away the trees and you have instant pastures." Very subtle humor.

\* \* \*

[Mr. Kurtis closed his presentation with excerpts from his documentary "Richard Speck" released in 1996.]



## PANEL 1—FORGING A RELATIONSHIP: THE ARMY AND THE MEDIA

### **A Horrible Fascination: The Media and the Military**

(Submitted Paper)

by

**Mr. Frederick J. Chiaventone**

I am delighted to be able to address you here today in the great facilities that have evolved here at the Command and General Staff College. This is a far cry from Bell Hall and no one in his right mind would miss that facility . . . and the coffee's better.

As you are well aware, the American military system has been developed so as to place a minimal burden on the people, to provide for a strong defense, and to reconcile concerns of individual rights with national security requirements. Every man and woman of the Armed Forces swears an oath not to the administration in power, or any individual or political party but to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic." Charged with the defense and security of the nation, the military plays a vital role in the democratic process.

Also serving the democratic process, but in a less conscious fashion, is the Fourth Estate. Those members of the press corps who broadcast over the radio and television and publish in newspapers, magazines, and now on the seemingly omnipresent blog, which apparently is an abbreviation of the term "Web log," also perform a vital service to the republic providing that information required to make informed decisions by a self-governing population. Supposedly fair and unbiased in their attentions, this "above it all" approach, you might note has been significantly less evident of late. I will submit that this is a worrisome development. A partisan press corps is, unfortunately, a less critical instrument, more vulnerable to co-option, and thereby less effective for the democratic process.

Do not, however, delude yourself with visions of an entirely neutral Fourth Estate—it has never existed. What we have been fortunate in having thus far has been a wide range of dissenting opinions with a predisposition to be critical of big government. I should hope that this condition will reassert itself in the near future. Thoughtful criticism, however harsh, is to be preferred over cheerleading. But more on that later.

One would think that war reporting is as old as war itself, but that is most certainly not the case. Yes, we have accounts of earlier conflicts be they Xenophon's "The March Up Country" or Caesar's "Gallic Wars" and of later conflicts by Philippe de Commines and Jean Froissart and they are quite illuminating in their own way. But these are unusually narrow in their focus, and one can easily recognize that the writers had a specific, sometimes self-aggrandizing purpose in writing them . . . and their works appear long after the events described. War reporting is in truth a much more recent development. In relative terms one

might almost say that it is in its infancy. Real-time reporting, thanks to near-instantaneous satellite communications, might even be described as newborn.

The first evidence we have of war reporting as we have come to know it is from the *Swedish Intelligencer*, a broadsheet that appeared in London in 1632. For example, in one issue it gave full accounts of the exploits of Gustavus Adolphus and was illustrated with his portrait, a bird's eye view of the siege of Magdeburg, a plan showing how the King of Sweden and his army crossed the Lech River into Bavaria, and a diagram of the Battle of Lützen, where Gustavus was killed. But again, the appearance of the correspondence is well after the fact . . . in this case but a few weeks, but still nowhere near approaching the speed and immediacy of portage of today.

The historical and practical impact of war correspondents on conflict really emerges for the first time with the reports by Thomas Chenery and William Howard Russell on British operations in the Crimea in the 1850s. And here we can see how war reporting can work if not for the good of the commanders involved (and here I refer to their public image), at least for the welfare of the soldier.

The British Army at the time was officered almost entirely by a woefully unprepared aristocracy. Commissions were acquired by purchase, and there was no formal schooling or education in warfare required. The results, of course, were horrendous blunders in logistics, planning, organization, and intelligence. The result was that much of the suffering endured by the army was the direct result of the ignorance and ineptitude of its own leadership. Reporting for *The Times of London*, Russell and Chenery, while quite adept at portraying brilliant British feats of arms, were not at all bashful about citing the errors of judgment and general mismanagement of men and materiel, which made the British soldiers' lot a very nasty business indeed. Their reports of illness and death by disease and almost nonexistent medical care for the troops caused an uproar among readers in England and led to the establishment of the Red Cross. So not only did the media trumpet the battlefield successes of British arms, so too did they expose its shortcomings. While much of the senior leadership was displeased by this approach, Generals Cardigan and Raglan for example—the authors of the Light Brigade debacle abhorred Russell and his reports—but the lot of the individual soldier was greatly improved and for this we have to thank the efforts of the Russells and Chenerys of the world.

One thing that reporting of the Crimean War did was to firmly establish in the minds of the media moguls the public's appetite for reports from the battlefield. Reflecting on his own experiences in World War II, historian J. Glenn Gray observed the horrible fascination of mankind with warfare and concluded that it has to do with a concept he found first described in the Bible as "the lust of the eye." Gray believed this was because the human eye could not be satisfied with the familiar and so "lusts after" the spectacular and the novel, criteria which are nowhere so in evidence as in the caldron of war.

This peculiar aspect of the human condition was brought home to Americans during our own Civil War. While the Crimea saw the first battlefield correspondents, our own Civil War was really the birthplace for modern war reporting. On commencement of hostilities, the Northern papers alone were represented by over 500 correspondents in the field. The

army leadership, as you can well imagine, was less than enthusiastic about their presence. To illustrate this point I'll quote William Tecumseh Sherman who remarked: "Now to every army and almost every general a newspaper reporter goes along, filling up our transports, swelling our trains, reporting our progress, guessing at places, picking up dropped expressions, inciting jealousy and discontent and doing infinite mischief."

Sherman, as you can imagine, was not a fan of the press. He at least was fairly blunt about his distaste for the profession. His fellow officer, General Irwin McDowell, was a little more subtle. Just prior to the first Battle of Bull Run he stated: "I have made arrangements for the correspondents of our papers to take the field, and I have suggested that they wear a white uniform to indicate the purity of their character."

Now, here's an interesting point that demonstrates a potential disconnect between the military and the media. Shortly after the operation in Grenada, and peeved by military-media relations during URGENT FURY, *TIME Magazine* used McDowell's quote to show how the military used to revere and respect the press. The editors of *Time* simply did not understand the battlefield of the mid-19th century where a white uniform attracted attention and did little more than provide a superb target for marksmen. So, as you can readily see, even as far back as our Civil War, the media and the military were grating on each others' nerves.

A couple of interesting concepts emerge about this time—the first concerns the emergence of what we might call the "celebrity" correspondent. Some of these folks began to document their own exploits in the collection of news—so we may be able to thank our Civil War predecessors for Geraldo Rivera—there's a horrifying thought. Second, there began a race to get the news home as quickly as possible. Aiding this development was the widespread use of Samuel Morse's telegraph. With the almost instantaneous transmission of information from the battlefield, the newspapers in Washington, DC, carried reports of progress in battles that were still underway. Robert E. Lee, for one, came to depend on the reporting of one Northern correspondent because, as Lee said, "He knew what he reported and reported what he knew."

U.S. Grant was appalled by the presence of reporters and refused to allow them near his headquarters or staff fearing they would inadvertently reveal his plans. When General Sherman, who we have seen was no fan of the media, was informed that a correspondent was missing and presumed dead he remarked wryly, "I expect we'll have news from Hell before breakfast."

This was an interesting comment for Sherman to make for hard times were coming and the military and the media found themselves as partners in a most unusual alliance. It was also at this time that photography was beginning to make a significant impact on the public and battlefield photography, as imperfect and as slow as it necessarily was considering the available technology, had an especially curious impact on the public. In 1862, Mathew Brady posted a sign in the window of his studio in New York City announcing his latest exhibit, "The Dead of Antietam." The *New York Times* said that Brady had brought "home to us the terrible reality and earnestness of war" and then went on to say, "If he has not brought bodies and laid them in our door-yards and along our streets, he has done

something very like it.” While it would still be a while in coming, war and the grim realities of soldiering were starting to be brought home to the public in a much more graphic and immediate way. By the late 20th century, this trend would begin to raise some troubling challenges for both the military and the media. But we’ll get to that shortly.

With the end of the Civil War, the army was demobilized at an alarming rate. The great armed force that had suppressed rebellion and saved the Union was broken up within months of the war’s end and went from over 2 million men to a ceiling of 25,000 souls stationed at over 256 posts throughout the occupied south and including every post in the unsettled West. Talk about a reduction in force! Along with this reduction in force came budgetary restrictions, which were draconian in the extreme. While hard to imagine now, the year 1877, for example, saw no appropriations whatsoever for the Armed Forces, a situation that required many officers to secure private loans simply to allow themselves and their units to survive. This incidentally was the year after the disaster on the Little Bighorn and throughout the bitter campaigns against the Sioux and Nez Percés.

But let’s get back to the military and the media. The newspapers had found that there was intense public interest in anything out of the ordinary and this led them naturally to military operations. Any time a foray or expedition against hostile Indian tribes was mounted, you could depend on there being a correspondent present. There’s an old expression in newsrooms and later in television studios that goes “If it bleeds, it leads!” And we can see the truth in that to this day—Serbia, Bosnia, Chechnya, Angola, the Congo, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Mumbai—when shots are fired in anger, when blood begins to flow, the news media are there to witness and record the affair.

After the American Civil War, our newspapers began to look Westward as the great source of conflict and thus reader interest. From the Modoc War to the Great Sioux War of 1876–77 if there was a major campaign anticipated, correspondents flocked to follow the guidon. Even with forces as drastically reduced as they had been in the wake of the Civil War, a commander of one of these campaigns would sometimes have to deal with four or five correspondents clustered around his headquarters tent, following along in column, and scribbling down every move for the benefit of avid newspaper readers in New York, Boston, San Francisco, or Chicago.

While General Sherman remained annoyed by the profession, other professional soldiers remained cordial and even welcoming to correspondents. Men such as John Finerty, who accompanied General George Crook at the Rosebud and barely escaped from a Sioux war party while on a reconnaissance, and Mark Kellogg, who died near George Armstrong Custer at the Little Bighorn, were in great demand by the military and their reportage was known by publishers to increase newspaper circulation. Campaigning on the frontier made for rattling good copy and no editor worth his salt would let slip an opportunity to follow the trumpet.

For the military, this was a real “no brainer.” With Washington politicians and the nation reluctant to recognize an individual soldier, publicity through newspaper copy was the only way to gain notoriety and possibly promotion in a stagnant and penurious Army. Correspondents, despite General Sherman’s attitude, were actually welcomed by officers

on the frontier. When editorial cartoonist Thomas Nast joined the conversation campaigning for better pay and treatment of the soldier and sailor, he was lionized by troops. The media-military relationship during the late 19th century was as close to a love fest as you can imagine.

As newspapers gained more and more clout, their publishers came to wield more and more influence over political affairs. When one considers how much influence is wielded by broadcast media today, it's easy to forget that by the late 19th century newspaper publishers were doing essentially the same thing. Consider, for instance, renowned artist Frederic Remington dispatched in 1898 to Cuba by newspaper mogul William Randolph Hearst in anticipation of a coming war with Spain. With little but hot words being exchanged between the United States and Spain, Remington was bored to tears and cabled back asking to be allowed to go home. Hearst, however, insisted that there would soon be work enough for Remington and sent a brief telegram, which is now famous for its hubris and presumption. Hearst's telegram read: "REMINGTON, REMAIN IN CUBA STOP YOU FURNISH PICTURES I WILL FURNISH WAR STOP. HEARST."

And furnish the war he did with his sensational treatment of the destruction of the battleship USS *Maine* and its aftermath. This so-called "splendid little war" with Spain also marked a new high point for the war correspondent where individual feats of derring-do sometimes eclipsed any formal military operations—such as when Stephen Crane—better known for his novel, *The Red Badge of Courage*, forged ahead of American troops and single-handedly accepted the surrender of the Spanish garrison of an enemy-held town. It was a major coup for Crane's employer Joseph Pulitzer, and a poke in the eye for Hearst.

Imagine if you will the fact that the job of war correspondent is at this time about 50 years old. Already a sort of cult of personality has begun to spring up around certain journalists—men such as Henry Morton Stanley (later of Stanley and Livingston fame) and Richard Harding Davis have managed through their reporting of war to make themselves as well known as the generals of the wars they reported—and not just here in the United States. During the Boer War, another young correspondent reporting for the *Times of London* helps to defend and facilitate the escape of an armored train, is captured by the Boers, escapes from a prisoner of war camp, and makes his way back to British lines. The public acclaim for his exploits really launches his career—you'll probably here recognize a young Winston Churchill.

As quickly as the concept of the war correspondent came into prominence in the late 19th and early 20th century, it was about to undergo a major shift. Remember that the coverage of conflict, begun in the Crimea and then the United States by correspondents, involved opposition by relatively unsophisticated or even unlettered populations—American Indian warriors, African tribes, Arabian bandits, Indonesian pirates, Mexican bandits, Chinese peasants—most of whom were unable or disinclined to read the Western papers. World War I, however, posed a different dilemma. Western nations faced each other on the European landmass in some of the most brutal and destructive fighting in history. With the Western front killing men in unprecedented numbers, the contending governments were hard pressed to maintain public morale and the public's willingness to put up

with a carnage that was decimating the manpower of France, England, Germany, Austria, Italy, and their less populous neighbors. Technology had caught up with and surpassed the human power to employ it with discretion. The news from the Western Front was horrifying, vicious, and unrelenting. Or would have been had the European powers permitted it. The press, especially a free and unrestricted press, threatened the ability of the warring governments to pursue their ends both tactically and strategically. As far as governments were concerned, it had to be managed—censored.

With relations between the media and the military having been fairly chummy for the previous quarter century, this was an entirely new development. Oddly enough, Imperial Germany at this time was remarkably open to news-gathering organizations. Having been badly damaged by its stance on unrestricted submarine warfare and savaged by the Western press with unsubstantiated rumors and graphic cartoons of “Hunnish excess” among the civil population of Belgium, the Kaiser eagerly courted the newspapers seeking to tell his side of the story and thus lessen the resolve of the Allies. But the Kaiser’s faith in utilizing the press to laud his nation’s success was overly optimistic.

For their part, the Allied powers were less enthusiastic about unrestricted press access to the front. As you well know, and if you haven’t had a chance I will urge you to wander through the stunning National World War I Museum here in Kansas City, the war was exacting staggering costs in men and materiel among the participants. It doesn’t take all that much to sway public opinion in terms of warfighting ability, and news from the Western Front was uniformly appalling. For example, in 1916 the British lost 19,240 men killed in action on the Somme—*on the first day!* But it got worse. During that one battle, which lasted from July to November 1916, the French and British lost 146,431 killed and missing (which is shorthand for blown to smithereens) while the Germans lost 164,055 killed and missing—one battle. One. Think about the casualties we have thus far incurred in Iraq and Afghanistan and balance these figures against the totals for World War I—9,721,937—for all sides just soldiers killed in action—not counting the wounded, the disfigured, the missing. And add to that over 6 million civilian casualties. It’s perhaps understandable that the governments of all the nations involved saw the very real risks of allowing uncontrolled media coverage of the war. When nearly every household had been affected by the war—husbands, brothers, sons, killed, missing or horribly maimed—whether support for the war effort could be maintained psychologically or politically were very real questions. As a result, exceptionally restrictive measures were taken to ensure that little of import wound up in the newspapers on the home front.

The establishment of offices for censorship and war propaganda during World War I is the first appearance of a general governmental effort—at least since the days of Elizabeth I—of government imposed restrictions on what could be written about in the general media. There had, of course, been haphazard attempts to muzzle or direct the course of media coverage of conflict, but this was the dawn of a new age of a concerted, organized effort to control what the public saw of the wars fought on their behalf.

The United States, of course, was a relative latecomer to the war, but the administration of Woodrow Wilson quickly recognized the necessity to “shape” news to a form that



would support the war effort and thus formed the Office of Press Information to do just that. A great many reporters tried to circumvent government restrictions on war coverage, but these efforts were really subsumed by more partisan coverage wherein correspondents and publishers saw their “duty” as the publication of material that would aid their side in winning the war. Thus, any inclinations to convey to the public the horror of the Western Front were quickly overcome by tales of the Marines’ heroism in Belleau Wood (where correspondent Floyd Gibbons lost an eye) or the romantic exploits of T.E. Lawrence in the desert as recounted by Lowell Thomas. Interestingly enough, once the war was over, as the enormity of the human cost to civilization began to become apparent, a great many journalists began to have second thoughts about their own complicity in having helped to prolong it.

The interesting thing is that with the coming of the World War II these doubts were conveniently shelved as journalists began to see the struggle with Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan as necessary to the very survival of Western civilization. So, once again, journalists—now become war correspondents again—turned their efforts to support of the war effort rather than unbiased coverage thereof. However odious, ill-advised, poorly planned or executed Allied operations might have been—the bungling of Kasserine Pass or the debacle on the Rapido River, the disastrous raids on Dieppe or Arnhem—the need to keep mum, to minimize Allied flaws and setbacks, in the interests of defeating the Axis Powers took precedence. This is not to say that there weren’t some brilliant pieces of writing, radio broadcasts, or filmography to come out of the war—the efforts of many of these reporters were nothing less than remarkable. But the focus of most reporting, the underlying *raison d’être* was winning the war. To this end, a great many first-rate journalists flocked to the banner. The contributions of these folks, who risked it all, were spectacular. They included writers like Ernie Pyle, who died in a burst of Japanese machinegun fire, and Ernest Hemingway, writing classic tales from the front lines. There were photographers, like Robert Capa who took the iconic photos of soldiers scrambling ashore in the first wave on Omaha Beach and jumped with the Airborne across the Rhine River, and filmmakers like John Ford, who played poker with cartoonist Bill Mauldin and Capa under German shellfire in the basement of an old villa outside Anzio. These were, above all, American citizens. This sublimating of the journalistic instinct to the achievement of national goals would continue for a couple of decades following VE Day and VJ Day in World War II, but slivers of doubt would begin to appear in the 1960s and the military-media relationship would be altered yet again.

It’s probably not possible to simplify the relationship of the military and the media during the Vietnam war—too many of us here today still have vivid memories of that conflict and of the nature of war reporting that grew from that period. Entire volumes have been written about the military-media relationship in Vietnam, and it will do us no good to try to examine each of these at this time. Instead, I strongly suspect that the rupture between the two institutions began during what the press began to label as the “Five O’Clock Follies”—this was the unofficial term for the regularly scheduled military briefings of the news media in Saigon regarding operations in theater. The only real source for reporters based in Saigon, the “Follies” presented an official picture of the daily war effort

and was almost invariably upbeat citing glowing reports of actions in the field, staggering statistics—the most readily recognizable being the “body count,” and generally painting the best possible picture of the war.

The problem, of course, was that these briefings were invariably optimistic, frequently incomplete, or just plain misleading. Complicating this was the fact that those correspondents who managed to steer clear of Saigon, who made it into the field and actually witnessed the war, quickly undermined any credibility that the Joint Staff might have hoped for. Once various journalists caught the authorities in a half-truth or a flat out lie, any mutual trust or confidence between the military and the media went right out the door. Now remember that most of our senior leadership had learned their trades during World War II and the Korean Conflict and were thus disinclined to change their modus operandi as regarded the press. Complicating this perceived credibility gap was a growing tendency among younger reporters, having never served in the military and looking to advance their own status, especially among the audience at home that had been given pause by the growing antiwar movement. As less and less flattering reports began to appear in newspapers and on television, a great many members of the Fourth Estate failed to distinguish between the war, however ill-run it might have been, with the warriors charged with executing the orders of the chain of command, all the way up to the President. As a result, the majority of military personnel began to feel betrayed by the media and registered their feelings with disgust. This produced a very dangerous situation in which two of the primary contributors to a democratic society quickly found themselves at loggerheads—it was a situation in which no one was well served.

These feelings of bitterness and distrust probably came to a head when we launched an expedition against the thuggish rule of the island of Grenada. In Operation URGENT FURY, the Department of Defense (DOD) tried to plan for almost every contingency. If you experienced this operation, you’ll likely shake your head over this. Yes, the operation was a great success but, on the ground, what a goat rope. All sorts of little things fell through the crack—from intelligence gathering to joint radio communications. And the press, well, they were simply viewed as a pain in the butt who could be well controlled and allowed to see what DOD wanted them to see. And they didn’t like it one bit. By the 1980s, the Armed Forces largely viewed the media as “the enemy.” For example, in a study done by students at the War College in 1983, it was determined that the attitude of senior officers toward the media was extremely negative and that the majority of serving officers did not “trust the media to tell the truth.” Thus, the legacy of Vietnam was a gap of confidence that appeared almost insurmountable.

So, what has happened since then? To put it simply, the pendulum seems to have begun to swing back the other way. Some folks in the Pentagon realized that there was a problem. The media can be a powerful and influential aspect of any human endeavor, and if that endeavor involves conflict, death, destruction, the commitment of manpower, resources and public finance, you can bet that the media will be involved for good or ill. Perhaps the planners at the Pentagon had finally recognized the truth in what Napoleon said when he stated, “Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets!”



Only now, however, instead of just newspapers we have radio, television, cell phones, and computers—sophisticated means to gather and disseminate information, and a 24-hour news cycle. You can't just close your eyes and expect the media to go away—it won't happen. Further, news gathering is not necessarily limited to what we might refer to as professionals—anyone with a portable video camera, indeed, anyone with a mobile phone is a potential reporter. What I would say to anyone who'd listen would be, "If you don't want to see it on the evening news, don't do it!"

So we seem to have embarked on a new era of media-military relations. The military, fighting down acquired prejudices and habits, has reached out to the media and begun to recognize them as part of the solution rather than the problem. And this is to the good. Yes, there will be incidents such as Abu Ghraib—but things of this nature we need to hear about and clean up the mess. Yes, some backbenchers will latch on to an incident of this nature and say, "See, we told you so. They're all thugs!" and never let go of it. (I've seen one publication on the Internet run Abu Ghraib stories almost continually for over 2 years.) But the Armed Forces will solve the problem and continue to march. The American public will recognize that mistakes are made, accept an apology and a corrective course of action, and move ahead. We will all be better for the experience. If we recognize the imperatives of technology and the inevitability of information saturation, accept them as natural parameters and work with them, the future of military and media relations should be less rocky, less disruptive. Thus, the omnipresence of media representatives should be a recognized factor in any military operation.

To sum up I'd like to take just a moment to note the exceptional contributions of a number of representatives of the media—we may not always have liked their reports, but they always said something that was verifiable, well-researched, and most of all needed to be heard. Just to note a few, I want you to think on the contributions of people like Linda Thompson, Sean Naylor, Rick Atkinson, Ralph Peters, and John Burns—some of these folks are probably here today. Without their efforts, only a very few would know what sacrifices are made by the military on behalf of the American people and our values. We are all better for their efforts.

I'd like to conclude with a personal story and a special acknowledgment. A few months ago I sat in the snack bar here drinking coffee and chatting with an old friend—Lieutenant Colonel Tim Karcher. Tim was still recovering from the effects of a sniper's bullet, which took a large chunk out of his left shoulder in Fallujah. He was on his way down to Texas to assume command of an outfit and delighted with the prospect. On 28 June of this year, after turning over control of his area to Iraqi forces, Tim's outfit was ambushed outside of Sadr City and a powerful improvised explosive device (IED) sheared off his legs. Badly wounded, his troops rushed him to medical assistance by ground as a huge sandstorm had grounded all aircraft. Tim's a fighter and it's obvious why his men are devoted to him for, despite massive blood loss and terrible injuries, as he regained consciousness the first thing he asked about was the welfare of his Soldiers. Now, not 10 days before this Tim had been interviewed for ABC News by veteran correspondent Martha Raddatz. Martha has spent a lot of time with the 2-5 Cavalry and became very fond of the Soldiers and thinks the

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world of Tim. It was Martha who called Tim's wife back in Texas and gave her updates on Tim's condition and informed worried friends of his injuries and outlook. Martha is one of those rare people who is not only a journalist but a human being of the first order. Ernie Pyle would be proud to know her. I want to personally thank Martha for her kindness and compassion. She's a trooper. She also happens to be a neighbor and friend of our colleague Ralph Peters. We've come a long way from William Howard Russell, Thomas Chenery, and the Light Brigade—it's called evolution.

## PANEL 1—FORGING A RELATIONSHIP: THE ARMY AND THE MEDIA

### **Ethics and Embedded Journalists: Beyond the Boundaries of Industry Induced Guidelines on Objectivity and Balance**

(Submitted Paper)

by

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**President, Military Reporters & Editors**

In 1987, television journalist Mike Wallace of *60 Minutes* and CBS declared in an interview that if he were traveling with a group of enemy soldiers from a country at war with the United States and saw American Soldiers about to be ambushed, he would do nothing to prevent it. He said he “would regard it simply as another story. . . .”<sup>1</sup> Pressed on the issue of whether he had a higher moral duty to save American lives, Wallace bluntly replied, “You don’t have a higher duty. . . . You’re a reporter.”<sup>2</sup>

That image of the reporter as a nonactor on any stage he or she visits, and in essence a noncitizen with no higher moral responsibility than to their profession, has remained embedded in the minds of many military leaders and high-ranking members of the media. It exacerbated already tenuous military-media relations in the aftermath of the Vietnam war and led to the military’s fruitless and much-criticized attempt to keep the media at arm’s length during operations in Grenada and Panama. Later, it resulted in the awkward and ill-conceived media pool system utilized in Operation DESERT STORM.

This paper will demonstrate that the popular image of the American journalist as a distanced, unconnected, and unfeeling observer is largely false. From Ernie Pyle during World War II to Joe Galloway in Vietnam to Dr. Sanjay Gupta during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, and my own personal experiences during several conflicts, responsible journalists have proven that they not only can produce balanced accounts when they travel with and report on front-line forces, but they also have repeatedly demonstrated they do not forsake their humanity or their citizenship on the battlefield. At the same time, they seldom compromise their responsibility to news consumers or violate the key canons of journalistic fairness and balance. Despite the criticism these reporters have received from their media colleagues, who often make their judgments from the safety of a desk far from the front, embedded reporters have demonstrated they are a significant benefit to the American public, the military, and their profession.

#### **Embedding: Purposes and Practices**

The long and often troubled history of the military-media relationship has been dissected in extraordinary detail over the years, so this paper will touch only on one key aspect

of that history as it pertains to the issue of balance and fairness of reporting by embeds. I specifically avoided using the word “objectivity” as that is a troublesome bit of verbiage as it relates to news reporting and I will deal with so-called “objective reporting” later in the paper.

During the lengthy air campaign that preceded the ground war in Operation DESERT STORM, hundreds of members of the media gathered in Riyadh and Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, to get the latest briefings and work out with military officials some system whereby reporters could get out with the troops and tell the story from at, or close to, the front. The result was something called the “pool system,” in which the military left it to the media to organize pools to cover various units. That was a brilliant ploy, because the folks in the Pentagon and at the Joint Information Bureau (JIB) in Dhahran knew that most journalists are a disaster when it comes to organizing anything. Most of us have difficulty organizing our own lives, much less an intricate system by which we would transmit information about the conduct of the war to an eager and expectant public.

The pool system by all accounts was a disaster. Those who parceled out reporters to the pools usually did not take into account the interest various publications had with certain units. If you were from the Fayetteville, North Carolina, paper, there was no guarantee you would be able to cover the 82d Airborne Division. And, if you were from the Clarksville, Tennessee, newspaper, there was no guarantee you would be able to cover the 101st Airborne Division. It was the same with any number of journalists from news organizations near bases that had units participating in the war. There was little, if any, consideration given to the fact that these hometown news organizations would provide better and more in-depth coverage that would be of great interest to the news consumers in their coverage area.

Although the pool system seemed designed to fail, those of us who saw the failure coming and made arrangements to “embed” with a unit of particular interest to our readership or viewership were seen as traitors to the system. My particular interest as a reporter with the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* was with the 24th Infantry Division out of Fort Stewart, Georgia. Although I was not in the pool for the 24th, then Major General Barry McCaffrey, the division commander, knew that the paper’s readership included the families and friends of his Soldiers back home in Georgia. As a result, he invited me to cover the division independent of the pool system. When I got to the staging area for the invasion, I found that Joe Galloway, then of *U.S. News & World Report*, had also bypassed the pools based on the recommendation of a contact he had made in Vietnam, General Norman Schwarzkopf.

Galloway and I were of the opinion that we had used our contacts and initiative to bypass a dysfunctional system, a journalistic tactic normally applauded in industry circles. Only later did we learn that we were seen by some of our colleagues and media watchdogs as “pet reporters” who bartered “favorable coverage for access to the front” or were “willing to report favorably on a general or unit in return for access to the front.”<sup>3</sup> The not-so-subtle implication was that by improvising and overcoming we had somehow stepped across an ethical boundary and had compromised our journalistic integrity. More than 10 years after the war, John Fialka, who took Joe and me to task in his book *Hotel Warriors* for

what we did because we disrupted the pool system he helped set up, was still complaining about it at various media conferences.<sup>4</sup>

Here was the so-called “secret deal” I had with McCaffrey. Galloway’s was much the same. McCaffrey had two ground rules: “Don’t tell them where we are and don’t tell them where we’re going.” All else was fair game, although we were trailed by “minders” wherever we went and had to submit our copy through the JIB in Dhahran. My stories on the first few days of combat, written on a portable typewriter and hand-carried from the front to Dhahran, made it into print 2 days after the cease-fire was called. There was no “secret deal.” There was no quid pro quo. There was no effort to influence where we went and who we talked to. I was then, and continue to be, insulted by the claim that by bypassing the pools we had somehow compromised our journalistic ethics and produced only “good news” stories that were neither fair nor balanced. Yet that myth endures to this day.

The dissatisfaction with the pool system and the advent of new technology in laptop computers and satellite telephones that enabled journalists to report in real time from anywhere in the world helped convince major news organizations and the Pentagon that a better system was needed.<sup>5</sup> Thus was born the embed system. While not perfect, it was the best opportunity journalists have had since Vietnam to get a close-up view of warfare and to report on how America’s sons and daughters in uniform were performing and how their tax dollars were being spent.

## **The Myth of Objectivity**

One of the major criticisms of the embedding system in the aftermath of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM-1 (OIF-1) was that embedded journalists were not able to provide unbiased or so-called objective news reports. Before going any further it is necessary to include my own brief analysis of the term “objective reporting.” There is no such thing. It is a myth devised and promulgated by journalism professors, of which I am one, who teach concepts and ideals rather than real-life situations, and by media bosses who long ago traded in their reporters’ stripes for the comforts of a cozy office.

The term “objectivity” implies that there is some neutral language that will be interpreted the same way by everyone reading or listening to a particular story. But language is not neutral. Every word is loaded with meaning in some form or fashion. What is seen as objective by one person can be seen as bias by another. Journalist Robert D. Kaplan, writing in the November 2004 issue of the *Atlantic* magazine, argued, “[T]hough journalists assume the mantle of professional objectivity, a writer brings his entire life experience to bear on every story and situation. A journalist may seek different points of view, but he shapes and portrays those viewpoints from only one angle of vision: his own.”<sup>6</sup>

Kaplan further argued that the media, especially the East Coast, Washington-centric journalists often have little in common with the average Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines who now make up the all-volunteer military. Most members of the media have not served in the military and few have family members or friends who have worn the uniform of their country. “The blue-collar element that once kept print journalism honest has been gone for some time. Journalists of an earlier era may have been less professional, but they were better connected with the rest of the country.”<sup>7</sup>

The media write and report in words and pictures that reflect their own personal biases, while the military and the public receive those reports and images and filter them through their individual biases. Thus, the idea of language-neutral objectivity is a myth. John Burns of the *New York Times* put it another way: “In this profession we are not paid to be neutral. We are paid to be fair, and they are completely different things.”<sup>8</sup>

The ultimate goal of any journalist, especially those reporting from the battlefield while embedded with military units, should be fairness. The Fairness Doctrine, as I have applied it in many situations and have taught it in the classroom, is that a journalist should look at his or her work through the lens of fairness. That is, is the story fair to those individuals or groups about whom I am writing? Is it fair to my readership or the viewers I am trying to reach? And, is it fair to me as a journalist? When the Fairness Doctrine is applied in good faith, with the knowledge that any reporting is always filtered through the individual biases of those who read, view, or listen to those reports, the journalist can feel confident he or she has fulfilled his or her professional, ethical, and moral obligations.

Those who complained most about the embedding system used the objectivity crutch as a means denigrating the entire system and those of us who were a part of it. “The lack of scope, tight living quarters, and dependence on US troops exacted an additional cost in decreased objectivity” was the argument heard over and over.<sup>9</sup> Some critics offered a blanket indictment and said that “the reporting was a failure because the embedded reporters were unable to inform due to the restrictions placed on the embeds.”<sup>10</sup> One military critic of the embed system writing about reportorial bias used Fox News’s Oliver North, a former Marine lieutenant colonel who has become an entertainer, not a journalist, as his single example of a reporter who had strayed off the ethics reservation.<sup>11</sup> Some critics even went so far as to say that embeds were suffering from the “Stockholm syndrome,” as if we were captives of the military.<sup>12</sup> If you use this analogy, you can say that anyone who covers any political campaign is a victim of the Stockholm syndrome.

Those same critics argued that the reports from independent journalists, known as unilaterals, “were presumptively free of the bias that may have influenced embeds. Their stories allowed for a more complete and accurate picture of the war to emerge than would have been available from embeds alone.”<sup>13</sup> That statement in itself reflects a bias against embeds by flatly stating that only unilaterals could do the unbiased reporting and that everything filed by embeds was somehow tainted by the mere fact that we were traveling with and reporting on the troops.

The prediction that embedded journalists would report only the good news and would become cheerleaders for the war effort was proven wrong early and often. Just a few days into the war, William Branigin of the *Washington Post*, reported on Soldiers at a vehicle checkpoint in Iraq shooting and killing several civilians.<sup>14</sup> In another incident, as the Marines with whom Mike Cerre of ABC News was embedded got close to Baghdad, he had to report about them shooting and killing civilians in a truck and minibus whose drivers failed to stop at a checkpoint. While Cerre was doing his report, the company executive officer and two platoon sergeants listened in. When he was finished, they told him: “You were fair.” That may be the highest compliment that a combat correspondent can receive from troops he or she is covering.<sup>15</sup> Chantal Escoto of the Clarksville, Tennessee, *Leaf*

*Chronicle*, embedded with the 101st Airborne Division, reported on an incident in which a sergeant tossed a grenade into a tent in Kuwait, killing several of his superiors.<sup>16</sup> Had she not been there to report it, that story likely would have ended up suppressed for weeks by the Pentagon bureaucracy.

As one military officer wrote of the critics of the embed program: “These negative comments on the objectivity of embedded media are ironic. These same commentators would likely have argued for greater access to military operations had there been no embedded media program.”<sup>17</sup> But the concern about journalists getting too close to their subjects was best summed up by Army Colonel Guy Shields, one of the public affairs officers in Kuwait. He called the hand-wringing “a pile of crap. That’s like saying that if you’re a Soldier trained to kill, you can’t be a peacekeeper. Trained disciplined Soldiers can do anything professionally. Journalists can bond with somebody and still do their jobs professionally.”<sup>18</sup>

### **The Line of Ethical Demarcation**

In October 1965, a young *United Press International* reporter by the name of Joe Galloway helicoptered into the besieged Army Special Forces camp at Plei Me, South Vietnam. As Galloway relates the story, when he got off the helicopter he was greeted by a tired and irritated Major Charlie Beckwith. Galloway said Beckwith looked him up and down and asked, “Who the hell are you?” “A reporter, sir,” Galloway replied. Beckwith was silent for a moment, then sputtered, “I need MEDEVACs. I need food. I need ammunition. I would like a big bottle of Jim Beam and a box of cigars and the Army in its infinite wisdom sends me a reporter.” Then Beckwith got quiet again before he said to Galloway, “Well, son; I don’t have any openings for a reporter. But I do have one for a corner machine gunner and you are it.” Galloway said he tried to tell Beckwith that technically speaking he was a noncombatant but Beckwith just sort of laughed and said, “There ain’t no such a thing in these hills, boy.” Galloway then received a 10-minute orientation on the care and feeding of the air-cooled .30-caliber machinegun and for the next 2 days and nights held down a corner of a trench line.<sup>19</sup> As Galloway said in a recent interview: “Was I technically speaking in violation of the Geneva Conventions? Yes. But then circumstances dictate what you do and how you do it.”<sup>20</sup>

Although the concept of reporters on the battlefield dates back to Thucydides and the Peloponnesian War in the 5th century B.C., it has only been in the last 100 years that some rules for the conduct and treatment of journalists were formalized. Under the provisions of the first, second, and third Geneva Conventions, originally signed in 1949, war correspondents were to be given the same treatment as combatants if they were wounded or captured.<sup>21</sup> After Vietnam, journalists were reclassified as civilians under Protocol I, Article 79 on the Conventions. No longer were they permitted to carry weapons or wear uniforms. They were required to differentiate themselves from military forces by wearing civilian clothes and were to be extended the same protections as civilians if wounded or captured.<sup>22</sup>

Media ethicists and media moguls have tried to convince us that there is a nonviolable ethical line that is clear and distinct and should never be crossed when it comes to combat reporting. To do so, even in the heat of combat, according to them, means that journalists who do so are incapable of providing balanced and fair reporting. Since the embed program



was formalized in late 2002 and early 2003, the issue of an individual reporter's ethics and just where the industry applied boundary is located has at times overshadowed the stories sent back from the front. But it is my contention that ethics are situational and that the ethical boundary can be moved in one direction or another depending on the circumstances. Split-second decisions made in the field by reporters to push the ethical line or step outside guidelines sometimes can mean the difference between the life and death of that reporter, his or her colleagues, the combat troops around them, or civilians.

During OIF-1, some journalists, when faced with tricky ethical situations, tended to react instinctively rather than wring their hands over what the longer-term implications of their decision might be. One such case involved Dr. Sanjay Gupta, CNN's chief medical correspondent. While embedded with a Marine unit, Gupta became a participant instead of an observer by assisting wounded Iraqi civilians and most notably removing a bullet lodged in the brain of a young Marine, saving his life.<sup>23</sup>

Gupta said the decision to operate on the Marine, even though it meant crossing that elusive ethical barrier and thus altering the outcome of events, was not difficult to make. If you are in a position to save someone's life, he said, "You put down your pen and paper, you put down your camera, and you do it." He likened the situation to coming to a burning building or a wrecked car with people in need of help. Most people, journalist or not, he said, would first seek to save lives and think later about doing their jobs. "It's just really common sense," he said. "Yes, there was criticism. Yes, there was a question of journalistic integrity. Yes, there was a question that I crossed the line. My opinion was that crossing the line would have been *not* doing something."<sup>24</sup>

Mike Cerre of ABC News, a Vietnam veteran, pointed out enemy positions to the Marines with whom he was embedded. "The problem for reporters," he said, "is not to cross the line in a story. It's even more difficult when you're in the middle of a story and that story happens to be a 5-hour firefight."<sup>25</sup> Scott Bernard Nelson of the *Boston Globe* did much the same thing. He did what he thought was right at the time and did his hand-wringing after the fact. "Should I have just strictly been an observer? Did I cross some journalistic line? But at the time all I knew was that the guy out there was shooting at us."<sup>26</sup> As Galloway said, circumstances dictate how far you decide to push the ethical boundary.

Jules Crittenden of the *Boston Herald* had a similar situation to Nelson's, but a far different reaction. Crittenden was with an Army unit during the second Thunder Run into downtown Baghdad on 7 April 2003. As they drove into the city taking fire from enemy snipers, Crittenden began pointing out firing positions to Soldiers around him. He knew he would be criticized for what he had done and wrote in his online journal: "Now that I have assisted in the deaths of three human beings in the war I was sent to cover, I'm sure there are some people who will question my ethics, my objectivity, etc. I'll keep the argument short. Screw them, they weren't there."<sup>27</sup>

One reporter admitted carrying a grenade thrust into his hands by a young Marine during a particularly intense battle.<sup>28</sup> Other journalists to whom I have talked have admitted carrying weapons and ammunition, if just to pass them from one Soldier or Marine to



another. Galloway said it was not unusual in Vietnam to find battalion commanders who refused to allow journalists to accompany their patrols unless they were armed.<sup>29</sup> My own experiences in OIF-1 include assisting in the treatment of civilian and military casualties, about which I wrote and subsequently took some heat at conferences I attended—mostly from journalism ethics professors. Those professors claimed that assisting wounded civilians was fine, but assisting wounded military had somehow made me a participant and not an observer. In their eyes I had crossed the ethical boundary and had altered the reality of what would have happened had I not been there. It did not matter whether what I did was for the good of an individual. I had interfered with the cosmic forces of nature and therefore had compromised my journalistic integrity.

There were two other occasions in which I became a participant rather than an observer. I did not write about them because I did not want to inject myself into more stories than I already had. I knew that any mention of me picking up a weapon, even to hand it off to a Soldier, would have created a peripheral controversy that would have diverted attention from the larger story I was trying to tell. My ethical transgressions and my violations of the Geneva Conventions are twofold. I tell them here merely for the sake of demonstrating how ethical concerns on the battlefield sometimes can be situational and that circumstances can often determine how an individual will react.

The first occurred during a fight for an intersection near Najaf early in the invasion. The unit I was with came upon a busload of civilians that had been taken over by a local militia member who tried to disable a Bradley Fighting Vehicle by ramming the bus into it. Many of the civilians were injured and the company first sergeant decided to take them back to an aid station for treatment in his M113. I was in the vehicle at the time and the first sergeant told me to get out and allow the wounded to get in even though the intersection was under intense fire. As I was exiting, I noticed one of the Soldiers who had been called on to police up enemy prisoners had left his M16 with grenade launcher in the back of the vehicle. I did not think twice and grabbed the weapon rather than leave it within reach of the Iraqi civilians. When I tried to return it to the Soldier during the firefight, he advised me to keep it. “You may need it more than me,” he said. So I hung onto it until there was a lull in the fighting and I could return it to him.

A few days later, on the initial Thunder Run into downtown Baghdad I was again riding in the back of the first sergeant’s M113. After one of the company’s tanks was disabled by enemy fire, we acquired a great deal of additional gear from that tank and two crew members from other vehicles. We were unable to close the hatch on the vehicle so the two extra Soldiers and one of the company medics stood up in the back firing at dug-in Iraqis who lined both sides of the road. As we got deeper into the city and the fire got more intense, one of the Soldiers thrust his pistol into my hands and said, “Watch our back. If anybody tries to get close to us, shoot them.”

Would I have used that weapon to defend myself and the Soldiers with whom I was riding? Absolutely. But the opportunity never came. Did I feel that I had somehow stepped over an ethical boundary? Absolutely. Did I feel that I had somehow compromised my journalistic integrity? Absolutely not. I would do it again if put in the same situation. Several

years later I was supervising a group of seven reporters and photographers from the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* who were rotating in and out of Iraq covering a Georgia National Guard combat brigade. I told each of them before they left for the war zone: “You’re no good to me dead. Don’t get dead. Do what you have to do to protect yourself, stay alive, and get the story back.” I made it clear I did not want them conflicted by ethical issues to the point where they might put themselves and others in danger. Their instructions were to do what was necessary to get themselves and the story back in one piece.

Only later did I learn that Galloway had written a much more eloquent memo to reporters about to embed in Iraq, advising them of the dos and don’ts of life in a combat zone. He told them to “not shy away from an opportunity to act first as a concerned human being and then later as a reporter. Help the wounded, if called to do so. Carry water or ammo or the dead if it seems needed. None of that violates either the Geneva Conventions or your objectivity as a journalist.”<sup>30</sup>

The issues raised here are still ongoing and the subject of much debate within the industry and the individuals responsible for guiding news coverage. During Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, National Public Radio Senior Foreign Editor Loren Jenkins said in an interview that his correspondents were under orders to seek out and report all military activities, including covert operations. “I don’t represent the government,” he said. Yet when Clark Hoyt, the Washington bureau chief for what then was the Knight Ridder newspaper chain, discovered plans for a special operations mission in Afghanistan, he called the Pentagon seeking comment. When told revealing the information at that point could jeopardize the operation and put American lives at risk, Hoyt decided to withhold publication.<sup>31</sup>

More recently, the editor of a national news magazine said that he had embedded with an Army unit to work on a story about a major battle in which the unit had been involved. One of the Soldiers gave him a CD with a number of photos on it, some related to the battle and some of other incidents dating back several years. Some of those photos showed what could be construed as war crimes, according to the military lawyers the editor consulted. In the end, the magazine decided not to run the photos because they were peripheral to the main story and the Soldier who gave them the photos had died in combat. “In the wake of Abu Ghraib there was sensitivity and special considerations given to the propaganda value of these pictures for all sides,” the editor said. “We were very conscious of the impact these pictures would have.” The decision, he said, came down to: “If it doesn’t really have to do with the story, why put it in there? It seemed like the right thing to do at the time. It seemed like the fair thing to do at the time, if not absolutely the right moral thing to do.”

### **The Role of Self-Censorship in the Balance and Fairness of News Reporting**

Another complaint of the critics of embedding was that the bonding that took place between journalists and troops resulted in self-censorship that distorted stories and did not provide accurate and balanced accounts of combat operations. Objectivity, they argued, was compromised by journalists who stepped over the ethical boundary simply by embedding with the troops. There is little question that public opinion is shaped as much by what is not reported as what is reported. The selective presentation of events, the use of

adjectives and adverbs to describe them, and the quotations of those involved, can influence how the reading and viewing public perceive those events.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the perception of objectivity often rests with the presenter, not the consumer. Put another way, “What does not get reported does not exist, or, stated more cautiously, its chances of becoming part of ongoing perceived reality are minimal.”<sup>33</sup>

But self-censorship is an everyday occurrence in the news industry. Not every photo is run in the newspaper. Not every bit of film is run on TV. Not every note is dumped into a story. Self-censorship occurs at every level of the news production cycle. Often there are intense debates among reporters, photographers, and editors about what should and should not be included in a story or what photos or film should or should not be shown to the public. Possibly the most self-censorship in the news industry occurs among those responsible for dealing with graphic images of dead and wounded. How much of the true face of war should be shown to a public that likes its wars nice and neat and sanitary?

John Roberts of CBS said that TV networks have to sanitize their coverage for American audiences because of their “sensibilities.”<sup>34</sup> Martin Savidge of CNN said images of human suffering are tightly regulated on American television. “There is a tendency on the part of domestic networks not to show that, because they know that the American public is revolted by it, and they don’t want to make the American public uncomfortable.”<sup>35</sup>

The implication of the critics is that self-censorship is wrong and embedding increased self-censorship to the point that only good news stories that would serve as rallying points for supporters of the war were presented. But as has already been demonstrated by the examples of William Branigin, Mike Cerre, Chantal Escoto, and the editor of the national news magazine, self-censorship does not mean overlooking bad news. By being on the scene and not held at arm’s length when bad news occurs, professional journalists can better put those events into context and provide more accurate and more balanced accounts than they would if they had to rely on peripheral sources days or weeks after the event.

As the commander of the tank company with which I was embedded told me before we crossed the border, “If we do something wrong, I expect you to report it. If we do something good, I expect you to report it. I don’t have time to read what you report. All I ask is that you be fair.” Did I self-censor? Yes. Had I crossed some ethical boundary by doing so? Not at all. I ended up reporting not only on the unit’s successes, but also on several incidents in which Soldiers fired on vehicles and killed civilians when the drivers of those vehicles refused to stop at checkpoints. Some of the vehicles had weapons in them. Some did not. Because I was on the scene when some of the events occurred, the stories were balanced, nuanced, and written in the appropriate context without any compromise in my journalistic integrity.

## **Conclusions**

The argument that professional journalists somehow compromise their integrity and their ethical standards simply by embedding with combat troops and reporting on them for extended periods of time is absurd on its face. No professional journalist is going to avoid reporting bad news simply because a Soldier tosses him a few MREs. No professional

journalist is going to look the other way when commanders make questionable decisions simply because that commander has taken him into his confidence or given him a ride in the back of a cramped, smelly, incredibly uncomfortable Bradley Fighting Vehicle.

The embedded journalists who have covered and continue to cover combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan for the most part have repeatedly demonstrated their devotion to their profession, to their readers and viewers, and to the troops they cover. When confronted with troublesome ethical situations, they more often than not do the right thing for all involved.

Ethically and morally speaking, is it worse for a professional journalist to embed with a combat unit in order to tell the American public the stories of their sons and daughters in uniform than it is for CNN to make a deal with the regime of Saddam Hussein to withhold stories on torture so it could continue to report from Baghdad?<sup>36</sup>

Is it worse for an embedded journalist to push the ethical boundaries to help civilians and troops under fire than it is for “Dateline NBC” to take on a quasi-police role for its “To Catch a Predator” series?

And is it worse for an embedded reporter to accept food, water, transportation, and security than it is for the New York–Washington talking heads who purport to be journalists to charge thousands of dollars in speaking fees to special interest groups that have a vested interest in influencing public opinion?

Difficult ethical situations will continue to arise in Iraq and Afghanistan, both for journalists and for the military. But the idea that journalists lose their sense of fairness and balance simply by embedding does not fly. The embedding system has its flaws, but as one military officer wrote, “Embedding the media brings the Soldier closer to the American people and puts a face on battle.”<sup>37</sup>

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## PANEL 1—FORGING A RELATIONSHIP: THE ARMY AND THE MEDIA

### Question and Answers

(Transcript of Presentation)

**Mr. Frederick J. Chiaventone**

**Mr. Ron Martz**

**Moderated by Donald P. Wright, Ph.D.**

#### **Audience Member**

First of all, Fred and Ron, thanks for the great presentations. In the interest of full media disclosure, I'll be [*inaudible*] and I'm speaking on Thursday morning on the military media as an event journalist. Sir, you blamed the media for Abu Ghraib and I don't quite understand that, sir. We're not the ones who—is this something I . . .

#### **Mr. Chiaventone**

Yeah, go ahead and I'm just a little stuffed up, so.

#### **Audience Member**

Is this better?

#### **Mr. Chiaventone**

Yeah, go ahead, go ahead.

#### **Audience Member**

You blamed the media for Abu Ghraib, but we're not the ones who tortured or abused captured prisoners. We're not the ones who sent the videos down to their families. It strikes me that you view the media as just trolling for anything that is not positively promilitary.

#### **Mr. Chiaventone**

Oh, no, quite the contrary. In fact, I think the media publicizing something like Abu Ghraib is very much to our advantage. What happens if word of that gets out, then we find that there's a problem within the ranks in our own organization and we correct the problem. But we wouldn't have known of that without the media's participation. You can, you know, drive it to death, do it to death, but the fact that it's brought out in public, that's a good thing. That's a very good thing. Because what it exposes to us, the fact that there are some problems within the system that we need to correct, just like with [William] Howard Russell and Chenery at Scutari, the British needed to know that their medical system was bad. By the same token, we needed to know that the training of some of our troops was subpar or the discipline within some of our organizations was subpar and we needed to



correct that. Because that negates a lot of the progress that we've made in other areas. So yeah, I'm all for that. I think that's a good thing.

**Audience Member**

Okay, thank you. I'd like to make a little addition to your comment about Mark Kellogg and Custer. General Cook had issued orders that there were to be no reporters on that expedition, and Custer let him in. Kellogg, what he wrote, was great for Custer, but it had very little relationship with any reality whatsoever.

**Mr. Chiaventone**

Oh absolutely, yeah.

**Audience Member**

This is the way it often was out there and Custer was famous for this. And to bring it into the present or nearly present, when David Akron did his thing in Vietnam and was brought up, could have been brought up on charges for all kinds of things, the [inaudible] personnel for the US Army pointed to General Abrams and said, "We haven't had his likes since George Armstrong Custer."

**Mr. Chiaventone**

Yeah, that's very true. As I said, a lot of these guys, they were actually going out and soliciting reporters, and you're right, Custer took Kellogg in direct contravention to his orders out of Chicago. They said, "Don't take any reporters whatever you do," but of course he brought Kellogg. Same thing with Crook, although I don't think he got the direct orders not to take reporters. But they were attracted to that, so not surprising. Does it continue to this day? In one form or another, but you're always going to have that possibility out there. And then the thing that's really complicated is that a lot of the material we're going to get these days may not come from someone who is trained as a reporter. For example, as I said, we saw some footage from Basra, came from a cell phone, of an ambush of a Russian unit. There are a lot of folks out there who are gathering news who are unable to process it. You know, so once again, we're learning as we go along and it's a tough road, it really is.

**Audience Member**

My name is Stephen Badsey and I'm presenting on Thursday as well. Thank you. As indicated, the big change comes in the middle of the 19th century with the introduction of principally the Billy Russell festival. Well, he did in fact write [inaudible]. And prior to that and continuing to the present, there has been very little change. There has been a military mechanism for getting the military story to the public. It goes back to Caesar writing his own biased account of wars and it proceeds up to the present day. And forget all notions about objectivity; this is if you like the military truth. This is what the military wants the public to hear and it's their truth. The point about the change which comes with Russell is the introduction of a second truth, which was meant/intended with the forces of democracy coming in to extend the knowledge of the public. Now, if you take that fast forward to the present day or more recent, [inaudible] both by reporters, also by theoreticians. For someone to turn around and tell a member of the public that they have no right to comment

because they weren't there defeats the whole object of the reporter as a second island. And criticism made of the [*inaudible*] system in various names and incarnations is that if the media is simply going to report the military truth and not go out of their way to take issue with us, to be adversarial, to be contrary without being inaccurate, then what are they doing there in the first place?

**Mr. Chiaventone**

That's a very good point.

**Audience Member**

That's an argument which has been increasing at the moment and has been for about the last 30 years.

**Mr. Chiaventone**

Yeah, I think that's a very good comment. I think it's very appropriate. And I don't know that we've come up with an answer to that yet.

**Audience Member**

I rather hope we might do so in the next couple of days.

**Mr. Chiaventone**

They're not paying us enough to do that apparently or they should. Go ahead, Ron.

**Mr. Martz**

I think it depends on the individual reporter to a great degree about what they report and how they report it. I mean, I think the examples that I cited—William Branigan, Chantal Escoto, Mike Cerre, myself—I mean, I reported on some instances when the troops I was with fired on civilians, killed civilians. And the bottom line is, I think, because we were there, we were able to see it, we did not have to take the military version of it. We had the nuances and the context of what those events were. I think that the story that you get that's a bit more distorted is when it's filtered through a number of channels of public affairs officers and they put their own particular spin on it at that point. I think it's actually a good thing that we've got all these various technologies up and coming, because it does keep us honest and I speak as former military. But the thing that I always say is that if you don't want to see it on TV, don't do it. Just don't do it. I mean, and you use that as your mantra if you will.

**Audience Member**

Mr. Martz, based on what you said, here's what you were saying: situational ethics are okay for your journalists. If that's the contention, I wonder what you teach your journalist students or what's the ethical baseline for right or wrong for their other activities?

**Mr. Martz**

Really haven't delved into that kind of thing. But I think that the battlefield is a unique situation where I think it's one of those things where you can't, in my opinion at least, just draw that hard and fast ethical line and say you should do this and shouldn't do that.

I mean, there are certain considerations that we as journalists have that are certain ethical considerations that our various organizations put on us, their professional organizations and that sort of thing. But I just, I think that there is the possibility that you can push that ethical line out. Now, in terms of their own personal—like, you know, that’s something that I haven’t discussed, but it’s something that I will definitely give some consideration to.

**Audience Member**

Sir, Lieutenant Commander Allen from CGSC. I know that we’ve already mentioned Abu Ghraib, understanding what happened there. This is an ideological struggle and every message that comes out that says we did something bad is amplified. In fact, even today the Abu Ghraib message is still being broadcast to recruit new fighters. So in our current conflicts, we see information spirited away by the enemy. How can we manage the media on the military side to spread our message without excess censorship or devaluing our Constitution while keeping the nation’s and our military’s objectives predominant?

**Mr. Chiaventone**

That’s a really good question. We have a tendency to play everything very close to the vest and we’re just not as open and forthcoming in a lot of things that we should be. We place a lot of restrictions on the conveying of information or we slow it down. We should, in fact, slow it down when it comes down to reporting casualties and that sort of stuff, make sure family members are notified, and everything like that first. But we should come straight out and say, “Look, we have caught the problem and we are going to deal with the problem,” you know, and get ahead of the power curve that way. Very tough to do, quite honestly, but we have to get out in front and say, “Look, this is what we are trying to achieve.” And we should not be afraid of calling a spade a spade. Say, “Hey, folks, these are bad guys. These are bad guys. We are going to deal with them and here’s why we’re going to deal with them because this is the sort of thing that they do.” We haven’t really done that when you come right down to it. We haven’t done enough of that. We haven’t said, “Look, these are the things that they’ve done.” We have to make sure that reporters are there to see what the other side has done. You know, try to make sure that they have access to it.

**Mr. Martz**

You used a term there that kind of grates on those of us in the media. “Managing the media.” That’s an impossible task. You can’t do that. “Work with the media.” Don’t try to manage them; otherwise, they will fight back. You know, if you work with them, if it’s more of a cooperative relationship than it is of you trying to manage them, I think it will work out a lot better that way.

**Mr. Chiaventone**

Yeah, I think it’s a matter of just being more forthcoming and inviting folks in and urging folks to come on and become part of it, part of the effort.

**Audience Member**

To build on that question, let me just quickly pose one other query to Ron. What do you think of the efforts by DOD to create their own news media outlets like *Defense News*

where they actually have uniformed and non-uniformed journalists asking questions, doing stories? It sounds a lot like we are competing or DOD wants to compete to help manage the message.

**Mr. Martz**

Yeah, I don't have a problem with that at all. I mean, I think that's just part of what the Government does. It's a way of them getting out their message, and I don't see it as competition. I see it as—and as long as it's clearly identified as this is coming from the Government, I think people, at least hopefully, are smart enough to realize this is coming from the Government. It's not coming from some sort of independent source. Now, you bring up something here. There is an effort now, which *Stars and Stripes* just wrote about the other day in Iraq, of DOD trying to compile profiles of reporters who want to embed over there and they're being classified as negative, neutral, or fair. That's something that I find a bit disturbing, and I understand that contract with the Rendon Group out of Washington is worth something like \$1.8 million, and as I mentioned to some folks, "We could do that a lot cheaper. I could just have our folks send you a few clip files. We can do it for a lot less than \$1.8 million." But to me, that's more an effort of managing the news when you try to determine who comes, well, who's a good guy and who's a bad guy. Who's a good embed and who's a bad embed. That's something I ran into in DESERT STORM. Any of you read the book *Hotel Warriors*? Joe Galloway and I were castigated mightily by John Fialka of the *Wall Street Journal* who wrote that book because John was under the opinion that we had made some sort of secret deal with Barry McCaffrey who was the commander of the 24th ID to get out there, outside the pool system. Well, Joe and I, I mean, we used our contacts. I used my contacts with the 24th ID and Joe used his. He knew Schwarzkopf from Vietnam. Most other times we'd be applauded for what we did. But some people looked at that as McCaffrey trying to manage the news by only getting out reporters who were fair to him. But now there seems to be a process in the works that has formalized that of trying to get reporters to Afghanistan who are only going to report the good news.

**Audience Member**

Colonel Farquhar, Combat Studies Institute. This is to you, Mr. Martz. Personally, I miss your reporting from the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. The shoe leather reporting you did in the [inaudible]. My question is on ethics and in the past, say, 30 years, since 1980 we'll say, if we look at journalistic scandals, the only one that really pops to my mind that's not military was the Janet Cooke affair, "Jimmy's World" of the *Washington Post* in the early 1980s where, again, the *Washington Post* was given a Pulitzer Prize for something that was entirely fictional. But since then, if we take a look at things like "The War Within," "CBS Reports 1980," which was a series of self-proclaimed Vietnam veterans who took part, claimed to take part in massacres that they had not been, not even served in Vietnam. The tale on CNN that destroyed the reputation of a famous and honored journalist, Peter Arnett, He did a piece which was a story that American soldiers had massacred Korean civilians in the beginning of the Korean war, Pulitzer Prize. Totally debunked. That the main witness was in a mental hospital. *Newsweek* recently published that guards had flushed a Koran down the toilet at Guantanamo. Well, what is it about this template that makes people of your former profession lie so much about mine?

**Mr. Martz**

I can't answer to those specific stories. I mean, I have no idea where they came from. The only thing I can surmise is that they picked up information or a tip from somewhere and it was of such magnitude that someone decided that we're going to go with this no matter what circumstances or what the truth is. Now, why they do that, you know, I don't know. I mean, I've been involved in stories in the past where that kind of thing happened also. There was a case a few years ago that I knew a lot of the participants where *Time Magazine* did a piece in which they ended up putting the blame for the Lockerbie explosion, the Pan Am 103 explosion, on a guy who was actually a janitor in Austell, Georgia. But, *Time Magazine* did some other things around that time. It was like they got this idea in their heads and this is just generally speaking—and again, I can't speak to all the specifics of it—but sometimes editors and/or reporters get this idea in their heads that this story is too good to pass up and we're going to go with it no matter what it is. A lot of times it's not necessarily the reporter that pushes it along, but an editor somewhere who's some distance removed from it. You could also bring up the Dan Rather thing with President Bush. But there are people in the industry, as we've seen—the Janet Cooke thing, the Jayson Blair thing—that will do . . .

**Mr. Chiaventone**

The guy Glass . . . .

**Mr. Martz**

Oh yeah, Glass, people that will do anything to become celebrities, to become known in the business. You know, we've got our bad apples too, just like you guys may have one or two bad apples yourselves every once in awhile. I mean, it's like we're not perfect as an institution. We do what we can to try to bring those things to light and to show that what somebody said about this is not correct, but we're not always successful in that.

**Audience Member**

Mike Fletcher of the visiting press at the University of Oklahoma. Just a comment. I just returned from a year embed in Afghanistan and Iraq. Any time you talk about situational ethics, it is true—I mean, you have to keep in mind that any time you bring a camera into the equation, you change—people do things differently. You're perhaps shot at more, your unit will be because you have a camera. The civilians as well too. So you have to adjust depending on what's going on at that point. You have to take into account that you bear a certain amount of responsibility for changing the equation and have to deal with that in a real-time situation. The other thing is on embedding. You hear the criticism that we're co-opted by embedding. But my argument always is that we should close down our press bureaus at the White House, at the Supreme Court, at the Justice Department, and as an embedded reporter in the field, you cannot, just can't physically cover every angle. If that is the case, the White House reporter then should go to the Hill and get their reaction and then should go to a small town and get reaction of other people [*inaudible*]. But what we have, and we have very little of it left, I mean, you have to have a deal to cover those

wars as they're, the military, as they're being pushed. You know, [*inaudible*] constitution [*inaudible*]. The networks closed down their overseas bureaus. So we're seeing less and less of that. Then if someone wants to cover the other side, which is very difficult to do if you want to cover the Taliban. Good luck. But another reporter has to do that. There has to be bodies out there to do that.

Then a second question I have for you, Fred, is this Office of Press Information in World War I. How did they try to manage in World War I? I'm very curious. Did they have the embeds and that sort of thing?

**Mr. Chiaventone**

They had the—I don't know if you would call them embeds. But they had a lot of, they would accredit various correspondents to go over there, to follow it. But they would censor it. They would actually have a military officer who would be assigned to go through it and red letter everything that was going out and they had to go through a military telegraph to get back to the States with their stories. It was a tough business. Now some of them tried to circumvent it. They tried to send it by other channels and that sort of thing, but they quickly lost their credentials as a result. If they lost their credentials, they didn't have access to the front because, as messy as the front was in France, it was tough getting to it. It was really tough getting up there and getting back, getting your material back. So it didn't work very well except for the fact that a lot of folks believe very much in the war effort and they say, "Well, we've got to keep the effort going." Afterwards, there was a lot of personal rejection of that. They thought they had maybe participated in making this cataclysm possible. So in fact, there were several suicides among former reporters who thought, "What did I do to make that possible? To keep that going?" So it was a tough business.

**Mr. Martz**

If I could just address something. Mike, that comment about the limited view of the war by the individual embed. And I address that in my paper. I just didn't go into it here. But I mean, the idea that an embed can cover the whole war is absolute nonsense. Those of us who were embeds, I think, or any embed who thought they could do that—just totally impossible. As an embed, you report what you can see and what you can hear and you try to present that snapshot picture of what's on the battlefield in front of you so it's representative of a larger piece of what's going on in the war. When I went over there for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, we probably had somewhere in the neighborhood of 15 reporters scattered around the battlefield at different places. We had one guy in Baghdad, as a matter of fact, who had stayed behind. We had unilaterals who were roaming the battlefield. We had reporters and various other units around. And, as an embed, I'm not responsible for telling people the entire story of the war. I think it's up to the editors and the news consumer to be good news consumers and take more than just what I'm writing as the story of the war.

**Audience Member**

Don Wolfe. On an earlier question about DOD getting out their own message, I'm completely in favor of that. But my pet peeve is getting competition in a combat theater



from a senior officer. A couple of examples. In Camp Philadelphia in Kuwait, a week before the invasion of Iraq, there was a grenade thrown into a tent. It was believed to have been a terrorist incident. We crawled around all night trying to find out the truth, and by morning we pretty well identified the situation as a fragging carried out by one of the soldiers against their officers. We were asked to embargo that story a couple more hours until more investigation could take place and we agreed. I can remember tuning in to Voice of America or BBC or something, 7 a.m., bingo, coming from Qatar, US Army spokesman telling our story. Breaking it. Another case was in Kosovo at Camp Eagle. I had been with the Marines all day. There had been a small skirmish and several Serbs were shot and a couple killed, a few wounded. Went back to Camp Eagle, rushed into the PIO tent to get the phone to call ABC News, and was told, "Don, our commanding general has a briefing by phone with journalists at the Pentagon in an hour and he said no journalists will be using the phone or filing any stories until I get on. I'm going to give the today's report." And he got on and gave it, but he got it wrong. But I told him the next day, "General, I won't fight the war if you won't report my stories."

**Dr. Wright**

Maybe we'll get a point of view on the command side on this type of issue. I'm not sure if our panelists want to quickly respond to that?

**Mr. Chiaventone**

No, I think he's got some valid points. You know, it's a messy business and it's going to take a while to sort it all out quite honestly.

**Mr. Martz**

I think one of the things that we're fighting now is, I mean, during Operation DESERT STORM, they were still running into folks who had the Vietnam hangover, some of the top commanders. Tommy Franks was one of those guys who carried that through, even through OIF-1. McCaffrey is one of the guys who was a little more enlightened in terms of media relations. But what you have now is pretty much a generation of folks who did not grow up with that Vietnam hangover regarding the media, and I know there are folks who are going to speak on that issue later today. So I think that this current generation of officers, all the way from four stars down to second lieutenants, have an opportunity to be more engaged, more engaged with the media, and to do a better job of letting the American public know what it is that they do and what it is that our sons and daughters in uniform do.

**Mr. Chiaventone**

You know, it's kind of interesting. It's less of a mysterious business right now. I know I have a tough time doing this stuff. My 13-year old son knows more about technology than I ever will. But, you know, we've grown up in an era where technology is much more readily available and a lot of the folks, from second lieutenants to now even four star generals, are more comfortable with it, more used to it, more willing to adapt and utilize it to our advantage. It's going to take a little while to work all the bugs out. We're going to have problems with it. We're going to have glitches. Generals are going to try to talk to DC, you know, to the reporters in DC, and they're going to get it wrong. We're going to try to wean



ourselves away from that sort of thing, but it's going to take some time to get all the bugs worked out of the system.

**Mr. Wright**

Thank you very much for your excellent questions and to our panelists for two provocative papers. Would you join me in a round of applause for them. Ken Gott would like me to remind you that the virtual staff ride (VSR) is occurring in about 15 minutes upstairs and that lunch will go on for the next hour and 15 minutes. The symposium will reconvene here at 1300. Thank you.



## PANEL 2—THE PHILIPPINES AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

### **“Its Officers Did Not Forget”:**

### **The Philippine War, the Press, and the Pre-World War I US Army**

(Submitted Paper)

by

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The current understanding of the Philippine War, especially within military circles, is that for all of its difficulties, it was ultimately a success for the Americans.<sup>1</sup> No doubt the broader consensus stems in part from a presentist-minded comparison to perceived shortcomings in the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Whatever the case, the Philippines-as-a-success-story is a recent development.<sup>2</sup> At the time of the actual war, over 100 years ago, as the American efforts in the Philippines dragged on for more than 3 years of consistent fighting and decades of intermittent clashes beyond that, the war triggered a storm of criticism in the media of the day. The resulting controversies were very much in the minds of the generation of Army officers who fought in the Philippines, and for years afterward had a significant affect on the way they looked at the Army and their missions in the world.

### **Controversies**

The public controversies over the Philippines began before the war itself even started. The process that led to the sustained American occupation of the entire archipelago is beyond the scope of this discussion, but suffice it to say that it initiated a heated debate between camps of so-called imperialists and anti-imperialists over the proper role of the United States in the wider world.<sup>3</sup> For the most part, the military remained removed from this particular debate, but the critics of the acquisition of the Philippines made a strong, sustained, and very public case, and the American efforts in the Philippines began under a cloud of controversy.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, as the actual fighting broke out between the Americans and Filipino nationalists in February 1899, the controversies over the Philippines began to multiply.

At the outbreak of hostilities between the Americans and Filipinos, Major General Elwell S. Otis commanded the American forces on the islands. The war that followed broke into two phases. The first began in the spring of 1899 and involved a conventional ground campaign by the Americans to break out of Manila and drive north to destroy Emilio Aguinaldo's regular forces and hastily organized government. The outnumbered

Americans managed to push north over the next few months, but could not deliver a decisive blow before the onset of the rainy season. The prolonging of the war triggered the second large public controversy over the Philippines, this one involving the Army specifically. Some journalists began to question Otis's leadership. For his deliberate style of command, he picked up the sobriquet "Nervous Nelly," and in an article under the headline "Otis is a Fussy Old Man," a reporter for the *Boston Daily Globe* wrote, "Unless Gen. Otis is removed and a competent general put in command, the whole campaign will be a failure."<sup>5</sup>

The overall success of the follow-up campaign in the fall of 1899 relieved some of the controversy over Otis's leadership, and the general turned over command to Major General Arthur MacArthur in May 1900. However, the war was long from over, and the public controversies over the counterinsurgency that followed would only grow more heated, especially for the Army. The details of the second phase of the Philippine War, the guerrilla war, have been covered admirably elsewhere, but in short Otis and then MacArthur, and then, after July 1901, Major General Adna Chaffee, faced the daunting task of organizing for ongoing small fights throughout the islands in a wide variety of geographic and social conditions. As in most insurgent wars, the guerrilla style of fighting involved more and more of the civilian population as willing or unwilling conspirators. In their desperation, many of the guerrillas used brutal techniques—including torture and mutilation—against Americans, their Filipino allies, and Filipino civilians. As the war dragged on with no end in sight, some of the increasingly frustrated Americans responded in kind. Opponents of the war in the press and at home seized on reports of American atrocities, and initiated the strongest and most heated controversy involving the Army in the war.<sup>6</sup>

Newspapers and other periodicals went into detail about all manner of misconduct committed by Army officers and soldiers, especially wanton destruction of villages and private property, the killing of civilians, the torture of prisoners, and the summary executions of captured insurgents. Regardless of the veracity of the charges—some were true, but many were later proven either false or exaggerations—the fact that they appeared in the press and were repeated by anti-imperialists at home set a trend.<sup>7</sup>

The charges were legion, and they grew as the fight dragged on and turned into a guerrilla war, but a few examples should provide the flavor. Letters home from American soldiers found their way into papers all over the country, making claims of orders from generals to "burn the town and kill every native in sight," and reporting a standard practice in the fighting that if natives "fire a shot from a house we burn the house down and every house near it, and shoot the natives."<sup>8</sup> If there was one particular accusation of mistreatment of prisoners that media reports particularly latched on to, it was the use of the so-called "water cure" as an interrogation technique. One report after another described in detail the process of sticking a bamboo tube or some other kind of funnel in a prisoner's mouth, forcing water down into the tube until his stomach was full and distended, and then pressing, hitting, stomping, or even jumping on the stomach to force the water out.<sup>9</sup> The 22 May 1902 cover of *Life* magazine featured a cartoon with American soldiers administering the water cure, as caricatures of a variety of other nationalities, mainly European, looked on. "Those pious Yankees can't throw stones at us anymore," read the caption.<sup>10</sup>

The capture of Aguinaldo in a daring raid by then Brigadier General Frederick Funston in March 1901 absorbed much of the attention of the press and militarily helped lead to the surrender of many other guerrilla leaders, but by then public criticisms had too much momentum to be stopped for long. Funston himself even came under attack for the supposedly unsportsmanlike and maybe even illegal ruse he used to take Aguinaldo (he had posed as a prisoner to get into the Filipino leader's camp).<sup>11</sup> In 1902, no less a figure than Mark Twain penned the satirical "A Defence of General Funston," in which he wrote:

He and his party were well disguised, in dishonored uniforms, American and Insurgent; they greatly outnumbered Aguinaldo's guard; by his forgeries and falsehoods he had lulled suspicion to sleep; his coming was expected, his way was prepared; his course was through a solitude, unfriendly interruption was unlikely; his party were well armed; they would catch their prey with welcoming smiles in their faces, and with hospitable hands extended for the friendly shake—nothing would be necessary but to shoot these people down. That is what they did. It was hospitality repaid in a brand-new, up-to-date, Modern Civilization fashion, and would be admired by many.<sup>12</sup>

Such was the environment of the spring of 1902, when the public criticism of the Army's actions in the Philippines reached a fever pitch. In September 1901, Filipino insurgents, numbering in the hundreds and armed with bolo knives, attacked and all but wiped out a company from the 9th Infantry Regiment at Balangiga on the island of Samar. In response, the Americans sent one brigade under General Jacob Smith to Samar and another under General J. Franklin Bell to Batangas province in southern Luzon. Outraged by the slaughter of the American troops at Balangiga, Smith led a campaign of destruction clear through the island. He may or may not have ordered his men to turn Samar into a "howling wilderness," but what is important here is that it was so widely reported that the general became known as Jacob "Howling Wilderness" Smith. Because of his actions and the popular outrage over reports of American atrocities, Smith was court-martialed, convicted, and forced to retire. Bell, who is often lauded now for the effectiveness of his efforts in Batangas, at the time came under intense criticism, especially for his technique of gathering the friendly population into concentration camps.<sup>13</sup>

At the same time, the US Senate, which had created a standing Committee on the Philippines as far back as 1900, decided to redirect the Committee's efforts into an investigation of "the conduct of the war in the Philippine Islands, the administration of the government there and the condition and character of the inhabitants."<sup>14</sup> To add fuel to the fire, the last full-time Commanding General of the Army, Lieutenant General Nelson A. Miles joined the fray on the side of the critics of the Army's efforts. In the late summer of 1902, Miles, who already had made public comments about Army misconduct in the Philippines, went on an inspection tour of the archipelago. His reports, submitted in February 1903 and publically released in May, repeated many of the same charges of the previous years, including naming specific American officers and soldiers who participated in the destruction of property, the use of the water cure, and the mistreatment and execution

of civilians and prisoners. The report, formally released in the *Army and Navy Journal*, received widespread coverage in newspapers at the time.<sup>15</sup>

Even the declared end of the war in 1902 did not change the trend of press coverage of the ongoing actions in the Philippines, especially in the fights against the Moros and other groups on the islands.<sup>16</sup> The tendency toward criticism continued. There was no escaping it—the entire Philippine adventure had become a public relations disaster for the Army.

### **Recognition**

There is a current tendency to assume too much about the effects of the rapidity of information sharing in the digital age. While it is true that modern technology allows for the collection, processing, and dissemination of information in a variety of formats and at unprecedented rates, that does not mean that people in the past did not have effective information sharing systems of their own. Newspapers and periodicals were everywhere during this era, and they covered every topic of national interest from the full range of ideological perspectives. The information came slower and it was mostly in written form, but for interested parties, the information was almost always there.<sup>17</sup> But even more important, then and now, is the way people in and out of decisionmaking positions understand and use that information. Whether the American people and American policymakers find out about a controversy through a press report or a Web log, what really matters is how they act (or do not act) based on their understanding of the controversy.

With that in mind, it is worth noting that people associated with the military in the early 20th century became acutely aware of the power of the available media, especially newspapers, to shape public opinion and potentially force actions that would affect the way the military did its work. And if they did not know before the Philippine War, they certainly did after, because when it came to the coverage of the controversies in the Philippines the military heard it all, some of it directly, and everyone from the top down took notice.<sup>18</sup> Major General Otis said on several occasions that he believed the critiques of the war had helped start the fight and had most certainly prolonged it.<sup>19</sup> General Henry W. Lawton wrote to a friend from the Philippines, “I know from my own observation, confirmed by the stories of captured Filipino prisoners, that the continuance of fighting is chiefly due to reports that are sent out from America and circulated among these ignorant natives.”<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps the most consistently controversial American officer, and the one most likely to note and respond to attacks, was Frederick Funston. It seemed like at every turn, Funston was defending his actions from charges in the press. When reports came out that he had ordered prisoners killed in the early fighting, Funston denied the charges and retorted publically that “some of the rankest cowards in the army were officers from the Twentieth Kansas Regiment . . . and it is this same class of skulkers that is now making contemptible and underhand attacks upon Colonel Metcalf and myself.”<sup>21</sup> “Liars and blackguards of the first water,” was what he called the editors and journalists who accused him of such crimes.<sup>22</sup> At the end of his time in the Philippines, when he gave a speech at the Lotos Club in New York in March 1902, he said, “All of those men who have fallen since the month of January, 1900, have died, not because the Filipinos really had much heart in fighting

against us, but because they were sustained by a lot of misguided people here in the United States.” He continued:

I do not want to say anything brutal, but, as I say, the Army feels bitterly about this business. I have no quarrel with the man who thinks that we should not at first have taken the Philippine Islands; I have no quarrel with the man who thinks a whole lot of things but who does not say too much about it now; but as to those men who have been writing and talking about this thing and keeping this warfare alive and in the field to-day, I say that I would rather see any one of these men hanged, hanged for treason, hanged for giving aid and comfort to the enemy, than see the humblest soldier in the United States Army lying dead on the field of battle.<sup>23</sup>

A decade later he was still at it, as significant portions of his memoirs answered old charges that still rankled.<sup>24</sup>

For obvious reasons, the officers could not miss the Senate hearings on Philippine affairs; a good number of them either sent in documents or had to testify directly. Admiral Dewey, Generals Otis, MacArthur, Robert P. Hughes, William Crozier, and Colonel Arthur Wagner all stood before the committee and answered detailed questions about all of the controversies attendant to the war in the Philippines.<sup>25</sup> On multiple occasions, the questioning grew heated, as imperialists and anti-imperialists on the committee debated with each other and the witnesses, and had their testimony or reports republished in the press.<sup>26</sup>

Likewise, the Miles report elicited responses from around the Army. When the *Army and Navy Journal* first published the report, the magazine also reprinted responses to Miles’ specific claims from the Judge-Advocate General, the Commissary General, the Chief of Engineers, and the Surgeon General. In addition, Major General Adna Chaffee, the military commander in the Philippines after MacArthur, also replied, as did J. Franklin Bell, who said the War Department had already investigated all of Miles’ charges.<sup>27</sup>

It was not just officers who felt the sting of the critiques. Historians William Sexton, John Gates, and Edward M. Coffman all made the case that the controversies affected the men in the field.<sup>28</sup> Jack Ganzhorn, who served with Funston and witnessed the field execution of two Filipino insurgents, wrote, “In many instances from Maine to California, General Funston was declared a cold-blooded, callous killer.” Ganzhorn’s memoir, first published in 1940, still sought to correct the record:

In contradiction, let me point out that the General Order above referred to [General Order No. 100] makes it mandatory that any enemy caught in the act of torturing prisoners of war be summarily executed. These two Filipino officers were caught in the act, their persons and clothing spattered with the life blood of helpless prisoners. Aside from the fact that the execution was well merited and entirely legal, its general effect no doubt saved many Americans a like fate.<sup>29</sup>

Even more telling was the unwillingness to open old wounds. Almost 30 years later, with World War I in the interim, the editor of the *Military Engineer* still rejected an article



about the Battle of Mount Bagsak because one senior officer said it was an incident “which should not be unduly publicized. This discussion of these actions may revive public attention to military operations that might well remain forgotten.”<sup>30</sup>

### Effect

As Edward M. Coffman has pointed out, the wars in the Philippines “were a crucible for the officer corps,” especially those officers who would rise to prominence prior to and during World War I.<sup>31</sup> The question at hand is what affect the media controversies over the Philippines had on the Army directly prior to World War I. The straightforward answer relates to relations with the media, and the Army response in that sense had two sides. The first is obvious: The Army became much more vigorous about the need for censorship. John J. Pershing, who had to enlist the help of politicians and independent investigators to clear his name for a variety of issues in the Philippines, strongly supported review and censorship of press reports coming out of the Punitive Expedition in Mexico and the American Expeditionary Forces in World War I.<sup>32</sup>

The second response by individuals in the Army from the lessons of dealing with the media in the imperial years is that they grew much more astute at using the media to affect larger debates. The best example of this was on the preparedness question, the classic dilemma for an American military that came from a society that feared and did not want to pay for large standing armies. For all the internal angst about the Army’s lack of preparedness, the Army had trouble getting the message out, even after the difficulties in mobilizing for the Spanish American War.<sup>33</sup>

The generation of officers who served in the Philippines and saw the power of the media to gain unwelcome attention realized that controversy could also work in their favor. It is no exaggeration to say that advocates for preparedness in the pre-World War I period launched one of the most effective public relations campaigns in American history. John McAuley Palmer said outright, “My modest success in writing magazine articles on reform subjects in *McClure’s* and elsewhere led me to believe I might make myself most useful by acting as a literary agent for the scheme of reorganization. . . .”<sup>34</sup> Chief of Staff Leonard Wood wrote and published a steady stream of articles and speeches arguing for some form of greatly expanded military training, and eventually even managed to get a series of citizen military training camps opened in 1915, starting in Plattsburgh, New York.<sup>35</sup> Palmer was even more explicit about the role of newspapers in describing how Chief of Staff General Hugh Scott, who served in Cuba and the Philippines, pushed for the World War I draft with Secretary of War Newton Baker:

General Scott sensed the danger of trying to convert his man by frontal assault. Open debate might well lead to acrimony. . . . Instead, General Scott resorted to a campaign of gradual attrition. Having sent his annual report with its plea for universal training as a trial balloon, he sat back and waited. Each day, as editorials favoring the report were sent in from newspapers all over the country, he would refer them to Mr. Baker without comment. He knew the secretary would eventually make up his own mind, as indeed he did—after more than 800 editorials favoring compulsory duty

had crossed his desk. And once persuaded of his own volition that the principle was sound, Mr. Baker himself took the initiative in winning over President Wilson.

Newspapers, then, played an important part in shaping the policy of the War Department. Without their support even the diplomatic skill of General Scott might well have proved inadequate.<sup>36</sup>

In a broader sense, the media coverage of the Philippine War also affected and continues to affect the way the Army thinks about counterinsurgency. It just is not true that the soldiers who fought in the Philippines simply forgot about small wars. On the contrary, they believed that beyond concerns with strategic deployment for the conflicts, they had done a pretty solid job of tactically fighting against insurgents, and that whatever skills they needed in the future had been captured in corporate experiences and knowledge.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the generation had some pretty solid foundational ideas for counterinsurgency, especially about balancing coercion and attraction. As Robert Bullard wrote in 1910, such wars meant “a judicious mixture of force and persuasion, of severity and moderation.”<sup>38</sup> Their skill at achieving just such a mixture played out in Cuba in 1906, the ongoing fights in the Philippines, the occupation of Veracruz in 1914, and even in the border troubles with Mexico in 1915–17.

In each case, Army officers put serious thought into both how to achieve the mission and how that mission might be perceived. In Cuba, the local conditions meant that the Army could get by almost entirely with attraction.<sup>39</sup> As already mentioned, the Moros and some of the other belligerents in the Philippines required a harder hand.<sup>40</sup> There were plenty of Americans calling for harsher measures against Mexico, but generally the military took a more measured line, in both Veracruz and on the southern border. As Frank McCoy wrote to an acquaintance, “If it were not for us altruistic soldier missionaries, you jingoes would have forced us into an unjust war against the poor, downtrodden peons of Mexico.”<sup>41</sup> The point was that there was no magic equation of balancing attraction and coercion—it depended on the circumstances and the ability of the commanders on the ground to recognize when it was time to do what.

This is the real paradox of American counterinsurgency. In a 1988 article, Edward Filiberti neatly captured the problem in a discussion of J. Franklin Bell’s dilemma:

Could Bell have accomplished his mission without resorting to the aggressive techniques employed? Was the reaction of the press and public outcry over the conduct of his campaign indicative of our own culture biases and standards of conduct? . . . This raises some higher issues: Will the constraints inherent with US social and culture morality preclude effective low-intensity operations in specific operational environments? Who will be able to determine that we cannot achieve the ends given our constraints on the means? Will our country ask our military leaders to try anyway?<sup>42</sup>

There is no need to assume that Filiberti was projecting backwards; Army officers at the time said much the same thing.

For example, in 1904, Major Augustus Blocksom wrote in an article that explained and defended the use of the water cure as part of the lessons from the Philippines:

When war comes, officers, high and low, will exert their power to keep its evils at the minimum. But public sentiment will be morally responsible for its beginning, and would without cavil let the army and navy fight it to the end, remembering that the larger the well-trained, properly equipped fighting force sent early to the scene of action, the shorter will be the war and less liability to methods like those described in this paper. And when things go wrong, the average blame for cruelty, privation and delay should be placed where it belongs—on war itself.<sup>43</sup>

As historian Allan Millett wrote of the post-Philippines Army: “Its officers did not forget that they would have to answer for what were portrayed to American readers as atrocities.”<sup>44</sup> The frustration created by the paradox of winning through a balance of attraction and force that might not be acceptable to a fickle public is all too evident in such accounts.

It has become axiomatic to accuse the US military of wanting to forget the lessons of counterinsurgency and return to a focus on what military professionals see as their proper task: fighting and winning the big wars. In the case of the Philippine War, the classic bit of evidence for this view is that the Army never published John Taylor’s extensive four-volume history of the war. But perhaps a little more empathy is in order. Whatever lessons learned there were and are to be gleaned from the Philippines, they are not generalized. The conditions in all of the small fights were unique enough that they do not lead to anything like a short or even long list of dos and don’ts. Rather, what the history of counterinsurgency in the Philippines provides is a catalog of unique experiences, the study of which provides a catalog of proxy experiences on which a professional could draw in more rapidly understanding and dealing with his unique counterinsurgency dilemma.<sup>45</sup> That study would require acknowledging in print or at the schoolhouse—in other words, in public—the necessity, sometimes, of the use of harsh measures to achieve the desired objectives. And so even the study itself of counterinsurgency subjects the Army once again to the public scrutiny and the almost inevitable controversy that follows. Many of the Army’s studies of the Philippine War went by the wayside for precisely that reason.<sup>46</sup>

So what is it to be? Study small wars as they should be studied and suffer the slings and arrows from a liberal democratic society, or choose to agree that the lessons have been inculcated enough through experience and turn the profession’s attention to conventional wars? In the case of the pre-World War I generation, the choice was made easier by the growing conventional threats around the world, and the view that the survival of the republic depended on not losing those wars, which was not the case with the small wars, and, no matter how painful, generally turned out all right for the United States. The Army did not eliminate the coercion side from its understanding of small wars, but they knew that coercion led to controversy. So they decided to turn their attention to big wars, something they could do with a Marine Corps taking on the small wars task, a generally less expeditionary mindset among the political leadership of the United States, and large conventional threats on the horizon (including the Japanese threat on the Philippines itself).<sup>47</sup> That logic held on at least until the end of the Cold War.

Despite some protestations, the dilemma now is the same as it ever was. One can only imagine what veterans of the Philippine War and all of its controversies would say in response to a recent article claiming,

Harsh counterinsurgency techniques of . . . history—including forced population movements, coercion of locals into security forces, stringent curfews, and even lethal pressure on civilians to take the government side—are outdated. The combination of an insurgent’s skillful international propaganda and all-pervading media coverage ends the use of such tactics that worked in the obscure jungles of the Philippines . . . and elsewhere.<sup>48</sup>

It is hoped this paper has shown that such a view is flawed when it comes to the military and media relations, but the statement, which is generally in line with the Army’s current professed counterinsurgency thinking, also reveals another assumption that all counterinsurgencies can and must be won without the use of such harsh techniques.<sup>49</sup> The surge in Iraq has succeeded in part because of a perception that the US military successfully went over toward attraction (security) and away from coercion. Whatever the merits of such an interpretation, and it is in dispute, what happens when the circumstances clearly change? After the Philippines, conditions in the world meant that the Army could pretty much ignore the question. But that might not be the case now, as the United States and its allies find themselves in the midst of another fight where the local conditions might require a different balance, one that requires more coercion, and maybe even extremely harsh techniques. Regardless of the current fights, it seems folly to assume that no small war will ever emerge where winning requires the type of force that makes a liberal democracy uncomfortable.<sup>50</sup> In such a case, it will have done no good to ignore the paradox. The question for the Army is how to manage the perception in the media, not pretend that the task does not exist.

## Notes

1. See, for example, Edward J. Filiberti, “The Roots of US Counterinsurgency Doctrine,” *Military Review* 68 (January 1988): 50–61; Timothy K. Deady, “Lessons from a Successful Counterinsurgency: The Philippines, 1899–1902,” *Parameters* 35 (Spring 2005): 53–68; Robert D. Ramsey, *Savage Wars of Peace: Case Studies of Pacification in the Philippines, 1900–1902*, Long War Series Occasional Paper 24 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2007); Robert D. Ramsey, *A Masterpiece of Counterinsurgency Warfare: BG J. Franklin Bell in the Philippines, 1901–1902*, Long War Series Occasional Paper 25 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2007); John M. Gates, *Schoolbooks and Krags: The United States Army in the Philippines, 1899–1902* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973); Brian McAllister Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899–1902* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000); and Brian McAllister Linn, *The U.S. Army and Counterinsurgency in the Philippine War, 1899–1902* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1989). See also, David J. Silbey, *A War of Frontier and Empire: The Philippine-American War, 1899–1902* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2007). An early less-well-developed account along the same lines is William Thaddeus Sexton’s 1939, *Soldiers in the Sun: An Adventure in Imperialism* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1971).

2. See, for example, Robert L. Beisner, “1898 and 1968: The Anti-Imperialists and the Doves,” *Political Science Quarterly* 85 (June 1970): 187–216; Daniel B. Schirmer, *Republic or Empire: American Resistance to the Philippine War* (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman, 1972); Stuart Creighton Miller, “Benevolent Assimilation”: *The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899–1903* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982); David Haward Bain, *Sitting in Darkness: Americans in the Philippines* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1984); Daniel B. Schirmer and Stephen Rosskamm Shalom, eds., *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship, and Resistance* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1987), esp. 1–51; Stanley Karnow, *In Our Image: America’s Empire in the Philippines* (New York, NY: Random House, 1989); and H.W. Brands, *Bound to Empire: The United States and the Philippines* (Oxford University Press, 1992). An earlier account in the same vein is Leon Wolff, *Little Brown Brother* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961). More recent generally critical accounts of American activities in the Philippines and elsewhere that do not have such direct ties to Vietnam (but sometimes relate to the Iraq War) include Angel Velasco Shaw and Luis H. Francia, eds., *Vestiges of War: The Philippine-American War and the Aftermath of the Imperial Dream, 1899–1999* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2002); Julian Go and Anne L. Foster, eds., *The American Colonial State in the Philippines: Global Perspectives* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Sharon Delmendo, *The Star-Entangled Banner: One Hundred Years of America in the Philippines* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004); Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), esp. 87–158; and Julian Go, *American Empire and the Politics of Meaning: Elite Political Cultures in the Philippines and Puerto Rico during U.S. Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

3. There is extensive literature on these issues, covering the full spectrum of interpretations. See, for example, Howard K. Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956); Ernest R. May, *Imperial Democracy: The Emergence of America as a Great Power* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace, 1961); Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860–1898* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1963); H. Wayne Morgan, *America’s Road to Empire: The War with Spain and Overseas Expansion* (New York, NY: Knopf, 1965); Oscar M. Alfonso, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Philippines, 1897–1909* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1970); Lewis L. Gould,



*The Spanish-American War and President McKinley* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1982); Walter A. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World since 1776* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 101–121; Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press); Warren Zimmerman, *First Great Triumph: How Five Americans Made Their Country a World Power* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2002); Thomas D. Schoonover, *Uncle Sam's War of 1898 and the Origins of Globalization* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2003); Eric T. Love, *Race Over Empire: Racism and U.S. Imperialism, 1865–1900* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 159–195; and Silbey, *War of Frontier and Empire*, 50–60.

4. The best account is still Richard E. Welch, *Response to Imperialism: The United States and the Philippine-American War, 1899–1902* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1979).

5. “Nervous Nelly” from Brands, *Bound to Empire*, 50; “Fussy Old Man” quoted in Robert T. Davis, *The US Army and the Media in the 20th Century*, Long War Series Occasional Paper 31 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2009), 13–14.

6. A catalog of claims of misconduct from the time can be found in *Secretary Root's Record* (Boston, MA: George H. Ellis Printers, 1902). An excellent discussion of the dimensions of atrocities in the war is Linn, *Philippine War*, esp. 219–224.

7. Linn, *Philippine War*, 124–125; “Charge Against Metcalf,” *Los Angeles Times*, 24 November 1899, 3; Thomas W. Crouch, *A Leader of Volunteers: Frederick Funston and the 20th Kansas in the Philippines, 1898–1899* (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1984), 214–233; and Welch, *Response to Imperialism*, 133.

8. Quoted in Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 88–89. See also Luzviminda Francisco, “Philippine-American War,” in *Philippine Reader*, eds. Schirmer and Shalom, 13–14; and Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 141–142.

9. See the reprints of newspaper accounts in *Secretary Root's Record*, 60–66. Historical studies include Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 250–252; Wolff, *Little Brown Brother*, 306; and Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 140–142.

10. *Life* 39 (22 May 1902), cover.

11. Sullivan, *Our Times, Vol. I*, 542; and Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 168–170.

12. Mark Twain, “A Defence of General Funston,” *North American Review* 174 (May 1902). See also, Jim Zwick, “Mark Twain's Anti-Imperialist Writings in the ‘American Century,’” in *Vestiges of War*, ed. Shaw and Francia, 38–68.

13. The best overall account of the campaigns and controversy is Linn, *The Philippine War*, 277–321. See also, Glenn Anthony May, *Battle for Batangas: A Philippine Province at War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), and Ramsey, *A Masterpiece of Counter guerrilla Warfare*. A somewhat earlier and less reported version of a similar style campaign occurred in Marinduque from April 1900 to April 1901, and is aptly covered in Andrew J. Birtle, “The U.S. Army's Pacification of Marinduque, Philippine Islands, April 1900–April 1901,” *Journal of Military History* 61 (April 1997): 255–282.

14. Henry F. Graff, ed., *American Imperialism and the Philippine Insurrection* (Boston, MA: Little Brown, 1969), xvi; US Senate, *Affairs in the Philippine Islands, Hearings before the Committee on the Philippines of the United States Senate*, S. Doc. 331, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902; and Welch, *Response to Imperialism*, 136–138.

15. “General Miles Report on the Philippines,” *Army and Navy Journal* 40 (2 May 1903): 862; or the reprint, *The Philippines: Reports by Lieutenant-General Nelson A. Miles, U.S.A.* (Boston, MA: Anti Imperialist League, 1909), 8. An example of detailed newspaper coverage was “Gen.

Miles Report on Philippines Army,” *New York Times*, 28 April 1903, 3. Miles repeated some of the charges in brief in his 1911 memoirs, and under photographs of insurgent leaders Aguinaldo and Apolinario Mabini, labeled them as “patriots.” Miles, *Serving the Republic* (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers, 1911), 306–308. For details, see Edward Ranson, “Nelson A. Miles as Commanding General, 1895–1903,” *Military Affairs* 29 (Winter 1965–66): 196–198; Robert Wooster, *Nelson Miles and the Twilight of the Frontier Army* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 232–246; and Peter R. DeMontravel, *A Hero to His Fighting Men: Nelson A. Miles, 1839–1925* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1998), 326–352.

16. A good summary of the post-1902 action in the Philippines is Brian McAllister Linn, *Guardians of Empire: The U.S. Army and the Pacific* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 23–49.

17. A particularly astute account is Alfonso, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Philippines*, 174–181. See also, the discussions of popular newspapers and periodicals, and their editorial stances in Welch, *Response to Imperialism*, passim.

18. For the responses of Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft, see Alfonso, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Philippines*, 185–205.

19. Welch, *Response to Imperialism*, 169, fn. 34.

20. Quoted in Fred C. Chamberlain, *The Blow from Behind* (Boston, MA: Lee and Shepard, 1903), 108.

21. “Funston Issues Challenge,” *Los Angeles Times*, 22 November 1899, 5.

22. “Funston Issues Challenge,” 5.

23. Elderkin, Lord, and Price, eds., *Speeches at the Lotos Club*, 61, 65.

24. Frederick Funston, *Memories of Two Wars: Cuban and Philippine Experiences*, introduction by Thomas Brusolino (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 2009), 149–444.

25. A sampling of their testimony can be found in Graff, *American Imperialism*, passim. See also, Kenneth Ray Young, *The General’s General: The Life and Times of Arthur MacArthur* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), 298–304.

26. “Sharp Responses Made in Philippine Inquiry,” *New York Times*, 7 March 1902, 3. The transcript of this section of the testimony can be found in US Senate, *Affairs in the Philippine Islands, Hearings before the Committee on the Philippines of the United States Senate*, S. Doc. 331, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902, 621–625.

27. “General Miles Report,” *Army and Navy Journal* 40 (2 May 1903): 862–863.

28. Sexton, *Soldiers in the Sun*, 255; Gates, *Schoolbooks and Krags*, 172–173; Edward M. Coffman, *The Regulars: The American Army, 1898–1941* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 43.

29. John Ganzhorn, *I’ve Killed Men: An Epic of Early Arizona* (New York, NY: Devin-Adair Company, 1959), 152. For an example of press report on the hanging, see “Rebels Hanged,” *Los Angeles Times*, 10 April 1900, 14. If the discussion of General Orders 100 seems farfetched, one officer wrote in 1903, “The average American officer in the Philippines carefully studied General Orders 100. . . .” C.J. Crane, “Paragraphs 93, 97, and 88, of General Orders 100,” *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States* 32 (March–April 1903): 256. See also, Augustus P. Blocksom, “A Retrospect and Prospect for War,” *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States* 35 (September 1904): 215–226.

30. Quoted in Smythe, *Guerrilla Warrior*, 203. The officer in question was most likely Major General Walter Campbell Baker, the Chief of the Chemical Service, who began his military career as an enlisted man in the Pennsylvania National Guard during the Spanish American War.

31. Coffman, *The Regulars*, 53.



32. Davis, *The US Army and the Media*, 15–23; Vandiver, *Black Jack, Vol. I*, 570–571; and Smythe, *Guerrilla Warrior*, 228–229, 245–246.

33. See Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, enlarged ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984), 265–354; Weigley, *Towards an American Army: Military Thought from Washington to Marshall* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1962). Early 20th century examples of preparedness literature, beyond Emory Upton but still confined to a military journal, were Charles D. Rhodes, “The Experiences of Our Army Since the Outbreak of War With Spain,” *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States*, 36 (March–April 1905), 187–223, and Celwyn E. Hampton, “The Experiences of Our Army Since the Outbreak of War With Spain,” *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States* 36 (May–June 1905): 399–420.

34. I.B. Holley Jr., *General John M. Palmer, Citizen Soldiers, and the Army of a Democracy* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 211, 248–259.

35. See Weigley, *Towards an American Army*, 199–234; John Garry Clifford, *The Citizen Soldiers: The Plattsburg Training Camp Movement, 1913–1920* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1972); John Whiteclay Chambers, *To Raise an Army: The Draft Comes to Modern America* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1987). Wood also wrote the introduction to Frederic L. Huidekoper, *The Military Unpreparedness of the United States* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1916).

36. Holley, *General John M. Palmer*, 260–261.

37. Andrew J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1860–1941* (Washington DC: US Army Center of Military History, 2004), 174–182; Roy K. Flint, “The United States Army on the Pacific Frontier, 1899–1939,” in *The American Military and the Far East: Proceedings of the Ninth Military History Symposium, United States Air Force Academy*, ed. Joe C. Dixon (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1980), 144–148. This view partially explains the focus on deployment for the General Staff and the Army school system. See Otto L. Nelson, *National Security and the General Staff* (Washington, DC: Infantry Journal Press, 1946), 73–186; Harry P. Ball, *Of Responsible Command: A History of the U.S. Army War College*, rev. ed. (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Alumni Association of the US Army War College, 1994), 79–121; Timothy K. Nenninger, *The Leavenworth Schools and the Old Army* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978), 82–111; and the first person perspective in Ewing E. Booth, *My Observations and Experiences in the United States Army* (Los Angeles, CA: Ewing E. Booth, 1944), 34–70.

38. Robert L. Bullard, “Military Pacification,” *Journal of the Military Service Institute of the United States* 46 (January–February 1910): 4.

39. Allan Reed Millett, *The Politics of Intervention: The Military Occupation of Cuba, 1906–1909* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1968); and Bacevich, *Diplomat in Khaki*, 44–47, 53–54.

40. Other examples of officers in the Philippines grappling with the push and pull between violence and development were William H. Carter and Henry T. Allen. See Machoian, *William Harding Carter*, 199–210; Heath Twichell Jr., *Allen: The Biography of an Army Officer, 1859–1930* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1974), 101–146.

41. Quoted in Bacevich, *Diplomat in Khaki*, 61. See also, Robert E. Quirk, *An Affair of Honor: Woodrow Wilson and the Occupation of Veracruz* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 1962); Frederick S. Calhoun, *Power and Principle: Armed Intervention in Wilsonian Foreign Policy* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1986), 34–35; Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency*, 147–207; Thomas A. Bruscino Jr., “A Troubled Past: The Army and Security on the Southern Border, 1915–1917,” *Military Review* 88 (July–August 2008): 31–44.

42. Filiberti, “Roots of US Counterinsurgency Doctrine,” 61.

43. Blocksom, “Retrospect and Prospect of War,” 225.

44. Millett, *Politics of Intervention*, 11.

45. A very good start is Brian McAllister Linn, “The US Army and Nation Building and Pacification in the Philippines,” in *Armed Diplomacy: Two Centuries of American Campaigning* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2003), 77–89.

46. Thoughtful accounts of these dynamics for the Philippine War include Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency*, 181–182; Brian McAllister Linn, “The Impact of the Imperial Wars (1898–1907) on the U.S. Army,” *Heritage Lectures*, no. 908 (14 November 2005); John M. Gates, “The Official Historian and the Well-Placed Critic: James A. LeRoy’s Assessment of John R.M. Taylor’s ‘The Philippine Insurrection Against the United States,’” *Public Historian* 7 (Summer 1985): 57–67; John T. Farrell, “An Abandoned Approach to Philippine History: John R.M. Taylor and the Philippine Insurrection Records,” *Catholic Historical Review* 39 (January 1954): 385–407.

47. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency*, 181–182.

48. Huba Wass de Czega, “Keeping Friends and Gaining Allies: The Indivisible Challenge of Military Public Relations,” *Military Review* (May–June 2009): 59.

49. US Army Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2006).

50. American history has shown that if the stakes are high enough, the American people will accept, support, and even demand much harsher measures than current doctrine allows. See Thomas A. Bruscino Jr., “Our American Mind for War,” *Claremont Institute Academic Writings* (26 May 2008).

## PANEL 2—THE PHILIPPINES AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

### To Best Serve Democracy: Censorship and the Great War

(Submitted Paper)

by

**Mr. Jared Tracey**

Censorship is one of the penalties of war, a part of its armor . . . and one of its most loathsome features.<sup>1</sup>

—Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Palmer, Chief Press Censor, AEF

Censorship laws . . . even though they protest that the protection of military secrets is their one original object, have a way of slipping over into the field of opinion, for arbitrary power grows by what it feeds on.<sup>2</sup>

—George Creel, Chairman of the CPI

A political graveyard is being prepared in the public mind for a long list of men holding office in Washington.<sup>3</sup>

—Allen W. Ricker, publisher of *Pearson's Magazine*

Since the American Civil War (perhaps prior with the advent of the electrical telegraph) civilian policymakers and military leaders have balanced on tightropes squaring a “free press” with military security.<sup>4</sup> This balancing act has on occasion resulted in press censorship of varying degrees. In the crisis years of 1917 and 1918, President Woodrow Wilson’s administration justified domestic censorship as a function of democracy and, by virtue of applying military censorship policies to press entities within the United States, redefined the bounds of the First Amendment. This seemed ironic given the universal pronouncements of war aims, namely that “The War to End all Wars” would make the world “safe for democracy,” and many circles capitalized on this apparent contradiction. Clearly the demon of consequentialism possessed the administration, i.e., the ultimate defeat of “Kaiserism” justified unprecedented press censorship. This study will describe the volatility of censorship during the Great War, and how it strained government-press relations to a new level.

To understand why censorship affronted the domestic press, one must understand contemporary journalism culture. Prior to the 1880s, printed media held conspicuously partisan allegiances. Reporters supported parties and individual candidates while outwardly opposing others in highly personal attacks, and individuals seeking elected office solicited direct support from media sources without thinking twice. Journalists also attacked military officials, such as when the *Cincinnati Commercial* dubbed General William Sherman

“insane” in 1861 for his military judgments.<sup>5</sup> The sting of modern media commentary pales in comparison to the terrible printed attacks leveled by 18th and 19th century journalists.

Following Reconstruction, however, many changes occurred within the journalism profession. First, journalists widely accepted that scientific and empirical methods, combined with human rationality, could produce “truth.” “Truth,” a stark contrast to the blatant bias and partisanship characteristic of the earlier media, gradually became the Holy Grail for journalists. Journalists could find “truth” and expose it to the masses so that they might reach their full democratic potential.<sup>6</sup> In 1917, the American Newspaper Publishers Association unanimously agreed, “The American people are entitled to a full and frank statement of all that occurs, whether it be good or bad.” Press representatives held that there was absolutely “no justification for a restriction that abridges the liberty of the press, *for the people must have confidence that they are getting the truth.*”<sup>7</sup> Newspaper reporters did not fully buy into the innate rationality of the American audience, just that unlimited access to information was the hallmark of a “free press.” Second, the search for and revelations of “truths” fostered professional self-identity for journalists. Beginning in the 1890s and rapidly accelerating after the new century, journalists argued that their trade should be reserved only for those well enough versed in empirical methods and responsible enough to discern facts for the American people. Finally, many journalists came to believe that judiciously applying facts could bring about social change. Reform journalists, or muckrakers, armed now with undeniable “truths,” carried the mantle passed from 19th-century reformers. Muckrakers flourished in the Progressive Era, exposing such social and political maladies as labor and consumer exploitation and Government corruption. Journalists of all persuasions believed passionately in the First Amendment. Democracy in the United States, exemplified by an unbridled press, could not exist unless the public received unmo-lested facts. When the United States declared war in 1917, very different views on censorship (and democracy) arose.

Before the United States joined the fray in Europe, Americans generally agreed on the necessity of a free press. In 1915, former President [Theodore] Roosevelt chastised British statesman Edward Grey for England’s refusal to allow foreign correspondents to obtain information for international consumption. Roosevelt wondered if “it is worth your while considering whether much of your censorship work and much of your refusal to allow correspondents at the front has been damaging to your cause from the standpoint of the effect on public opinion without any corresponding military gains.” While acknowledging the excesses of the American press during the Spanish-American War, Roosevelt cautioned Grey that prohibiting correspondents (the other extreme) would hinder public support for the British war effort.<sup>8</sup> Americans likewise resented German propaganda and censorship. From day one, the German military capitalized on nationalistic fervor known as *Burgfrieden*, or in rhetorical usage, the “Spirit of 1914.” It “systematically” manipulated the mass-media through “bludgeoning censorship supported in some cases by crude coercion.”<sup>9</sup> American observers widely dismissed these practices as antidemocratic.

The US War Department had its own plans. In 1914, it granted the military wartime authority to “establish censorship of the press and of telegraphic and postal correspondence.” The military, once it occupied territory, “may prohibit entirely the publication of

newspapers, prescribe regulations for their publication and circulation and especially in unoccupied portions of the territory and in neutral countries.” Finally, the highest commander in these areas may lawfully seize postal facilities and establish a system of censorship as deemed fit.<sup>10</sup> The Army War College developed a censorship program not only for military use, but one on which Congress would later base the provisions of the Espionage Bill after the United States entered the war.<sup>11</sup> The *United States Infantry Guide* (1917) provided for “censorship over private communications” and “censorship over press publications and communications.” Furthermore, “All private communications . . . of officers, soldiers, foreign attachés, newspaper correspondents, and all other individuals, dispatched from the theater of operations are liable to censorship and to such delay in transmission as may be deemed necessary by the military authorities.” Military censors were “authorized to suppress any statement which might be of value to the enemy or prejudicial to the welfare of the forces in the field.”<sup>12</sup> These rules did not reveal any principled aversion to censorship on the part of the War Department.

In the early weeks of US mobilization, Wilson ordered the Secretaries of Navy and War, Josephus Daniels and Newton Baker, to censor submarine cables and telephone and telegraph lines around the Mexican border, setting the stage for a military censorship writ large. Secretary Baker directed Brigadier General Frank McIntyre, Chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, to handle the telephone and telegraph lines during this early stage.<sup>13</sup> In June 1917, angered by a premature announcement of General Pershing’s arrival in France, Baker decreed that *all* troop news would be censored, and that McIntyre would be the final arbiter on what news could be released to correspondents.<sup>14</sup> General McIntyre eventually rose to the position of Chief Censor of the War Department, and in September 1917 he provided the civilian press with simple rules to protect sensitive military information from the enemy.<sup>15</sup> Major responsibility for military censorship eventually fell under the Second Section of the General Staff, fourth subsection therein (G-2-D).<sup>16</sup> According to General John Pershing, the Press and Censorship Division was created “to prevent indiscretions in the letters of officers and soldiers, as well as in articles for the press. . . .”<sup>17</sup> The broad goals of this censorship program were: (1) “to prevent the enemy from obtaining important information of our forces”; (2) “to give to the people of the United States the maximum information consistent with the limitations imposed by the first object”; and (3) “to cause to be presented to the American people the facts as they were known at the time.”<sup>18</sup> As would soon be seen, G-2-D and subordinate censors suppressed en masse materials flowing from deployed soldiers and soldiers in domestic training camps, as well as what information was granted to the press corps.

Three major aspects of the military’s censorship program were censoring outbound mail from the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) soldiers; restricting correspondent access and information to be released to the press; and censoring photographs taken at training camps and forward areas. First, the military censored letters and packages sent by American soldiers (letters sent from the States to deployed soldiers passed through British and/or French censors, and thus were not doubly handled by American censors). The AEF established postal censorship guidelines in General Orders No. 3 on 28 June 1917, No. 13 on 13 July 1917, and No. 146 on 1 September 1918 (among other directives and

regulations).<sup>19</sup> According to historian Wilfrid Broderick, “Members of the A.E.F., from port of embarkation to return, were under the constant surveillance of some censoring organization.”<sup>20</sup> Censorship of letters written by troops stationed within the United States occurred at censoring stations in Washington, DC, and Hoboken, New Jersey. Domestic censors concerned themselves most with letters written by “embarking” soldiers since they were most apt to reveal the movement and intended destination of personnel and units. Field censorship occurred on a grand scale. Company level officers and above assumed responsibility for censoring their soldiers’ mail. Censors confiscated, discarded, or dismembered letters written in foreign languages, those containing sensitive information, or those of questionable moral content. Many letters left forward areas with words cut out or were “[obliterated] with ink.”<sup>21</sup> Censors placed particular importance on safeguarding unit locations and movements. One example of a censored letter was written by Corporal George Clifford Bredberg, Ambulance Company #355, 314th Sanitary Train, 89th Division. The letter, addressed “Somewhere in France,” contained information of negligible military relevance and was stamped, “Censored by B.A. Salzberg, 1st Lt.”<sup>22</sup> Another letter from “Somewhere in France” written by Corporal Keith Nathan Lacey, M Company, 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, hinted at the occurrence of censorship: “Will try to write you again. It seems you do not get any of my letters.”<sup>23</sup> Military postal censorship was so prevalent that Sergeant Charles Stevenson of Alpha Company, 314th Engineers, 89th Division, humorously remarked in one letter, “As you might guess, our officers are rather busy [devoting] much time to censorship.”<sup>24</sup> The tight lock on unit locations in particular caused a tremendous headache for the Postal Service and postal contingents within the AEF, all of which tried earnestly to deliver letters from home to their deployed recipients, often to no avail.<sup>25</sup>

In August 1917, the AEF established the post of Base Censor first at St. Nazaire and later at Hotel Méditerranée in Paris. Initially it began with one officer and four enlisted personnel, but blossomed to its zenith in November 1918 with a personnel strength of 33 officers, 183 enlisted soldiers, and 27 civilians. The Base Censor’s office executed three main functions: (1) original mail censorship, particularly of letters written in foreign languages or submitted in “blue envelopes”; (2) recensoring or verification of censorship done by lower-echelon censors; (3) “gathering of information concerning troop morale,” opinions of “troops toward public questions, [and] detection of irregularities and abuses,” the latter of which it forwarded to the Intelligence Section for analysis. The Base Censor was comprised of eight subdepartments to handle specific aspects of postal censorship. By April 1919, Base Censors had received 30,846,630 letters and packages. It examined 6,335,645 of these, and disciplinary action was taken in 1,042 cases.<sup>26</sup> These figures say nothing of those letters “lost” in the mail or hacked apart at lower levels.

Second, the AEF set up a rigid system of press censorship. On 6 April 1917, Colonel Edward House, Wilson’s friend and confidant, recommended Frederick Palmer to oversee this mission, simply because he “would know how to conduct a censorship with fairness to both the press and Government.” House selected him because he was “favorably known” to newspaper and magazine journalists throughout the country.<sup>27</sup> One could credit Lieutenant Colonel Palmer for the AEF’s overall press censorship program. Palmer set up



press office headquarters in Paris and Neufchateau, and had numerous civilian and military press officers under his charge. AEF press headquarters served as information control points. The AEF forged lapses between particular military events and relayed details to the American press, allowing for the selective release of facts.<sup>28</sup> It did permit accredited correspondents to accompany forward units. Field correspondents seeking accreditation had to appear before an authorized official from the War Department, swear to “convey the truth to the people of the United States,” withhold facts that might aid the enemy if published, post a \$10,000 bond, and pay the War Department \$1,000 to \$3,000 for expenses. Press correspondents believing AEF censorship became too stringent bypassed American censors by either returning to the States to write the story or sending their stories through the French postal system. Violators could expect the AEF to revoke their press accreditation if discovered.<sup>29</sup>

In February 1918, the *New York Times* published a damaging indictment of the AEF’s handling of censorship. The article, simply titled “U.S. Officers Hostile to Censorship,” revealed “an apparent unanimity of opinion hostile to censorship” among military officers. One officer “of high rank” said:

Yes, all of us favored rigid censoring last spring, but I don’t think any of us have adhered to that view. Our belief in the beginning was that a strict censorship was necessary to keep military information from the enemy. The general impression among officers today is that censorship has not kept secrets from the enemy, but has served to conceal defects from the American public. Nor is that all. It has resulted in concealing the army’s good work as well as the imperfections and failures. Such being the case, censorship is a bad thing. If the public doesn’t hear what is bad and what is good, mismanagement can go on indefinitely. There is no doubt that army officers, or all of them I know, are now against censorship.<sup>30</sup>

In March 1918, the *Times* reported that Major General Peyton March, newly appointed Chief of Staff, had returned to Washington from France to assume his duties. March praised the conduct and disposition of troops in the AEF, but called military censorship “lamentable.” He believed in Americans’ entitlement to information about their soldiers, and he promised to permit a “freer dissemination of news” from France. March concurred with the “officer of high rank” and argued that most American officers “could not understand the present censorship methods.”<sup>31</sup> Much like the AEF’s prioritization of censorship in the first place, it is significant that March relegated (the relaxation of) censorship to such a high order of business.

Military press censorship during and following the engagements at Belleau Wood and Chateau-Thierry also helped initiate a longstanding rivalry between the Army and the Marines. Wilbur Forrest, AEF correspondent and author of *Behind the Front Page* (1924), later described how his story of the 7th Machine Gun Battalion’s (MGB) engagement at Chateau-Thierry “was killed by the censor.” According to Forrest, “An American major assisted in the execution.” The Marines fought at Belleau Wood, close to but distinct from Chateau-Thierry. During and after the slaughter of his story, Forrest, Paul Scott Mowrer



from the *Chicago Daily News*, and other correspondents covering Chateau-Thierry pressed military censors to let them identify the valiant 7th MGB and other Army units. The writers and Army censors struck a compromise. Because the word “Marine” did not identify a specific unit, the censors permitted correspondents to use it to describe the Americans involved in the fight. Newspaper headlines mistakenly read, “Germans Stopped at Chateau-Thierry with Help from God and Few Marines.” Historian Thomas Smith argued, “It was an oversight the U.S. Army would never forget.” Forrest, however, believed the “oversight” was entirely of the Army’s own making.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, the military dedicated many personnel and manpower hours to photograph censorship. In *The Military Censorship of Pictures* (1926), Lieutenant Colonel Kendall Banning, Signal Reserve Corps officer and former Director of the Division of Pictures within the Committee on Public Information (CPI), described the War Department’s pictorial censorship program during the war.<sup>33</sup> In April 1917, Washington resolved “to allow no photographs to be made at all in areas controlled by the War Department.” Then the War Department had “to determine [which] kind of photograph [should] be suppressed” and “to find out how to suppress that photograph without the aid of a censorship law.”<sup>34</sup> It settled on five main criteria. Photos could not (1) contain information of value to the enemy<sup>35</sup>; (2) misrepresent or ridicule the American soldier or adversely affect his morale<sup>36</sup>; (3) be able to be used by the enemy for propaganda purposes; (4) antagonize neutral nations or injure or misrepresent Allied nations; and (5) adversely affect the morale of the American public.<sup>37</sup> Despite these standards, actual photograph censorship was entirely subjective and inconsistent.<sup>38</sup> The Signal Corps became the primary proponent to handle photography and motion pictures. Enlisted and officer photographers of the Signal Corps took some 93,000 photographs and captured some 900,000 feet of motion picture footage. The Army War College General Staff sifted through these photographs and reels, transferring those acceptable for public release to the CPI.<sup>39</sup> The War Department also issued permits to “responsible private photographers” under the following conditions: they must abide to the strict date and location restrictions as stated in the permit; they must submit one copy of their photographs to the CPI for “screening,” which would be returned to them with an official verdict; they had to submit one copy for the CPI’s records; and they had to submit one to the Pictorial Section of the General Staff. The AEF prohibited soldiers from taking cameras overseas. Those gaining access to cameras abroad could expect to have pictures closely scrutinized by local and Base Censors.<sup>40</sup>

The AEF delineated between press and mail censorship. Field correspondents, while not always content with AEF restrictions, generally appreciated the rationale for them. And most soldiers were resigned to the fact that some officer or Base Censor might hack their letters apart. Domestically, however, no distinct line existed. Denial of the mails *equaled* censorship of the press and the suppression of the First Amendment. Censored individuals framed their arguments with broad language about a free press in democratic society. Many also argued that the Wilson administration sought domination over the private sector since many paying subscribers failed to receive their publications while the publishers themselves lost revenue in the writing, production, and distribution processes. This is how censorship unfolded in the United States in 1917–18.

The groundwork for domestic censorship was in place before April 1917. The Council of National Defense (CND), created by the Army Appropriations Act of 29 August 1916, made preparations to get the United States ready in case of war. It created an Advisory Commission consisting of seven persons, “each of whom shall have some special knowledge of some industry, public utility or the development of some natural resource, or be otherwise specifically qualified.”<sup>41</sup> Two weeks before Congress declared war, the Commission resolved that Walter Gifford from the American Telephone and Telegraph Company present a plan for federal censorship of the press at its next meeting. On 2 April 1917, the Commission also reported that it had received “urgent requests” from many reporters “that in the event of war it will be vitally necessary that there shall be set in motion a unified, workable, wise and, in so far as possible, *democratic Federal censorship of the press*.”<sup>42</sup> It forwarded this recommendation to the CND. Navy Secretary Daniels agreed that domestic censorship—not publicity—was the order of the day and that muckraker George Creel should spearhead the effort. However, Daniels envisioned a US censorship of a more modest and democratic character than that of Imperial Germany.<sup>43</sup> Despite the many so-called “urgent requests” for censorship, in spring 1917 many newspaper reporters feared a looming federal censorship and an executive usurpation of power. Walter Lippmann, social commentator and editor of the *New Republic*, viewed censorship as a wartime certainty but warned President Wilson that “the usual military censorship would be of great danger and we were hoping that you could see your way to putting it in civilian control, under men of real insight and democratic sympathy.”<sup>44</sup> Despite the president’s liberal pronouncements concerning American entry into the war, Wilson and his subordinates looked to a military-brand domestic censorship program from the outset. According to historian David Kennedy, in the administration’s quick jump to press censorship “many found proof of the conspiratorial and unpopular character of American belligerency. . . .”<sup>45</sup>

In April 1917, Secretaries Robert Lansing, Newton Baker, and Josephus Daniels prodded Wilson to establish “some authoritative agency to assure the publication of all the vital facts of national defense” with Creel at its head. This Committee on Public Information, created by executive order on 13 April 1917, had the dual functions of publicity and censorship. Creel admired the military format of censorship, and in the spirit of “absolute co-operation,” he suggested a censorship board within the bureau of publicity consisting of representatives from the Navy and Army. Of course, because of its “democratic” nature, a civilian chairman must lead the bureau.<sup>46</sup> Despite the more democratic face of domestic censorship, journalist Louis Sebold knew it had been “actuated by arbitrary considerations of a military character. . . .”<sup>47</sup> A handful came to Creel’s defense. William Chenery, Creel’s friend and longtime journalism colleague, remarked that no one “believed more sincerely in the necessity of an uncensored press to a free self-governing people than [him].” The *Independent’s* Donald Wilhelm called Creel “Our Uncensorious Censor” and affirmed “[he] is an educator, this censor.”<sup>48</sup> However, personal correspondence and public records indicated that censorship did not repulse Creel. Because the word “censorship” offended Americans, Creel believed “it should be avoided.” He also wrote, “The *suppressive* features of [our] work must be so overlaid by the publicity policy that they will go unregarded and unresented . . . every energy [must be] exerted to arouse ardor and enthusiasm.”<sup>49</sup> Sure, the

CPI would provide the public with information; what and how much information it would provide remained to be seen.<sup>50</sup>

In late-May 1917, the CPI released its preliminary statement to the press. Creel used principled language that the press would appreciate. Using words reminiscent of 19th-century European liberalism, Creel stated, “The best defense is an enlightened and loyal citizenship.” He stressed the common interests between the Government and the press: “The *representatives of [the press are]* at one with the Committee in regarding [*their*] great responsibilities in creating loyalty through enlightenment as *being* only heightened by existing conditions . . . and the creation and stimulation of a healthy, ardent national citizenship is the kind of fight that the press alone can do.”<sup>51</sup> Avoiding the word censorship, Creel hoped that the press would “realize the obligations of patriotism” through “voluntary censorship” and fomenting public support for the war. To aid editors nationwide, the CPI established three categories of news: (1) matters unprintable because of the sensitivity of military operations; (2) matters “of a doubtful nature” because military relevance was unknown and should be submitted to the CPI for approval, and (3) matters that clearly would not affect military operations, which were “governed only by the peacetime laws of libel, defamation of character and so forth.” Creel informed press representatives that it was “within [the CPI’s province to protect the people,” but that it would not place “a drastic censorship on internal affairs. . . .”<sup>52</sup> At a New York State Press Banquet the next month, Creel advocated “local boards of control” to monitor “self-censorship” since the CPI could not monitor all publications simultaneously. He believed these local boards necessary “to unite the newspapers of each community for the purpose of easy and responsible contact with the government.” He concluded, “Group action is necessary to defending censorship.”<sup>53</sup> Undoubtedly he received a frigid response since somehow a democratic free press had morphed into collective enforcement of censorship. Creel later remarked that he had opposed a “formal law” for censorship, but in effect he had contributed to a climate in which each newspaper, acting as “its own censor,” feared the costs of stepping out of the bounds of “patriotism and common sense.”<sup>54</sup>

President Wilson firmly backed Creel. Wilson would not forego censorship on principle alone. He told Congressman Edwin Webb, Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, that the nation needed censorship “for the protection of the nation.” Although most newspapers would “observe a patriotic reticence about everything whose publication could be of injury, [in] every country there are persons in a position to do mischief in this field who cannot be relied upon and whose interests and desires will lead to actions on their part highly dangerous to the nation in the midst of war.” To Frank Irving Cobb, editor of *New York World*, Wilson wrote, “There are some papers and some news agencies which we simply cannot trust and I felt it absolutely essential for the safety of the country that I should have some power in the premises.” Wilson argued that press members wanted to “[take] advantage of the situation and are doing the most dangerous and hurtful things,” which required even more stringent executive measures. Wilson believed that “[censorship] powers of this sort should be granted” by authority of Congress.<sup>55</sup> Congress was not wholly swayed by Wilson’s rationale. One congressman remarked that the proposed censorship was “too altogether Prussian in its tendency. . . .” Senator Oscar Underwood agreed: “I am opposed

to press censorship because I believe in throwing light upon Governmental conduct of the war.” Senators James Reed and Hoke Smith, among other members in both houses, also opposed censorship.<sup>56</sup>

These congressional objections notwithstanding, major legislative acts such as the Espionage Act (June 1917), the Trading with the Enemy Act (October 1917), and the Sedition Act (May 1918) emboldened the executive branch to censor. The Trading with the Enemy Act required foreign language publishers to translate all articles relating to the Government or its prosecution of the war, and the Sedition Act set forth punishments for disloyalty, treason, or willfully impeding military operations. Most importantly for this study, however, the Espionage Act declared that any publisher or journalist who “[interfered] with the operation or success of the military or naval forces of the United States or [promoted] the success of its enemies” would be punished with a \$10,000 fine and/or 20 years of imprisonment. Additionally his publication “shall not be conveyed in the mails or delivered from any post office or by any letter carrier.”<sup>57</sup> Secretary Lansing had earlier proposed “that a plan of censorship of postal correspondence should be formulated at the earliest moment [in] the first instance by the Post Office Department which is familiar with our postal laws and regulations” and later with cooperation with the Departments of State and Justice.<sup>58</sup> His position on postal censorship echoed that of the War Department and the Council of National Defense and its Advisory Commission.<sup>59</sup> Even Creel, the supposed master of publicity, favored mail censorship to ensure “that all criticism will be ended.”<sup>60</sup> Initially, Postmaster General Albert Burleson held mixed opinions on the topic. On the one hand he proposed “excluding papers from the mail papers [sic] that criticized” Wilson or the war effort.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand he argued, “I do not regard such censorship in the country as necessary.” The latter objection centered on practicality, not on legal or ideological concerns. He initially thought that postal censorship would only duplicate similar work of other agencies and countries.<sup>62</sup>

Nonetheless, the Wilson administration enforced postal censorship and Postmaster Burleson became the lightning rod for all press criticism. Wilfrid Broderick argued, “A large portion of civilian postal censorship occurred in direct proportion to a rising fear of ‘Bolshevism’” and other disloyal or subversive ideologies.<sup>63</sup> By July 1917, Burleson and his subordinates had denied the mails to such leftist publications as *The Masses*, *The International Socialist Review*, and *The American Socialist*. Wilson’s wartime Government made short work of socialist sympathizers like Victor Berger, Eugene Debs, Max Eastman, and John Reed, usually through censorship, sometimes by advocating imprisonment.<sup>64</sup> In addition to restricting the circulation of leftist publications, the Postmaster General and the Justice Department kept a watchful eye on German-American and other foreign language publications. Generally, foreign language publishers, “conscious of their vulnerability,” eagerly cooperated with censorship to “protect them[selves] from charges of disloyalty.”<sup>65</sup> One popular case of foreign language censorship involved George Sylvester Viereck, a German-American poet and writer. Postal authorities and the Justice Department kept his publication, *Viereck’s*, under close surveillance. Viereck reminded his detractors that he supported Wilson and the war effort, which kept them at a distance until February 1918 when he reprinted a fictional dialogue from *Metropolitan* that portrayed President Wilson

“as a hypocrite for denying self-determination for American colonies and certain Latin American states.” Before the Post Office denied him the mails, Viereck withdrew the issue from circulation and continued to voice his pro-Americanism.<sup>66</sup> After the war, Viereck wrote notoriously of his love for Germany, the German Lost Cause in the Great War, the hateful Allied propaganda, and in high praise of Hitler and the National Socialists, which in retrospect appeared to justify Government suspicions.

*The Masses* editor, Max Eastman, directly questioned the President “whether it is with your authority that an appointee of yours [Burlleson] endeavors to destroy the life of one of the three growing Socialist magazines in the country, as a war measure in a war for democracy. . . .”<sup>67</sup> “Is it not of the utmost importance in a democracy,” Eastman protested, “that the opposition to the government have a free voice?”<sup>68</sup> Attorney General Thomas Watt Gregory, originally a supporter of the Espionage Bill, and Burlleson, questioned the legality of running a publishing enterprise into the ground through censorship.<sup>69</sup> Burlleson had long been making the point, however, that his treatment of controversial publications had been “fair and impartial” and that “no bureaucratic discretion has been exercised,” but that he would not tolerate any publication “containing or advocating or urging treason, insurrection to forcible resistance to any law of the United States. . . .”<sup>70</sup>

Press opposition to censorship sprang up almost immediately after the declaration of war and accelerated after Burlleson’s assaults. Progressives like Lillian Wald, Herbert Croly, Jane Addams, Amos Pinchot, and Paul Kellogg expressed their worry that the Government might “sacrifice certain safeguards fundamental to the life of her democracy.” They held that “the truth should not be withheld or concealed from the American people whose interests after all are the most vital consideration.”<sup>71</sup> Walter Lippmann argued against the “brutally unreasonable” actions of the Post Office, and warned Colonel [Edward] House that many liberals stood ready to politically oppose the president.<sup>72</sup> Herbert Croly of *The New Republic* similarly warned the president.<sup>73</sup> Allen Ricker of *Pearson’s Magazine* lamented that the Post Office “has about blasted the last atom of patriotism out of us. . . .”<sup>74</sup> Upton Sinclair argued that “suppression convinces nobody,” and that the readers of *The Masses*, *The American Socialist*, and *The Call* “have not been converted by the Postmaster General. . . .”<sup>75</sup> John Spargo maintained that the Post Office was “entirely out of touch” with opposing sentiments, especially those of the leftists and labor movements, and that censorship only incensed those pockets of ideological resistance.<sup>76</sup> Progressive Amos Pinchot intervened on behalf of his friends Max Eastman, Arthur Young, and John Reed of *The Masses* who had been charged with violating the Espionage Act. “Rather than compromise with their consciences and sell out the cause of democracy in which they have fought so loyally,” Pinchot wrote, “it seems the more incredible that the Government of the United States has taken this mistaken stand.”<sup>77</sup> The People’s Council of America also wished “to register its strongest protest against the assaults on a free press that have been committed by officials of the Post Office Department in defiant violation of the principles on which our republic was founded.” It appealed to Wilson “to make the United States safe for democracy by breaking the hold of un-American bureaucrats on the threat of America’s press.”<sup>78</sup>

Opposition to censorship also emanated from certain pacifist and “radical” elements within the United States. Roger Baldwin, a member of the American Union Against



Militarism, conscientious objector, and director of the National Civil Liberties Bureau (later the American Civil Liberties Union), warned Colonel House of the effects of censorship on these elements. Generally, they “back[ed] the President’s war aims,” but “the policy of suppression of the radical press and the general terrorization of public opinion by overzealous officials makes it exceedingly difficult for these forces to speak.” He argued that the President must provide specific guidelines for what represented “acceptable” opinion, and that the US Post Office must establish regulations rather than pass subjective judgment on what constitutes disloyal or seditious speech. He attributed these constitutional transgressions to “the vague language of the Espionage Act.”<sup>79</sup>

The crux of the debate centered on the First Amendment. Arthur Brisbane argued that press freedom did not safeguard editors, but the public’s right “to know what is happening, what public servants are doing, what editors and others think on public questions.” To Brisbane, diversity of opinion (to include criticism of public officials) was inherent in the democratic process. The President assured Brisbane, “I can imagine no greater disservice to the country than to establish a system of censorship that would deny to the people of a free republic like our own their indisputable right to criticize their own public officials.”<sup>80</sup> But Joseph Patrick Tumulty, Wilson’s private secretary, agreed the Government contrived censorship policies to shield itself from public scrutiny.<sup>81</sup> Newspapers nationwide closed ranks against Government censorship because it reeked of political opportunism. The *Los Angeles Times* pointed out the hypocrisy: “There is grave danger . . . that the Administration is establishing a Caesarism, a Kaiserism, at home in the very era in which it is seeking to dispossess a Caesarism abroad.”<sup>82</sup> At its annual meeting at the Waldorf-Astoria, the American Newspaper Publishers Convention voted unanimously against censorship legislation. Although they opposed the censorship provisions of the Espionage Bill, they pronounced themselves “in full accord with the military measures proposed by the President and the General Staff” and advocated “voluntary censorship.”<sup>83</sup> As mentioned earlier, many congressional members like Edwin Webb proposed eliminating the censorship provisions outlined in the early versions of the Espionage Bill.<sup>84</sup> Webb’s objections were notably milder than Senator Hiram Johnson’s, who blasted censorship as “more drastic, more vicious, more worthy of condemnation” than anything seen thus far.<sup>85</sup>

White House staffer David Lawrence worried that the Government and the press would never reach accord over censorship. Lawrence believed that Creel’s “devotion” to publicity had failed to convert the majority of journalists, and recommended that Wilson convene with press members under a flag of truce. If he did that, “instead of an irritated press, ready to pounce on every slight thing and hammer men who are trying only to do their best with a machinery and a people unused to war, we will have a press that will be charitable in its criticisms and will inspire the people with a confidence in their Government.”<sup>86</sup> But the mutuality of interest for which Wilson, Creel, and Burleson persevered meant press endorsement of the company line. The military instituted a rigid system of censorship; the White House hoped that the domestic press would voluntarily do the same, but it stood ready to intercede whenever necessary.

The domestic press quickly understood the CPI’s modus operandi and viewed Government censorship as what it was: censorship of unfavorable information. Since

mid-1917, many individuals favored the establishment of an actual censorship board, which would remove the conspiratorial tenor of censorship thus far.<sup>87</sup> Breckinridge Long, a State Department official, longtime supporter of Woodrow Wilson, and staunch critic of George Creel, proposed such a board. According to Long, “If there was a censorship to treat news items properly before releasing them it would insure the proper treatment of news or, at least, centralize responsibility for failure to do so.” The chairman of his proposed censorship board must have “experience as [a] newspaperman, capacity for treating news in the proper manner, [and] psychological instinct,” as well as a respected reputation among fellow journalists.<sup>88</sup> For these reasons, Creel was *not* the man for the job. Creel recoiled at Long’s suggestion and retorted, “Mr. Long has never been near [the CPI] at any time, knows nothing of its work, and evidently did not think it worthwhile to make a single inquiry.” Creel wanted to pull the rug from under Long before he could claim credit for any domestic publicity or censorship program.<sup>89</sup> In reality, Creel *had* actively sought a monopoly on deciding what information from abroad could be released to the public. This created great tension between himself and Secretary Lansing (and their respective departments). “Fearing the injudicious publication of news” Lansing “flatly refused” Creel’s numerous requests to handle all foreign news.<sup>90</sup> Wilson hoped to thwart this bureaucratic discord and officially established a Censorship Board on 12 October 1917 to “administer a system of postal censorship for the United States.” On the Board sat Robert Maddox and Eugene Russell White from the US Post Office, Brigadier General McIntyre and Captain Frederick Hyde from the War Department, Captain David Todd from the Navy Department, Paul Fuller from the War Trade Board, and George Creel. The Board focused on mail and information sent from foreign countries. For this operation it set up 10 censor stations and 9 substations throughout the United States.<sup>91</sup> The Censorship Board worked closely with the Office of the Postmaster General for maximum operational efficiency. Through his chairmanship of the CPI and membership on the Censorship Board, Creel emerged as the face of both domestic publicity and censorship.

Like smoke through a tunnel, domestic censorship brought people and groups into the open to reveal their true thoughts and motives concerning a free press during wartime. To his dying day, Creel refused to accept responsibility for any foul play during the war. For decades he went to great lengths to defend the Government’s actions: “The need was not so much to keep the press from doing the hurtful things as to get it to do the helpful things.”<sup>92</sup> Concededly, because of its heavy reliance on local voluntarism, the CPI lacked any real power to censor. However, according to historian Stephen Vaughn, while the CPI did release an exorbitant amount of news and information to the press, “the very process of selecting it involved a subtle censorship.” Further, many citizens and political opponents failed to draw a clear line of demarcation between Creel “the publicist” and Creel “the censor.”<sup>93</sup> Though he was the head of the nation’s premier information agency, he also sat on the Censorship Board and tried wresting control of censorship from all other agencies, specifically the State Department and the US Post Office.<sup>94</sup> On this point it should be noted that while censorship was certainly a politically and ideologically charged issue, it also spoke to a high degree of bureaucratic ineptitude and executive overreach. Creel was a member of the CPI and the Censorship Board; the Secretaries of War and Navy also sat on the CND



and the CPI; Secretary Lansing ran the State Department but was also a founding member of the CPI and had his hands in many other agencies, particularly when it involved censorship of foreign news or American efforts at public diplomacy abroad.<sup>95</sup> In effect, the hasty attempts at wartime organization, to say nothing of individual personalities and motives, resulted in bureaucratic overlaps and operational inefficiencies. “Winning the war” seemed to be the least common denominator on which most could agree, and the executive restriction of press aims and vocal dissention seemed, at the time, the best way to meet that end and to best serve democracy.

## Notes

1. Frederick Palmer, *Newton D. Baker: America at War* (New York, NY: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1931), 2:51.
2. George Creel, *How We Advertised America* (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers, 1920), 17.
3. Allen Ricker to Woodrow Wilson, 3 August 1917, written after finding out that the Post Office tampered with his personal mail, in Arthur Link et. al., eds, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 43:382.
4. . . . and have made great strides along the way. According the US Army Combined Arms Center, current policy dictates, “We will be open and honest [with the media]. We will not cover up mistakes or embarrassing situations by burying them under a cloak of secrecy, and we will not lie to the media. Independent reporting means we will allow journalists to get their own stories. We will avoid using media pools, where only a few journalists are given access and must share their reports with other news agencies. There is no security review or censorship of news media products.” Combined Arms Center, “Media on the Battlefield: Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures,” *CALL Newsletter* 07-04 (October 2006): 67–68.
5. *Cincinnati Commercial*, 11 December 1861; J.E. Longhofer, *An Analysis of the Psychological Necessity of Censorship in Combat Zones* (MMAS thesis, Command and General Staff College, 1970), 68–73.
6. The changes in media culture have been described in detail in numerous historical works. For starters, the reader would do well to reference Richard Kaplan, *Politics and the American Press: The Rise of Objectivity, 1865–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Stephen Ward, *The Invention of Journalism Ethics: The Path to Objectivity and Beyond* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004); Si Sheppard, *The Partisan Press: A History of Media Bias in the United States* (Jefferson and London: McFarland and Company, 2008).
7. *New York Times*, 26 April 1917.
8. Some historians have chosen to view “yellow journalism” as a sign of things to come, but really it was more of an unwelcome throwback to an earlier era of political sensationalism. Yellow journalism injured professional journalism in the years that followed, simply because it demonstrated the volatility of an agenda-driven press; Longhofer, *Psychological Necessity of Censorship*, 74–75; Theodore Roosevelt to Sir Edward Grey, 22 January 1915, [http://www.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Letter\\_from\\_Theodore\\_Roosevelt\\_to\\_Sir\\_Edward\\_Grey](http://www.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Letter_from_Theodore_Roosevelt_to_Sir_Edward_Grey) (accessed 31 May 2009); the British military’s restrictive release of information led to what historian Stephen Badsey called “The Missing Western Front.” Tight censorship, Badsey argued, has prevented historians from fully understanding the operational effectiveness of the British Army. See Badsey, “The Missing Western Front: British Politics, Strategy, and Propaganda in 1918,” in *War and the Media: Reportage and Propaganda, 1900–2003*, ed. March Connelly and David Welch (London: I.B. Tauris and Company, 2005), 47–64.
9. German military propaganda was specifically handled by Section IIIb of the OHL (*Oberste Heeresleitung*), as detailed in David Welch, “Mobilizing the Masses: The Organizing of German Propaganda during World War One,” in *War and the Media*, ed. Connelly and Welch, 19–46.
10. *Rules of Land Warfare, 1914* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1917), 111.
11. Josephus Daniels to Woodrow Wilson, 11 April 1917, Josephus Daniels Papers, Library of Congress; *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42:39.
12. Article VII, Section 420, *United States Infantry Guide* (1917), [http://www.theworldwar.org/s/110/images/editor\\_documents/content/RESEARCH%20CENTERThe%20new%20Research%20Center%20opened%20on%20December%202020/AmericanLettersandDiaryEnt.doc](http://www.theworldwar.org/s/110/images/editor_documents/content/RESEARCH%20CENTERThe%20new%20Research%20Center%20opened%20on%20December%202020/AmericanLettersandDiaryEnt.doc)

(accessed 4 June 2009); General Pershing reported that within the AEF there were “36 regularly accredited correspondents, while visiting correspondents reached a total of 411,” though the actual numbers were slightly higher. *Final Report of John J. Pershing*, 17.

13. *New York Times*, 2 May 1917.

14. A week later, Baker relaxed this order somewhat. *New York Times*, 29 June 1917, 6 July 1917; Paul Aswell, *Wartime Press Censorship by the U.S. Armed Forces: A Historical Perspective* (MMAS thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1990), 54.

15. First, “Selection of men, appointment of officers, organization, movement to training camps and cantonments, daily life and training therein—all may be reported on and may be freely pictured. The only reservation is that actual train schedules and routes should not be published until the movement is completed. Experimental work should not be published . . . the daily life [in training camps or cantonments] may be discreetly described. Honest and timely comment and criticism can, from a military point of view, do little harm.” Second, “No departure, or preparation for departure, from training camps or cantonments should be published.” Essentially correspondents were not permitted to report any troop movement at all. This rule “applies to large and small bodies of troops and to individual officers and soldiers. To this rule,” McIntyre pointedly remarked, “there is no exception.” Finally, “When troops have reached the field of operations, there is but one rule to govern publications—that is, nothing should be published or pictured, except with prior governmental approval. This approval, in so far as it relates to contemporary reports of operations and actions, is given by a representative of the commanding general in the field. The editorial comment at home should not disclose facts not so represented from the front. But, based on such facts, comment and criticism are limited only by rules of good faith and intelligence.” *New York Times*, 22 September 1917; in June 1918, McIntyre returned to his previous post as Chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, and was replaced as Chief Censor by Colonel Marlborough Churchill, at which time it was also announced that the overarching responsibility for censorship fell under Military Intelligence Section of the General Staff, *New York Times*, 22 June 1918.

16. *United States Army in the World War, 1917–1919*, 13 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1948), 1, 4–5, 25, and for general policies set forth by the G-2-D, see the same, 82–140.

17. *Final Report of General John J. Pershing, Commander-in-Chief, American Expeditionary Forces* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1920), 12, 16–17, 88.

18. *Final Report of General John J. Pershing*, 17.

19. See *Final Report of the G-2-D, G.H.Q., A.E.F., of May 1, 1919*, National Archive Record, cited in Wilfrid Broderick, “Postal Censorship During World War I,” in *The Postal History of the AEF, 1917–1923*, ed. Theo. Van Dam (State College: American Philatelic Society, 1980), 115–116; censorship was one of the first items of business for the AEF. Immediately following General Orders No. 1 (Command and General Staff of the AEF) and No. 2 (necessity, requirement, and means of maintaining troop accountability for all echelons of command), General Order No. 3 (28 June 1917) outlined the general principles and justifications for field censorship: “The sole object of field censorship and all other steps taken to prevent the leakage of military information is to secure success of our own and allied operations with the least possible loss.” As mentioned above, more specific protocols for censorship followed soon thereafter. *United States Army in the World War, 1917–1919* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1948), 3–8.

20. Broderick, “Postal Censorship,” 113.

21. Myron Fox, “Censorship!”, [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/warletters/sfeature/sf\\_censorship.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/warletters/sfeature/sf_censorship.html) (accessed 31 May 2009).

22. *Diary and Letters from George Clifford Bredberg From World War I*, available at the Research Center at the National World War I Museum, Kansas City, MO.

23. *Sergeant Keith Nathan Lacey*, available at the Research Center at the National World War I Museum, Kansas City, MO.

24. Letter from Charles Stevenson, 18 September 1918, [http://www.theworldwar.org/s/110/images/editor\\_documents/content/RESEARCH%20CENTERThe%20new%20Research%20Center%20opened%20on%20December%202021/AmericanLettersandDiaryEnt.doc](http://www.theworldwar.org/s/110/images/editor_documents/content/RESEARCH%20CENTERThe%20new%20Research%20Center%20opened%20on%20December%202021/AmericanLettersandDiaryEnt.doc) (accessed 4 June 2009).

25. General Pershing originally placed the burden of mail on the civilian postal service, but that system was too slow and inefficient. In May 1918, the AEF assumed control of the postal service in forward areas and placed a “military postal organization” at each major port, each of which would then forward mail to the appropriate unit’s postal center. Although the situation improved somewhat, “The mail service never became entirely satisfactory.” See “Postal Service during the War,” <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~rstaley/wvessay.htm> (accessed 31 May 2009).

26. Broderick, “Postal Censorship,” 118–119.

27. Edward House to Woodrow Wilson, 6 April 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 41:555.

28. *United States Army in the World War* 13, 9, 103–107.

29. Aswell, *Wartime Press Censorship*, 55–59; the particulars of press censorship and correspondent accreditation can be found in General Orders No. 36 (12 September 1917), No. 96 (15 June 1918), in *United States Army in the World War*, 73–74, 348–349.

30. *New York Times*, 10 February 1918.

31. *New York Times*, 2 March 1918.

32. Excerpts from Wilbur Forrest’s *Behind the Front Page* (1924), [http://www.worldwar1.com/dbc/ct\\_contr.htm](http://www.worldwar1.com/dbc/ct_contr.htm) (accessed 31 May 2009); W. Thomas Smith, *Alpha Bravo Delta Guide to Decisive 20th-Century Battles* (Indianapolis, IN: Alpha Books, 2003), 19.

33. Kendall Banning, *The Military Censorship of Pictures: Photographs that Came Under the Ban During the World War—And Why* (1926), typewritten monograph of very limited circulation, available in the Special Collections Section at the Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

34. Almost immediately after Wilson appointed Creel as Chairman of the Committee on Public Information, a conference regarding censorship was held in the War Department. This meeting was attended by Major Douglas MacArthur, chief censor for the Army; Lieutenant Commander Porterfield, censor for the Navy; Philip Patchin, representative from the State Department; and Kendall Banning, representing the CPI. It was at this meeting that these members decided that the CPI would serve only in an advisory capacity regarding censorship of photography, but that actual censorship was exercised by officials of the State, War, and Navy Departments. Banning, *Military Censorship*, 7.

35. First and foremost, ones that revealed troop movements, but also photos that depicted fortifications, factories, ports, research and experimental structures, aerial viewpoints, unit identifiers, and details of weapons systems.

36. Those which showed unprepared or out-of-uniform soldiers, or soldiers with “unseemly attitudes” or in an “improper environment”; pictures of “faked battle scenes, [giving a] false impression of military tactics and methods”; pictures of physical or psychological testing of recruits; and those showing soldiers drinking alcoholic beverages or “in the attitude of drinking.” Banning, *Military Censorship*, 12–14.

37. Especially what Banning referred to as the “horrors of war,” i.e., dead and mutilated (American) bodies. Banning, *Military Censorship*, 19.

38. Aswell, *Wartime Press Censorship*, 54, 59–60.

39. Creel extensively discussed the relationship between the Signal Corps and the CPI in *How We Advertised America*, 117–132.

40. Writing from Camp Allentown, Pennsylvania, on orders to deploy soon, Private Milford Manley informed his girlfriend that he was sending his camera to her. “Janet,” he wrote, “Couldn’t get the Kodak thru & was given 15 min. to get rid of it. . . . Take good care of the Kodak & when I get back 10 yrs. from now we’ll take some pictures.” Letter dated 30 October 1918, in *The World War I Letters of Private Milford N. Manley*, ed. Robert Manley and Elaine Manley McKee (Gardner, NE: Dageforde Publishing, 1995), 65.

41. These members included Samuel Gompers, head of the American Federation of Labor; Daniel Willard, president of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad; Howard Coffin, vice president of Hudson Motor Company; and Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, Roebuck, and Company.

42. *Minutes of the Council of National Defense, 1916–1921* and *Minutes of the Advisory Commission of the Council of National Defense, 1916–1918*, National Archives and Records Administration Microfilm Publications, accessed at the Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

43. Diary of Josephus Daniels, 9 April 1917 and 17 April 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42:23 and 42:90–91, respectively.

44. Walter Lippmann to Woodrow Wilson, 6 February 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 41:135.

45. David Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 22.

46. Memorandum by George Creel, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42:40–41.

47. Louis Sebold to Woodrow Wilson, 3 July 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 43:95–96; Robert Herrick also captured this sentiment brilliantly in an opinion piece in *Dial*, 14 February 1918: “The most lamentable immediate effect of War upon human psychology is the tendency to cover up, conceal, distort the truth, for one or another of innumerable specious reasons. To the stupidity of military censorship . . . we add the misguided zeal of propagandists and self-appointed guardians of national morale, who serve out the Truth to the public in homeopathic doses, tardily, and agreeably disguised.”

48. Cheney, *So It Seemed*, 118; *Independent*, 5 January 1918. Donald Wilhelm went through great pains in this article/interview to show evidence of Creel’s historic devotion to publicity, the point simply to whitewash current efforts to squash dissent in the nation’s newspapers during the war.

49. Memorandum by George Creel, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42:39.

50. Robert Lansing, Newton Baker, and Josephus Daniels to Woodrow Wilson, 13 April 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42:55; *Outlook*, 25 April 1917.

51. Committee on Public Information’s Preliminary Statement to the Press, read to members of the press on 23 May 1917 and printed in the *New York Times* on 28 May 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42:305.

52. Committee on Public Information’s Preliminary Statement to the Press, read to members of the press on 23 May 1917 and printed in the *New York Times* on 28 May 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42: 306–308, 311.

53. *New York Times*, 29 June 1917.

54. Creel, *How We Advertised America*, 18.

55. Woodrow Wilson to Edwin Webb, 22 May 1917; Woodrow Wilson to Frank Irving Cobb, 23 May 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42: 376–377; Woodrow Wilson to Louis Wiley, 23 July 1917.

56. *New York Times*, 27 May 1917; Supreme Court Justices Oliver Wendell Holmes and Louis Brandeis were likewise opposed to politically derived censorship. On 16 May 1917 they released the following statement: “To justify suppression of free speech there must be reasonable ground to fear

that serious evil will result if free speech is practiced. There must be reasonable ground to believe that the danger apprehended is imminent. There must be reasonable ground to believe that the evil to be presented is a serious one.”

57. Ronald Schaffer, *America in the Great War: The Rise of the War Welfare State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 13, 218–221.

58. Robert Lansing to Woodrow Wilson, 30 April 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42:163.

59. *Advisory Commission and Council of National Defense Minutes*.

60. George Creel to Woodrow Wilson, 24 August 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 44:49.

61. Diary of Josephus Daniels, 6 April 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 41:556.

62. Albert Burleson to Woodrow Wilson, 3 May 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42:195–196.

63. Broderick, “Postal Censorship,” 113.

64. Of Victor Berger, a founding member of the Socialist Party of America, Wilson once wrote that he had a “revolutionary temper” and “he is not to be trusted as in any sense a friend of the Government. . . .” Woodrow Wilson to William Kent, 17 July 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 43:193; Shaffer, *America in the Great War*, 15–30.

65. Kennedy, *Over Here*, 25–26.

66. Niel Johnson, *George Sylvester Viereck: German-American Propagandist* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 63; *Viereck’s*, 27 February 1918; *New York Times*, 12 March 1918; and George Sylvester Viereck, *Spreading Germs of Hate* (New York, NY: Liverlight, 1930), 167.

67. Max Eastman to Woodrow Wilson, 8 September 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 44:171–172.

68. Max Eastman to Woodrow Wilson, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 43:165.

69. Thomas Watt Gregory to Woodrow Wilson, 14 May 1918, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 48:12–14.

70. Albert Burleson to Woodrow Wilson, 16 July 1917 and 16 October 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 43:187–188 and 44:389–390, respectively.

71. Lillian Wald et al., to Woodrow Wilson, 16 April 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42:118–119.

72. Walter Lippmann to Edward House, 17 October 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 44:393–394.

73. Herbert Croly to Woodrow Wilson, 19 October 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 44:408–410.

74. Allen Ricker to Woodrow Wilson, 9 August 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 43:413.

75. Upton Sinclair to Woodrow Wilson, 22 October 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 44:470–472.

76. John Spargo to Woodrow Wilson, 1 November 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 44:491–492.

77. Amos Pinchot to Woodrow Wilson, 24 May 1918, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 48:146–147; the previous summer Wilson had already informed Pinchot that while he might review the case of *The Masses*, he would not rush to judgment or make any public condemnation of the Postmaster General’s actions, 13 July 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 43:164; Pinchot had detested Burleson since at least the previous July when he argued that not only did the Postmaster General not “see the injustice of the course the Department was following in regard to these newspapers, but that he seemed to look at the problem with a degree of aloof externalism. . . .”, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 43:276–278.

78. W.I. Irvine and Paul Hanna of the Philadelphia branch of the People’s Council of America to Woodrow Wilson, 4 August 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 43:383.



79. Roger Baldwin to Edward House, 24 January 1918, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 46:383–383.

80. Woodrow Wilson to Arthur Brisbane, 25 April 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42:129. Many individuals leveled attacks against the administration, charging it with using censorship for purely political purposes. On learning that a foreign edition of his periodical, *The Outlook*, had been denied the mails by the post office because of an allegedly revealing editorial, Lawrence Fisher wrote the President, “If the editorial reveals any military secrets to our enemies we cheerfully accept the ban which has been laid upon us, for we wish to aid in every possible way in the winning of the war by a decisive victory. If the prohibition of censorship is merely based on the criticism of Government officials, it seems to us both unjust and un-American, for we cannot rid ourselves of the conviction that constructive criticism is one of the means of winning the war.” Lawrence Fraser Abbott to Woodrow Wilson, 12 September 1918, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 51:15–16.

81. Arthur Brisbane to Woodrow Wilson, 20 April 1917, and Joseph Patrick Tumulty to Woodrow Wilson, 20 April 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42:106–108.

82. Quoted in *New York Times*, 22 April 1917.

83. *New York Times*, 26 April 1917.

84. In fact, several influential House members had aligned against the censorship section of the Espionage Bill. For an overview of the congressional dispute on the matter, see *New York Times*, 4 May 1917.

85. *New York Times*, 26 May 1917.

86. David Lawrence to Woodrow Wilson, 24 May 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42:386–387.

87. In a personal note, Louis Wiley proposed this directly to Wilson, 31 July 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 43:333.

88. Memorandum by Breckinridge Long, 20 November 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 45:89–90.

89. George Creel to Woodrow Wilson, 28 November 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 45:152–153.

90. *War Memoirs of Robert Lansing*, 323, available at the Research Center at the National World War I Museum, Kansas City, MO.

91. Broderick, “Postal Censorship,” 121–123.

92. Creel, *How We Advertised America*, 18.

93. Among these was Frank Irving Cobb, who informed Colonel House that “Creel is hopelessly discredited. . . . The newspaper correspondents distrust him. They have no respect for him. They are suspicious of everything that he gives out, and, therefore, are working at cross purposes with the Government.” In August 1917, he had suggested that “it would be much better to separate the censorship and the publicity, which can be easily done.” He did not envision Creel as the head of any censorship committee, though. See Letter from Cobb to House, 2 August 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 43:366.

94. For the CPI’s reliance on local voluntary efforts, see Robert Wells, “Mobilizing Public Support for War: An Analysis of American Propaganda during World War I,” delivered to the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, New Orleans, Louisiana (March 2002); Stephen Vaughn, “First Amendment Liberties and the Committee on Public Information,” *The American Journal of Legal History* 23 (April 1979): 95–119.

95. This is covered extensively in Gregg Wolper, *The Origins of Public Diplomacy: Woodrow Wilson, George Creel, and the Committee on Public Information* (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1991).





## PANEL 2—THE PHILIPPINES AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

### Questions and Answers

(Transcript of Presentation)

**Thomas A. Bruscino Jr., Ph.D.**

**Mr. Jared Tracey**

**Moderated by Major John Mountcastle**

#### **Major Mountcastle**

Okay. We have about 19 minutes, 18 minutes left for some questions and answers from our panel and I'll take a moderator's privilege here and start off the questioning with one I came up with on my own. I guess this is primarily a question for Tom; however, Jared, this might bleed into your presentation as well. In my readings at least, and maybe we all have at some point, there comes into play the question of at what point did the American press separate itself from the partisanship that we saw very much attached to the American press early on during the American Revolution even, then all the way up through the 19th century until the American Civil War where you have specific newspapers align specifically with different political parties, like *Greeley's Tribune* aligned with the Republican Party, the *New York Herald* with the Democrat Party. A lot has been said about when truth became the guiding principle of the American press. Some people have attached that around the 1880s, somewhere toward the end of the 19th century. However, when Tom was talking, I started to ask myself, is that too early to start calling the American press an unpartisan press? When we get into the area of the Philippines it certainly seemed like a lot of the editorial press that was being put out was driven heavily by the anti-imperialist ideology or the movement. I offer that to you, Tom. Do you think it would be fair to call the American press during the period of the Philippines a nonpartisan press or do you feel that the various political parties, or maybe not even parties but movements, as it were the anti-imperialist movement, had a large hold on what was being put out not only in written word but as editorial cartoons as well?

#### **Dr. Bruscino**

Well, I chose to focus on the controversies, so the negative press. This actually gets to a very important issue about the Philippines, which is they issued, the Army, the military, the Army almost never sees or seems to put less of its attention on it, which is that there was a lot of press supporting them very aggressively—supporting the efforts in the Philippines. So, part of the controversy is that it's going back and forth throughout this. I wouldn't say that this is that area of transition from the party newspapers to a more objective thing. But the editorial policies at the various newspapers tend to align along issues. You'll have your anti-imperialist papers and your imperialist papers, as far as editorial policy, and I think you see that pop up in the news coverage too. The one example I use in the larger version's

paper, that the *New York Times*, which is generally in support of most of these efforts, even they in the coverage of, I think, it's one of the Persian examples, that they do this: "President lodged this campaign, 600 women and children killed." The editorializing with the headlines kind of thing. You sort of see this, even in their case, the reporting has a bit of an issue. I think there are still some partisan papers and then there's a lot of these outlets. The thing we have to keep in mind too is that a lot of these outlets are periodicals, which when you don't have the Internet, you don't have TV, you don't have radio, the periodicals fill the gaps that weren't in the newspapers and the periodicals were much more inclined to be aligned along partisan lines or something like that. So that's where a lot of these stories and a lot of this stuff is played out. There's also self-publishing, which happened to a degree in this era, to include the famous anti-imperialist named Edward Atkinson who lived in Boston, who has just gone crazy publishing all kinds of interesting things. And then you see some guys self-publishing their replies to this or getting small publishing houses to reply to it. So yeah, probably should be a little bit tempered that this era makes this real hard and fast break to objectivity.

**Mr. Tracey**

I would also say there's other factors going on here at the same time as well. I would agree with Tom. I don't think that this is an era where you have partisan periodicals and then nonpartisan. Other things that are going on at the time is the increased amount of press agencies that are putting out one line and some of the more local/rural publications are kind of using what are called grapevines—taking what they know and kind of adapting it to local situations. Also is the increase attendance in secondary education beginning in 1908. The University of Missouri is going to be your first school of journalism. So that kind of leads to factors in the professional self-identity that accompanies the organization. More of these publications are borrowing from each other at this time. Urbanization. So I think all of these factors are not necessarily leading to a nonpartisan press, but one on which there seems to be more of an emphasis on a certain journalistic code at this time.

**Audience Member**

Colonel Farquhar, Combat Studies Institute. Coming off of the end of that last answer from Mr. Tracey, I'll start off with Dr. Bruscano. Tom, you talked about the corporate mind-set of Army officers. Anywhere in your search did you come across any place that made it into the manuals or curriculum of professional military education in the post-Philippine war period?

**Dr. Bruscano**

No, not in the manuals. This is the point of Andrew Birtle's book, which I think everybody should revisit if they get a chance: *US Army and Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine*. I think that's the full title, and there's two volumes for it. He talks about this too. They don't actually capture much in doctrine. There is a little bit of material in the teaching of some of these Philippine vets here. There's a very little bit on some of the tactics. But keep in mind, from their perspective bringing up these particular issues is just going to reignite the controversy. Whereas, so the controversy, the stuff they can focus on is the thing they want to correct and where they see they made their biggest mistakes

in the Spanish-American War, which is in the preparedness. They weren't ready for the fight, which is why you end up with all these guys on the Gulf Coast catching and dying of malaria before they even get to Cuba. Although, even in this case, the military fudges the record a little bit to push the preparedness question. This is the other side of it, because they do pretty well getting to the Philippines actually. The mobilization to go into the Philippines actually goes pretty well, and there's actually a CSI study out there on it. But no, mostly what they tend to focus on is preparations. Where they see they struggled was in the strategic deployment, not in the actual tactical activities of what they were doing.

They had some issues, but they worked through it and they figured most of these guys knew how to do it and they go through to Cuba in 1906. And the Army's actually calling to stay there longer, because they want to do more of civil affairs security institution building, and the politicians are like, "No, you did your objective. Way to go. You know, you guys can now go home." "Well, we're not done building houses and roads and things." And they do really well in a whole series of these events. I mean, civil affairs operations can become this sort of model of an occupation with Veracruz. They clean up the city, get the sewers running, do all the things that we talk about. It's all there. There's no reason for them to say, "Well, look, we need to write this down," because they're doing it already and writing it down is just going to have to account for the fact that sometimes we're going to have to go out there and do some of the nastier stuff. The General Orders 100 stuff that accounts for spies and things like that. And if we do that, it's just going to start it again. "Oh, you guys are a bunch of torturers. You're pushing for atrocities. We'll take a pass on that. We'll focus on Japan." That's what they do. Not so much in doctrine, but in this sort of corporate knowledge and a little bit in some of the writings. But the focus in doctrine and on strategic deployment and the general staff, the same way. Not on how to get, they do look at how to go to Mexico. They do look at how to support the Philippines. But they do not look at what to do once you get there.

### **Audience Member**

I've got a question for Dr. Bruscano. In your research, did you ever run across any retractions by the media for any of the more lurid stories that weren't correct in newspapers or periodicals?

### **Dr. Bruscano**

Not that I've seen; I mean, I haven't scoured the newspapers in that way. The best book on the coverage is Richard Welch, *Response to Imperialism*. This is a very good study of these issues, and he doesn't talk about retractions. I can't think of any.

### **Mr. Tracey**

Well, during World War I, I think there were two retractions printed. One the media put out or there were certain press agencies that put out that the Committee . . . they relied on the Committee on Public Information for some of the information about what was going on abroad and news about troop movements, etc. There was at one point where they exaggerated the amount of American naval vessels and American airplanes that we had over there in the field. And that actually turned around and hurt their own credibility more than it did the press. But actually the press, after an investigation, did go back and print a retraction

as far as them, even though through no fault of their own, they were relying on information printed in the Committee on Public Information's official bulletin. They did print the retraction on some of those issues.

**Audience Member**

My question is for Mr. Tracey. You alluded in your paper to the general dissatisfaction throughout the Armed Forces with the program of censorship for the media. We know that during World War II many of the senior leaders in the military were junior officers during World War I. So my question for you would be, what changed during that war period that resulted in further support for censorship by the military?

**Mr. Tracey**

That's a huge one. That's actually the topic of my doctoral dissertation. World War I censorship became something regrettable, something to be rejected. In World War II, you have, of course, more expansive media that you have to deal with. You have the radio. You have more live action photography and motion pictures and things like that. So I've read one report that says that basically what they want to do is avoid the Draconian measures of World War I censorship and propaganda. Now this was in principle. In practice, they fell into some of the same traps as they did during World War I. First, was the insistence on truth in order to convey the American position. This is accomplished by, say, Frank Capra's *Why We Fight* series, more footage from Signal Corps and things like that. Also, what they did was they established two distinct organizations. From the outset, they established both an Office of War Information and a Office of Censorship. That was pronounced from the very beginning, whereas during World War I, there was that ambiguity as far as who was doing what, who was responsible for what was going on. One of the biggest complaints about World War I era censorship was that nobody knew who was doing it. Obviously, the Post Master could not handle all of this by himself, so there was that question of who's the hidden hand behind all this censorship. And going beyond that, even going beyond World War II, the propaganda and censorship efforts during World War I had a profound impact on how we would deal with those issues after World War II and the beginning of the Cold War, such as with the US Information and Education Act where it was seen that public relations and censorship were seen as basically weapons, things to be not used against the American people, but deployed on peoples overseas. So there was a lot of talking about what went wrong during World War I and then there was also a lot of relapse during World War II.

**Major Mountcastle**

Okay, that takes us up to our time limit. Oh, one more question? One more question. Won't need it, okay. Oh, one at the top.

**Audience Member**

In your study of history and all the wars that we've been in, when you look at censorship versus transparency, what do you believe is the best operationally to actually accomplish winning a war?

**Dr. Bruscano**

Well, this is actually an issue with the entire conference. I think we're all perhaps struggling with the separation about who your audience is. I have a question for you. Are you interested in affecting public opinion, using the media to affect public opinion at home, or are you interested in using it as information operations with the enemy targeted or international opinion? You know, what are we looking at the media doing here? If it's the case, there's certainly a case to be made that you need censorship operationally so that you're not revealing information that the enemy could use against you in the field. As far as these big ideas of what you're going about, and you're interested in public opinion at home, the hope would be that transparency would be the way to go primarily because, presumably, the United States is doing these things for reasons that most of the public supports. And if the public doesn't support it, it needs to know why you're doing it anyway so they can make a judgment as you go. So I think transparency is the way as far as that goes, but where do you draw the line? When does that information start to become operational and affect you militarily? I mean, you're going to need censorship the closer you get to the action. But on the big issues, transparency I think is the way to go. If you're making mistakes, sometimes these things have to be accounted for. This is part of what I was talking about with managing the issue rather than pretending it's not there. Rather than telling people we're never going to use harsh techniques again in counterinsurgency, you make the case for it, because you know, the cost of that might just be winning the war. And if it's important enough to the American people that we win the war, then it's going to happen. It's a follow-on to the issue. But I think transparency is how you handle that, too. Those are the issues I think between whether we're talking about enemy, whether we're talking about public opinion—it all blends together a little bit with the media and the military.

**Mr. Tracey**

I would agree totally with that. Just, it was more the issue in wars past and less so today, less applicable today, because of the vast amount of media out there. I read some statistics that says the United States constitutes 6 percent of the world population and consumes 60 to 70 percent of its information. And this is largely due to the information overload that's out there due to technology today. But in wars past, I think the main issue was relay of information. The time lapse between the actual military event and when it could be relayed to the public. What was most important was that you could relay information or military events that had already happened versus what was going to happen and that just seems to be the unwritten rule. So there's no magic formula right now, and like Tom was saying, I think transparency is great, but we still deal with these conflicts.

**Major Mountcastle**

And it's a good that carries us on into our next panel, which will convene at 1445. Before we get out of here, I just want to say once again, we appreciate all of our presenters here at the panel. We have the book, *Three Centuries of Service: The History of Fort Leavenworth*, here for our presenters. Please join me in a round of applause for Dr. Bruscano and Mr. Tracey.





## PANEL 3—THE VIETNAM WAR

### **Generals Westmoreland and Abrams Meet the Press: What Went Right and What Went Wrong with Media Relations in Vietnam**

(Submitted Paper)

by

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In 1965, when the American large unit war began in Vietnam, the military and the news media started off on reasonably good terms. Although disagreements existed, each group understood that a cooperative relationship would be of benefit to both. They began the war on that premise, with the press exhibiting a strong sense of solidarity with the soldier in the field, if not always his commanders, and the military instituting rules for the handling of information that showed great sensitivity to the news media's needs. By the conflict's end, however, very little of that relationship remained. Both sides followed the rules because they had to, but neither placed much trust in the other.<sup>1</sup> If the two were not enemies, they sometimes seemed to be.

What went wrong? There are many approaches available to answer that question. The military blame the media and the media the military, and both, when pushed, along with many scholars, point their fingers at the White House and the multitude of contradictions and incongruities it produced that gnawed at the war from its very start. There are important elements of truth in all of those analyses, but they don't tell the whole story. This brief article seeks to broaden the discussion for the soldier and journalist of today by comparing and contrasting the public affairs styles and approaches of the two officers who were most responsible for media relations during the American years of the war, Generals William C. Westmoreland and Creighton W. Abrams. How does one compare to the other? What did each do right, and what wrong? Are there contrasts?

Of the two, Westmoreland often comes off the poorer in comparisons. Reporter Dale Van Atta's recent biography of former Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird provides a case in point. The author quotes former Secretary of the Army Robert Froehlke to the effect that the general was, in his mind, "not a bad person" but "overly consumed with appearance and not too deep." Van Atta adds that Froehlke's predecessor as secretary, Stanley Resor, agreed and considered the general "quite a stuffy fellow." He adds that Secretary Laird was wary of the general, whom he believed was competent, had a knack for selecting good people, and was loyal to his civilian superiors, but was much too confident where the war was concerned, because he could not see that the window of opportunity leading to victory in Vietnam had passed. By contrast, according to Van Atta, Abrams "loathed ostentation," was committed to telling the truth, and insisted that "bad news does not improve with age."<sup>2</sup>

Characterizations of this sort notwithstanding, the two generals had much in common where relations with the news media in Vietnam were concerned. Thanks to astute advisers whom they supported, both did well initially in their handling of the press, and both used the advantages this gave them to good effect. In the end, moreover, both also failed where the news media were concerned.

Westmoreland came first and set the tone for press relations during the war. When he stepped in to become deputy commander of the US Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV), in January 1964, press coverage was a major concern for everyone of importance dealing with the war. The administrations of Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Baines Johnson had sought to preserve as much of a free hand in their foreign relations as they could by giving the conflict a low profile. This ran counter to the instincts of the Saigon correspondents, who knew a great deal of what was happening in Vietnam, because of their connections with the US officers advising the South Vietnamese Armed Forces. Many of those reporters disagreed with the US Government's handling of the war, particularly its support for the regime of South Vietnamese president Ngo Dinh Diem. Viewing the world from the perspective of the Cold War and supremely confident in the abilities of the American soldier, they wanted the United States to push Diem and his inept armed forces aside and to do the job itself—right. They also disagreed emphatically with official efforts to restrict release to the press of information that would verify the expanding role US forces had begun to play in the war. In the face of an official ban on references to napalm in official news releases, for example, they saw no reason to keep the weapon secret. A photograph of an exploding napalm canister, as a result, had even graced the cover of *Life Magazine* in early 1962. The reporters could count, moreover, the American fighter jets parked near commercial runways at Saigon's Tan Son Nhut Airport, knew that American airmen were flying airstrikes supposedly piloted only by South Vietnamese aircrews, and understood that US Army helicopters were not only ferrying South Vietnamese troops and supplies into the combat zone, but also taking offensive action against the enemy.<sup>3</sup>

Warned time and again by public affairs officers in the field that continued dissembling would demolish military credibility, the Defense and State Departments finally took action in June 1964 by convening a high-level conference in Honolulu composed of senior public affairs officers and chaired by Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara. At that point, the US Ambassador to South Vietnam, Henry Cabot Lodge, was exercising one-man rule over the conduct of public affairs by American military and civilian spokesmen. The US mission's press relations had become so unfocused, as a result, that its chief of public affairs, Barry Zorthian, was dealing only with psychological operations against the enemy and had nothing to do with the news media at all. The situation was so out of hand that highly qualified military information officers had come to consider service in the war zone a black mark on their careers. Several had even resigned rather than accept duty there. Recognizing that new guidance was necessary to eliminate directives on the books that military information officers interpreted as requiring them to lie, the conference recommended that President Johnson give Zorthian the rank of minister-counselor and make him a single manager in charge of both psychological warfare operations and public relations activities in South Vietnam.<sup>4</sup> Johnson did so on 6 June

1964. Subject only to the ambassador, Zorthian received czar powers in making whatever changes he needed to turn press coverage around and to promote positive aspects of the war to the world. Shortly thereafter, recognizing that adequate press coverage required not only timely release of the news but also full disclosure, State and Defense made MACV the sole release point in South Vietnam for news of military operations. It also instructed members of the US mission there to refrain from any attempt to mislead the press.<sup>5</sup>

Assuming his duties, Zorthian worked closely with General Westmoreland, who would replace General Paul D. Harkins as US commander in South Vietnam on 1 August 1964. Hoping to underscore that a break with the past had occurred, the two started off by changing the name of the MACV Office of Public Affairs to the MACV Office of Information (MACOI).

As the reorganization continued, believing that more positive news reporting would occur if the command sped reporters to the sites of breaking news, Westmoreland took it upon himself to assign a passenger-carrying CV-2 Caribou to the information office. He also sought to include correspondents on his trips to the field, made personal appearances at press briefings, and began a series of personal visits to locations and projects where his presence would highlight favorable stories. Aware that the US Army was playing a key role in the war that was developing and that it would continue to do so, the general also pushed to ensure that all future chiefs of the new MACV Office of Information would be US Army officers with the rank of brigadier general. There was some initial resistance from the Air Force, but he got his way.

Zorthian inaugurated a series of weekly off-the-record background briefings with knowledgeable experts who could add depth to the Saigon correspondents' understanding of the war. Together with Westmoreland, he suggested that Washington agencies should also begin a program to bring editors and other opinion leaders in the United States to South Vietnam where they could obtain a full picture of what the United States was doing. Coordinating with Zorthian, the MACV Office of Information's Special Projects Division established a press center and began to organize special trips by correspondents into the field. It also started to keep a file on operations in progress to tip the reporters to stories they might otherwise overlook; sought ways to increase the number of interviews with the Ambassador and other high-ranking US and South Vietnamese officials; and began to make specially prepared news stories, radio tapes, and film clips available to the press.

One of the most farsighted moves Westmoreland made was to cooperate with Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Arthur Sylvester to ensure that future chiefs of the MACV Office of Information had the fullest possible preparation for the job. Under the system that came into being, the Chief of Information, US Army Europe, Colonel Benjamin W. Legare, would fill a transitional role, becoming Chief of MACV Office of Information for 1 year. His successor would be the current chief of a recently established Southeast Asia Division within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, Colonel Rodger Bankson. That officer's job mandated that he should know everything he could about the war so that Defense could formulate intelligent policy guidance for handling the press in the field. When Bankson left for Vietnam in 1966, a former Deputy Chief of US

Army Office of Information who was serving as Military Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colonel Winant Sidle, would take his place at Defense. A year later, Sidle would succeed Bankson at MACV. From then on, each chief of the MACV Office of Information would first serve as special assistant for Southeast Asia in the Defense Department. In effect, the system allowed each future chief to become fully aware of the policies he would administer and the problems he would face in Vietnam by working on them for a year at the Pentagon.

Conceived as an effort to mollify the press to obtain good coverage, the program that came into being—rotating the chief of the Defense Department’s Southeast Asia Division into the job as chief of MACV Office of Information—had considerable merit on the organizational level. Good press relations sometimes require flexibility and quick decision-making. With an experienced, high-ranking officer always in charge at the MACV Office of Information, there would be no learning curve. While established policies would take precedence in most cases, he would know how far he could bend the rules when a challenge occurred, and also have the influence to get his way when the situation so demanded. The presence of Zorthian as “information czar” likewise had benefits. A member of the Marine Corps Reserve who had made his career at the Voice of America, Zorthian had resisted the purges of the McCarthy era. This gave him great credibility with the Saigon correspondents, who saw him as one of their own and respected him.<sup>6</sup>

Even so, the program that Westmoreland and Zorthian pulled together in 1964 never achieved the broad, positive news coverage it sought. At its core, the effort presupposed that the South Vietnamese Government would demonstrate the viability of American options in Vietnam by organizing itself to win the war. When that failed to happen, the finest public affairs program in the world could not have set things straight.<sup>7</sup>

Instead, the bad news continued. When stories began to appear in February 1965 that inadvertently revealed the timing of US air attacks against North Vietnam, President Johnson and high-level members of his administration recalled the field press censorship of World War II and the Korean war and pushed to establish such a system in Vietnam. Public affairs officers considered the issue at a second meeting in Honolulu in March 1965, but they concluded emphatically that any approach of the sort would be counterproductive. Not only would censorship require the legal underpinnings of a declaration of war, they argued, the US command in South Vietnam would have to take complete control of the country’s mail, communications, and transportation facilities to make it work. On top of that, it would have to enlist a team of censors fluent in virtually all the languages of the world to review the output of the Saigon correspondents. When everything was finally in place, moreover, there could be no guarantee that the press would cooperate. Reporters had only to fly to Hong Kong or Singapore to file their stories freely. Meanwhile, there was the South Vietnamese Government to consider. Sovereign in its own land, it would play an important role in any censorship system the United States adopted. No one doubted that its officials would exert their prerogatives in such a ham-handed manner that they might well sour the American public and Congress on the war for good. As the author of the conference’s final report observed, American success in Vietnam depended on the support of

the American public, and that would soon waver if “any significant number of our people believe . . . they are being misled.”<sup>8</sup>

The conference recommended that a system of voluntary cooperation, under which correspondents agreed to withhold certain categories of information until the US command released them, would be adequate to protect military security. The press was open to the idea and, in fact, was already participating in a system of the sort devised by Zorthian to control information about airstrikes in North Vietnam. The group added one final recommendation. In the past, it noted, public affairs officers at MACV had been required to release a communiqué designed to justify airstrikes against the North by listing US grievances against that country. That practice and all others like it should cease, because the coupling of strictly military information with obvious propaganda compromised the credibility of official statements.

The Johnson administration approved all of the conference’s recommendations but one. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Earle G. Wheeler refused to divorce announcements of airstrikes against North Vietnam from their political justifications on grounds that this would weaken the American position before the world. The decision seemed minor at the time, but as Colonel Rodger R. Bankson later asserted in an interview, it marked a critical divide in the history of the war by ratifying the subordination of military spokesmen to the political demands of their civilian superiors. This opened the way for President Johnson and his successor, President Richard M. Nixon, to attempt to exploit the military’s credibility with the American people by drawing military spokesmen, officers supposedly above politics, into the business of selling the war.<sup>9</sup>

The decisions stemming from the Honolulu conference notwithstanding, the Johnson administration considered censorship at least twice between 1964 and 1966. Each time, Zorthian and Bankson, who in due course succeeded Legare at MACV, with Westmoreland’s backing, defeated the option. As Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs James L. Greenfield put it at one high-level meeting in Washington, those who favored censorship saw it as a way to prevent negative news reporting, but it would not work that way. No system of censorship would prevent the appearance of stories such as CBS correspondent Morley Safer’s depiction in August 1965 of the burning by a Zippo lighter of the village of Cam Ne by US Marines. “Censorship dealt with questions of military security,” Greenfield said, “not public relations.”<sup>10</sup> All arguments notwithstanding, during 1966 the White House again ordered the Defense Department to draft a system of censorship for the war. The chief of the Southeast Asia Division at Defense Public Affairs, Colonel Sidle, killed the idea for all time by writing a program that was so ponderous it would never work.<sup>11</sup>

As predicted by the Honolulu conference, the use of voluntary guidelines for the press succeeded. The rules the system laid down were straightforward. They banned all mention in news reports of future plans, operations, or airstrikes; rules of engagement; the amounts of fuel or ordnance moving to front-line units; intelligence activities or methods; aircraft taking off, en route to, or returning from targets; and so on. Information officers made it clear that all who observed the rules would experience no difficulty covering the war. Anyone who broke them would lose that right either temporarily or permanently, depending on the

offense. Over the entire course of the war, only 8 of more than 6,000 reporters authorized to cover the war lost their accreditations because of security violations.<sup>12</sup>

In the end, despite protestations from some officials to the contrary, the system also provided the sort of positive news that the President wanted. Between 1965 and 1968, reporters often criticized Westmoreland's strategy of attrition, the violence of American tactics, clandestine US operations in Laos and Cambodia, the corruption of the South Vietnamese Government and the ineptitude of its Armed Forces. Even so, Westmoreland's Chief of Public Affairs in 1967 and 1968, Brigadier General Winant Sidle, insisted that the bulk of news reporting was either neutral in tone or favored the American cause. A survey of television reporting before the Tet Offensive of 1968 by researcher Daniel Hallin found the same thing: spokesmen for the war predominated over critics on news programs during the period by 26.3 to 4.5 percent, a ratio just short of 6 to 1.<sup>13</sup>

Policymakers under duress, however, often fail to notice broad trends and tend to see the bad rather than the good, and in the case of the Vietnam war, there was plenty of that to see. News stories by the respected managing editor of the *New York Times*, Harrison Salisbury, for example, appeared at the end of 1966 alleging that American air attacks in North Vietnam had hardly been as "surgically accurate" as official spokesmen contended. The reporter described scene after scene of desolation in areas that he contended were of little if any military value. The Defense Department disputed the claims, underscoring the Communist origin of some of the statistics the reporter had used. In the end, the *Times* backed off, going so far as to publish a rebuttal by its military correspondent, Hanson Baldwin, who had deep connections within the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

In this case, as in others, the press was willing to give the military the benefit of a doubt. Zorthian and Westmoreland were well aware that antiwar sentiment was rising in the United States and sought to avoid becoming involved in the political turmoil surrounding the conflict. Westmoreland, in particular, sidestepped two requests from the President during 1966 for him to travel to the United States to give speeches designed to foster support for the war. The President, however, was not to be denied. When he sent word early in 1967 that he wanted the general to address the Associated Press Managing Editors luncheon in New York City during April, Westmoreland's loyalty to his superior overcame his reservations. He consoled himself in his memoirs:

I appreciated the President's desire to keep the American people informed, particularly in view of manifold misinformation disseminated by antiwar activists. By providing a sober, authoritative explanation of the American role in Vietnam, I reasoned, I might contribute to thwarting North Vietnamese efforts to weaken American resolve. In any event, my Commander in Chief had ordered the job done.<sup>14</sup>

Whether the talk that followed improved public understanding of the war is open to question. What is clear is that it caused a furor in Congress and the press because of a statement the general made, which seemed to some to indicate that he considered antiwar dissent treason. The general had his defenders in the press, but as Sidle observed years after the war, the speech constituted a net loss for the military. Prior to the trip, the general's



credibility was so high that a rash of favorable news stories almost inevitably appeared after he gave a background briefing for the press. Some reports even repeated the general's remarks almost word for word. Afterwards, the reporting became more critical. For reporters, the general was no longer a soldier doing his job. He had become a spokesman for the Johnson administration with a line to spin.<sup>15</sup>

Over the months that followed, Sidle took what steps he could to improve official credibility by replacing official briefers who seemed to have grudges against the press; ensuring that well-qualified information officers were always available to reporters with questions; and replacing the generals who periodically briefed reporters with lower ranking officers who, in the eyes of the press, had little to sell. A small group of reporters was hopelessly biased against the war, he told Westmoreland in a lengthy memorandum on 11 September 1967, but the majority of those who questioned official claims were "convinced that we have not been telling the whole truth, . . . that we tend to be over optimistic, and therefore our talk of progress at the present must be taken with a large grain of salt." On the side, Sidle also advised Westmoreland to take a lower profile with the press than he had in the past. Since reporters tended to place heavy weight on the comments of a four star general, he said, the general should allow lower-ranking people to do the talking and reserve his own public statements for important moments that called for them.<sup>16</sup>

Westmoreland said he would follow Sidle's advice, but little changed. Instead, during September and October, he allowed the command to be drawn into a wide-ranging optimism campaign directed by the Johnson administration to refute claims in the press that the war had fallen into stalemate. Sidle and Zorthian did what they could to temper official claims of progress, but they had no control over the White House or agencies in Washington.

As part of that effort, the President asked Westmoreland to return to Washington in November. Officially, he made the trip to participate in discussions on what course the war should take over the next year. All concerned understood, however, that his real purpose was public relations. Speaking at the National Press Club, the general remarked that the enemy was so worn down he could no longer mount a large unit operation near any of South Vietnam's major cities. Although the general could cite impressive evidence in making that claim, when the enemy launched the Tet Offensive 2 months later, attacking every city in South Vietnam over a 2-day period, his credibility with the press ceased. From then on, balancing the general's record of over-optimism against the word of the troops, who were less informed but fighting the battle, most reporters sided with the troops.

In the wake of the attack, Clark Clifford, McNamara's successor as Secretary of Defense, recognized that the Government's over-optimism had backfired. When news reports appeared detailing a briefing at MACV in which a "senior military spokesman" had avowed that the enemy still had huge forces left and might well attack again at Hue, he used the occasion to make a change. In the future, he instructed Wheeler to tell Westmoreland, official spokesmen were never to denigrate the enemy, forecast allied or enemy plans, predict victory, or assert that difficult fighting was in the offing. Instead, moderation was to prevail. In that way, there would be no shock if reverses occurred, and in the case of success, the United States and South Vietnam could modestly claim the credit.<sup>17</sup>



Westmoreland acknowledged that he was the spokesman involved and promised to follow through on Clifford's instructions, consistent with honesty and the need to maintain the confidence of his command. He left South Vietnam shortly thereafter, however, to become Chief of Staff of the Army. The task fell to his successor at MACV, General Abrams. The new commander had the benefit of a system for handling the press that worked well and the advice of seasoned advisers, Sidle and Zorthian. He also had the good sense to recognize what he had. As Sidle remarked years after the war, Abrams would probably have fired him not because of the bad press that had accompanied the Tet Offensive, but for his warnings to Westmoreland to avoid over-optimism and to take a lower profile. Instead, the general had read his memorandum to Westmoreland, understood that he and the MACV Office of Information were not at fault for what had happened, and extended Sidle's tour of duty as his public affairs adviser for the better part of another year.<sup>18</sup>

Shortly after Abrams took command at MACV, Barry Zorthian's tour of duty in South Vietnam ended. The event marked the conclusion of an era. Over the preceding 2 years, the role of the MACV Office of Information had grown apace with that of the American military in South Vietnam. As it did, the civilian counselor's methods had come into question. Trained to give nothing away to the enemy, many officers grew concerned that the counselor was giving too much sensitive information to the press. General Sidle, for example, had begun to attend Zorthian's off-the-record briefings for the Saigon correspondents. As he put it, the presence of a general in uniform tended to preserve "the family jewels" by putting a damper on what had sometimes become wide-ranging discussions. Zorthian protested that none of the reporters who had participated in his sessions had ever betrayed his confidence. He added that most journalists had to file stories every day. The failure to provide them with an authoritative view of events would force them to rely on lower-level sources, and the errors that resulted would almost inevitably harm public understanding of the war.

Zorthian's superior at the time, Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, was undeterred by arguments of the sort. When it came time to appoint a successor, he split the counselor's job in two. Responsibility for psychological warfare went to an expert in media relations, Edward J. Nickel, while control of press relations fell to an expert in politico-military affairs, George S. Newman. "A sophisticated substantive officer of senior rank not a public relations or press affairs specialist," as Bunker put it, he could be expected to represent the official point of view and to side with the press far less than Zorthian. True to the Ambassador's expectation, Newman declined immediately to host his predecessor's background briefings and put an end to the practice. From then on, he played at most a minor role in handling relations with the news media. Bunker's point of view predominated.<sup>19</sup>

The change seemed inconsequential at the time. Sidle maintained excellent relations with the press and remained in command at the MACV Office of Information. He would continue some of Zorthian's practices. In particular, he saw to it that General Abrams filled some of the vacuum left by the cancellation of the counselor's briefings by holding regular off-the-record intelligence briefings of his own for selected newsmen and bureau chiefs.

Abrams, for his part, started off well with the press. As Jack Langguth of the *New York Times* noted, while Westmoreland seemed "forever hopeful," his successor appeared to be

the sort of officer who had long before decided “he wasn’t going to kid himself about anything.” As a result, even after working as Westmoreland’s deputy for more than a year to upgrade the performance of the South Vietnamese Army, Abrams still refused to advertise that force’s achievements. All he would say, the reporter remarked with approval, was that there had been “modest improvement” among the South Vietnamese or that things were “slightly better.”<sup>20</sup>

Abrams complied with Clifford’s directive to let the war do the talking. “We will not deal in propaganda exercises in any way,” he told his commanders, “but will play all of our activities in a low key.” To that end, all concerned were to refrain from revealing future plans and operations because information of the sort was not only of benefit to the enemy, it could also backfire if plans went awry. He had little objection to contacts with the press, but achievements rather than hopes were to be the subject of those encounters and commanders were to make “considerably more extensive use” of the phrase *no comment*. When things went wrong, a “surge effort” was to begin to find out what happened. If that inquiry confirmed that something bad had occurred, there would be no effort to paper over the truth. Good news was to be treated in the same way. Since first reports of anything could be badly exaggerated, public affairs officers were to determine the facts first and only then make an announcement. Over all, Abrams said, bad news was far less damaging than the allegation that the command had lied, and good news would have a far more favorable effect if reporters discovered it for themselves.<sup>21</sup>

The approach allowed Abrams to insulate himself, to a degree, from the political demands of his superiors, and he used it a number of times to avoid the mistake Westmoreland had made in allowing the President to draw him into the process of selling the war. Aware that the enemy was reinforcing his forces in the northernmost portion of South Vietnam, for example, Abrams decided in June 1968 to close the American base at Khe Sanh. Ambassador Bunker immediately pointed out that the move had heavy implications. The enemy was bound to depict it as an American defeat, and the contention would carry particular weight because of negative press coverage the siege of the base had received during the Tet Offensive. Abrams was well aware of the problem. Even so, he demurred when he received instructions from the Defense Department to highlight the earlier battle for the base as a debacle for the enemy and to depict its closure as an effort to reinforce success. All assertions of the sort were “not quite true,” he said, and they contradicted Clifford’s instructions to refrain both from denigrating the enemy and from predicting future heavy fighting.

That said, Abrams, nonetheless, attempted to minimize adverse comment in Congress and the press by imposing a ban on all news of the operation until he saw fit to release it. The restriction, however, brought about the very effects he had sought to avoid. When reporter John Carroll of the *Baltimore Sun* broke the embargo and MACV suspended his privileges as a correspondent indefinitely, Carroll’s colleagues in the press disputed official claims that the reporter had committed a genuine security violation. The enemy, they observed pointedly, could stand on the hills above the base and watch Army engineers removing the matting that composed the facility’s runways. When Maryland’s two senators, Daniel B. Brewster and Joseph D. Tydings, entered the fray at the *Sun*’s request, questioning the

embargo and labeling Carroll's suspension vindictive and unjustified, MACV reduced the suspension first to 6 months and then to 2 months. In this case, the wisdom of the embargo and the justice of the lengthy suspension can be argued, but the principle Abrams employed in disciplining the reporter was above dispute. In a war zone, lives may depend on the timing of news releases, and no journalist should have the right to make that determination on his own. That Abrams was also using his handling of Carroll to send a warning to the Saigon correspondents goes without saying.

Abrams had, perhaps, overplayed his hand with Carroll, but it was only the beginning of a much larger problem, for without knowing it, due to Clifford's instructions, the general was already caught between the news media, on the one hand, and his political superiors, on the other. What was happening came to light during the first conference he held with his generals after taking command at MACV. Two false news stories authored by South Vietnamese reporters had just appeared in the South Vietnamese press. One alleged that a North Vietnamese MIG-17 fighter had just shot down an American helicopter near South Vietnam's capital city, Saigon. The other quoted "reliable military spokesmen" to the effect that there were 51 enemy battalions poised to assault the city. General Abrams told the generals that stories of the sort played easily into the enemy's propaganda in South Vietnam and that American personnel had to understand the contributions saying the wrong thing could make it to the enemy's psychological warfare efforts. The commander of the US forces that defended Saigon, Lieutenant General Frederick C. Weyand, picked up on the comment. Referring mainly to the South Vietnamese press but including, as well, the entire corps of correspondents covering the war, he remarked that official spokesmen would run into problems no matter what they did. If they said nothing, some newsmen would be tempted to fabricate stories with no basis in fact. These would do little to improve the image of the US commitment. If they spoke freely and honestly, however, about how their forces and those of the South Vietnamese had defeated the enemy during the Tet Offensive and now had him on the run, an optimistic picture would emerge that could be destroyed with the firing of just a single enemy mortar round on Saigon.<sup>22</sup>

The head of the US pacification program, Ambassador Robert Komer, could not resist Weyand's cue. US officials suffered from the bureaucrat's fear of saying the wrong thing, he observed in a typically blunt remark. Officers would take a calculated risk of losing troops, but they would not take a chance on losing the war of words. Emphasizing the need to reflect the current situation by taking a more forward, optimistic posture in official statements than policy allowed, he added that the insertion of a few caveats warning of setbacks would provide all the cover necessary if something went wrong.

With that, the US commander of South Vietnam's II Corps Zone, Lieutenant General William B. Rosson, cut to the real point of the exchange. Abrams' guidance, which instructed commanders to play their activities in a low key and warned against discussing the war in an optimistic vein, tended to place a commander in a straitjacket, and it would have to be purged before Komer's advice could take effect. Abrams agreed, but he ended the discussion by indicating that the guidance had worked well when he had closed Khe Sanh and that, in any case, the policy had come from Washington and could not be abolished locally.

If Clifford's instructions inhibited MACV's ability to communicate progress, they could have much the same effect if the war took a turn for the worse. Bad news requires close, honest relations with the press rather than distance and often the release of more information rather than less. In the wrong hands, a policy of allowing a war to speak for itself could have just the opposite effect.

As far as Vietnam was concerned, the situation began to come unhinged after Lyndon Johnson's successor, President Richard M. Nixon, took office. On his own, Nixon would probably have favored a vigorous attack on North Vietnam when he took office, but his predecessor had already made the basic decision to negotiate and to turn the war over to the South Vietnamese. In the process, Johnson had contributed to a sense of disillusionment that was already rising in the United States. By removing himself as the spokesman for those who favored military means in South Vietnam, he had created an atmosphere in which formerly disciplined members of his own party in Congress could oppose the war with political impunity. If the leader of the party was seeking a way out, might not the rank and file? Complicating matters further, antiwar protests were on the rise in the United States. During 1967 and 1968, all of them had been peaceful, but during 1969 and 1970, 25 percent of the protests included, at one point or another, an element of violence. Analyzing the situation as it evolved and concerned that casualties were a major component in public disaffection, Nixon instructed Abrams to take no more losses than necessary and to begin planning for withdrawals.<sup>23</sup>

The changing nature of the war inevitably affected how the press reported. In November 1968, following President Johnson's bombing halt of North Vietnam, the producers of the ABC and NBC evening news programs instructed their reporters in the field to shift their attention away from combat and toward issues relevant to the negotiations: the South Vietnamese Government's long-term political viability, the progress it was or was not making in stemming the endemic corruption that gripped the country's bureaucracy, and other issues of the sort. Over the next 2 months, NBC's producers ran combat footage on the evening news only three times. During the preceding year, with the level of the fighting about the same, they had run it up to four times a week. From then on, reporting of combat increased when a military crisis occurred, but it never returned to earlier levels.<sup>24</sup>

It goes without saying that with news of combat no longer in demand, reporters would have to look elsewhere to find stories, and the material was there for anyone willing to get out into the field. The stories that resulted increasingly focused on problems. With the drawdown proceeding and commanders under orders to keep casualties down, many units in the rear fell into make-work routines that had little meaning for their members. As for those who remained in the field, no one wanted to be the last to die in a meaningless war. Combat refusals began to occur. According to the US commander in 1970 of the region around Saigon, II Field Force, Lieutenant General Arthur S. Collins, an "excessive number of accidental shootings" also began to occur—too many to be accidental. Collins added, "The promiscuous throwing of grenades . . . lent new meaning to the expression 'fragging'" and left every officer "with an ill-at-ease feeling."<sup>25</sup>

By 1971, drug abuse was rampant. Army investigators found that some 69 percent of the troops leaving South Vietnam had at least experimented with marijuana and that 45

percent admitted under promises of immunity from prosecution that they had used illicit narcotics at least once. Twenty-nine percent said they had used them more than 10 times and more than weekly, and 20 percent considered themselves addicted. Thirty-eight percent had tried opium, and 34 percent heroin.<sup>26</sup>

The news media chronicled it all, sometimes adding touches of commentary that showed little sympathy for the majority of soldiers who did their jobs and maintained their self-respect. Responding, the Nixon administration became increasingly defensive and fixed on the press as its enemy. Military commanders, many of whom took the criticism personally, often did the same. Although a few, particularly General Weyand, who became Abrams' deputy at MACV in 1970, quietly continued their dealings with the press, many drew in upon themselves, providing what the rules required of them where the press was concerned but nothing more. The regular intelligence briefings Abrams and his officers had conducted for the press died out as a result. Abrams was too busy, and the generals he delegated to do the job increasingly unwilling to deal with reporters, passed the task on to public affairs officers, who had something to sell in the eyes of the press. In the same way, officers occupying responsible positions often avoided reporters and declined to give interviews. Others actively discriminated against those they disliked.

Institutional fatigue, particularly in the case of the MACV Office of Information, made matters worse. By mid-1970, the military services were finding it difficult to identify experienced public affairs officers for service in Vietnam. Captains sometimes filled the jobs of majors and lieutenant colonels. On top of that, the system of training under which future chiefs of MACV Office of Information had served for a year at the Southeast Asia Desk in the Office of Defense Public Affairs disappeared in 1969 in a mindless Defense Department reorganization. Sidle's successor, Colonel L. Gordon Hill, and Hill's successor, Colonel Joseph F.H. Cutrona, passed through the system, but Cutrona's replacement, an officer who had broad public affairs experience in Europe but who had not served in Vietnam since 1963, Colonel Robert Leonard, spent only a few weeks at the Pentagon, mostly reading cables and policy directives.<sup>27</sup> Serving by then as the Army's chief of information, General Sidle helped where he could, as did Hill, who continued with the public affairs program in Washington, but neither could do much on a day-to-day basis. Increasingly hampered by their lack of institutional memory, MACV's information officers took refuge in what Sidle termed "the book," the system of formal rules that governed press relations.<sup>28</sup> They found the rule to let the war speak for itself made-to-order.

An example of what could happen as a result occurred in late 1970 when a US Air Force jet fighter crashed near the South Vietnamese border in Laos, and American troops moved in to hold the enemy off until the pilot could be rescued. Reporters were present when the incident occurred and had passed word to their colleagues in Saigon. Aware that this was a technical violation of the Cooper-Church Amendment, which had barred US forces from entering Laos and Cambodia in response to the US intervention in Cambodia earlier in the year, their colleagues asked about the incident at that evening's briefing in Saigon. Policy dictated that official spokesmen refrain from admitting any sort of infraction and lead the press to believe that South Vietnamese forces might have been the ones involved. The officer conducting the briefing, however, understood that the press knew everything and that



he would lose his credibility if he dissembled. An Air Force officer himself, he responded quietly that if he had been in his comrade's position, he would have wanted his fellow Americans to back him up. The reply satisfied the press, but it upset Leonard, who took the briefer to task. There matters stood for several days, until a note arrived from Secretary Laird commending the officer for his candor and good sense.<sup>29</sup>

Reporters complained bitterly as MACV closed in on itself. One veteran correspondent who had reported the war since 1962, Joe Fried of the *New York Daily News*, alleged pointedly that repression of the news was the worst he had seen in 7½ years of reporting the war. Press officers had not only stopped arranging intelligence briefings, he said, they had even failed to pass along requests for interviews with high-ranking officers. They sometimes declined to confirm information already on the record in Washington, and Colonel Leonard had even refused to respond to questions about one of the command's public affairs policies on grounds that "the policy has not changed, so there is no point in discussing it."<sup>30</sup>

Matters might have gotten worse if Abrams had followed the instructions he received in October 1970 from Admiral John S. McCain Jr., Commander in Chief Pacific. Facing stringent budget cuts, the admiral suggested that MACV accompany the American withdrawal from South Vietnam with drastic cuts in services for the press. Instead, the general temporized, citing a 16 percent cut the MACV public affairs had earlier incurred. It was well that he did. With the Nixon administration nearing a decision on a possible South Vietnamese cross-border operation into Laos, he would need all the public affairs assistance he could get.

The operation materialized in December, when McCain informed Abrams that President Nixon was contemplating a South Vietnamese incursion into Laos early in 1971 to deter a later North Vietnamese invasion. This would buy time for the South Vietnamese to cement control over their own affairs and secure an uneventful final withdrawal for American forces. It would also be the last opportunity the South Vietnamese would have for a major operation against the enemy's sanctuaries while US forces were strong enough to provide backing.

Abrams drew up a two-pronged campaign that involved an initial attack into Cambodia followed by a push from South Vietnam's northernmost area, known as Military Region I, into Laos along Highway 9 toward the town of Tchepone. He knew that the enemy had constructed fortifications along the route of the attack into Laos and possessed heavy anti-aircraft resources in the area, but he was still cautiously optimistic because American airpower would provide the key to victory, and it was indomitable. To create a sturdy supply base for the operation, he planned to reopen the base at Khe Sanh.

Concerned about security and deeply mistrustful of the press, the general decided to put a strong hand on news coverage of the operation. Although he would provide intermittent briefings for selected journalists, he planned to embargo all word of what was happening until he decided to release it. After that, to limit the number of journalists in operational areas, he instructed his information officers to discourage travel by single reporters into the field and to form press pools when they could. Those groups would have official escorts. Lest any doubt arise that the attack was anything less than a full South Vietnamese



operation, reporters would have to attend South Vietnamese briefings to receive their news of what was happening across the border.<sup>31</sup>

None too satisfied himself with what he termed the tendency of the press toward muckraking in Vietnam, Admiral McCain accepted the plan. Concerned, nevertheless, that Abrams' restrictions might spark the sort of controversy that would alienate Congress and affect military budgets that were already under stress, he insisted that MACV inform reporters of its plans for press coverage. He also wanted the command to devise a foolproof system for lifting whatever restraints it imposed.

Both McCain and Abrams hoped to keep the incursion secret until 30 January 1971, but the logistical effort that accompanied the operation proved so immense that neither the press nor the enemy could miss it. To compensate, on grounds that reporters needed time to develop perspective, Abrams imposed his embargo a day early. The announcement barred not only all news coming from the site of the operation but also any report that a ban was in place. The restriction seemed odd, but without it the press corps could have filed stories about a news blackout on the Laotian frontier, eliminating whatever element of surprise remained.

Reporters complied with the embargo, but they were furious. At a briefing the next morning that failed even to mention a possible incursion into Laos, they objected vehemently that there was no need for secrecy. The movement of huge bodies of troops toward the Laotian frontier was obvious both to them and to the enemy. They wanted to know if they could at least speculate about possibilities. The answer was no.

By then, however, the situation was already almost out of control. Although there was no breach of the embargo, journalists in Washington were pressing officials at the White House and the Defense Department for comment. Concerned that sensational news reports would soon appear that would spark opposition in Congress and limit the President's options, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Thomas Moorer, asked Abrams to at least lift the embargo on news of troop movements into Military Region I. The flow of factual news from the source, he said, could "help dampen rumors which could adversely affect future decisions." The general refused. "I am convinced," he said, "that as of now the enemy suspects many things, but . . . is uncertain as to where, when and in what force allied forces will strike."<sup>32</sup>

The situation deteriorated further the next day, when an article appeared in the London *Observer* that mentioned the news blackout and speculated brazenly on the possibility that the embargo was linked to plans for an invasion of Laos. No one ever identified the author of the story. The paper's correspondent in Saigon, Leonard noted, "had always been a man of integrity."<sup>33</sup>

Reasoning that the news was out and that the enemy had it, the *New York Times* wire service carried the *Observer's* story as a lead article. By 1 February, not only the *Times* but also the *Washington Post* and the *Baltimore Sun* were running stories on the possibility of a strike into Laos. Senators began to speak out on the subject, if only to allay constituent concerns. Recognizing a chance to score points against the United States, the premier of the Soviet Union, Alexei Kosygin, went on record himself to denounce America's "outrageous"

invasion of Laos. His remark received wide play in the press. The next day, unidentified US official sources, seeking either to kill the operation or to ally public concerns, spoke with reporters. They confirmed that a major operation was beginning, that Laos was indeed the target, and that some 25,000 South Vietnamese troops were involved.

Despite the outcry, General Abrams stood by his embargo. When the *Chicago Daily News* and other newspapers, however, criticized President Nixon for treating the American people like children, White House news analyst Mort Allen could only conclude in a memo to the White House chief of staff, H.R. Haldeman, that “from a PR standpoint, the Indochina situation is very damning. The stories in the papers are . . . the most serious credibility gap articles yet in this administration.”<sup>34</sup>

On 3 February, convinced that much of the speculation in the press was based on leaked information from sources within the State and Defense Departments and that he would lose any hope of controlling the bureaucracy if he allowed its members to dictate his decisions by playing to the press, President Nixon decided to go ahead with the operation. Shortly thereafter, Admiral Moorer notified Abrams that so much pressure had developed that there was little choice but to end the embargo. “I can assure you . . . that your views have been strongly put forward at the highest level,” Moorer said, “and that this decision . . . was made only after a most careful review. . . . We do not wish the embargo as such to be the single factor which prevents us from proceeding with the remainder of the operation.”<sup>35</sup> Abrams complied.

On the surface, as Moorer’s message indicated, the embargo seemed to have failed. Even so, appearances are sometimes deceiving. Although it will always remain a matter for conjecture, the welter of contradictory information, speculation, and commentary surrounding the operation in the news media of the world may have served to obscure American intentions from the enemy. As one National Security Council news analyst observed:

Confusion reigns in wire service reports as far as objective of operation is concerned. One says Thieu has left decision to enter Laos up to president, another that no decision has been made, a third that Acting Ambassador [Samuel D.] Berger has informed Thieu of decision during a meeting on this date. Other news reports were circulating to the effect that South Vietnamese units had already crossed the border and that paratroopers had landed far on the Plateau des Bolovens, well to the south of the true target area.<sup>36</sup>

Abrams’ stand in this case is nonetheless almost incomprehensible, for the general well knew that the North Vietnamese had months before decided that an attack into Laos was probable and had taken the steps necessary to deter one up Highway 9. Beginning in October 1970, moreover, they had moved their critical supplies away from Tchepone and had begun construction of a road that bypassed the town in order to ensure that, whatever happened, traffic on their main supply route to the south, the Ho Chi Minh Trail, would remain steady. In that light, the embargo served only to inflame a situation Moorer and McCain already deemed fated for controversy by turning it into a confrontation over what role the news media should play in war.<sup>37</sup>

As the episode involving John Carroll shows, General Abrams was already suspicious of the media and ill-disposed toward compromise. The imbroglio surrounding the Laotian incursion was merely more of the same, but magnified by 3 years of growing anger at what the military considered the “muckraking” of the press, staff members who lacked the sort of experience and insight a more flexible approach to the press would have required, and an inward turn within the military that placed soldierly values ahead of budget considerations and political concerns about “PR” in the minds of many officers.

Colonel Leonard thus wrote some 19 years after the event:

The press refused to believe there was a military reason for the embargo, while MACV couldn't believe that a few days delay in publication would represent a terrible infringement on the public's right to know. It was a classic confrontation as to which was more important, military security or the public's right. . . . As an old infantryman, my sympathies will always lie with the soldier . . . who always has to fight the war, not the reporter who writes about it. If the embargo saved one life it was worth it.<sup>38</sup>

These are noble thoughts, but in a war where public and congressional support were lagging, as Admiral Moorer had explained, the effort to allay the electorate's fears was essential to the preservation of the President's options. Abrams had every right to invoke an embargo, but when it broke down and even the premier of the Soviet Union mounted the podium in opposition, a new course was necessary. McCain and Moorer had already given him two. At the beginning, McCain had advised him to devise a foolproof system for lifting his restrictions, should the need arise. Later, when the situation began to come apart, Moorer had suggested that he drop the embargo on the buildup portion of the operation. Abrams instead chose to stand on his prerogatives as commander. It took a decision at the highest level to move him.

So, how do Generals Westmoreland and Abrams compare in their handling of the press? What they did right and wrong is fairly clear. Very simply, when they took command, they had good public affairs advisers and did well. The press liked them and responded accordingly. Even so, both suffered from flawed policies that originated in Washington. General Wheeler's refusal to divorce announcements of airstrikes against North Vietnam from their political justifications opened Westmoreland and his public affairs officers to the political demands of their civilian superiors. In earlier conflicts, the nation's political establishment had taken responsibility for raising public support for wars. In Vietnam, following the precedent Wheeler had set, Westmoreland allowed himself to become deeply involved in the process—much to the final detriment of his credibility.

Abrams faced a similar liability: Clifford's ruling that MACV should avoid optimism and allow the war to speak for itself. In the right hands and during a highly successful conflict, the approach might have worked very well. At a time when a war is in decline and when difficulties are rising in every direction, however, it could be used as a form of camouflage. In the case of Vietnam—as Zorthian, Bankson, and the others who had created MACV's public affairs program understood—officers who dealt with the press needed to exercise the greatest flexibility when problems occurred. By 1971, Abrams and his people

were no longer up to it. Squeezed between the demands of the press and those of the nation's political establishment, the general stood his ground. When he did, as Mort Allen observed from the perspective of the White House, the consequences were "damning."

What lessons do the experiences of Westmoreland and Abrams teach? There are several:

1. Stay away from the justification of wars. Politicians argue them. Soldiers fight them.

2. If you can, let a war speak for itself, but understand that this works best if things are going well. If things go badly, good relations with the press will be essential to get your story told. They don't happen on the spur of the moment. They are the product of little actions done carefully—a word here, a deed there—long before the problems occur.

3. The truth is not only your best defense, it makes the best propaganda. Even if it involves something bad, it will clear the air, allowing everyone to look for solutions. Lies, on the other hand, will bite you again and again. There are no uglier words in the American lexicon than *cover-up*.

4. Members of the press have long memories. You should know, if you don't already, that John Carroll had a distinguished career following his time in Vietnam. He became the editor of the *Baltimore Sun* and, later, the managing editor of the *Los Angeles Times*. He served on the Pulitzer Prize Board. In 2002, he also served as chairman of that board. In 2003, he was elected a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 2004, he received the Burton Benjamin Award for lifetime achievement in defense of press freedom from the Committee to Protect Journalists. Also in 2004, he received the American Society of Newspaper Editors Leadership Award. I spoke with John last year. The thought of what happened to him at Khe Sanh still angers him.

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## PANEL 3—THE VIETNAM WAR

### **The Viet Cong Assault on the US Embassy at Tet and The Military Media Controversy It Launched**

(Submitted Paper)

by

**Mr. Donald North**

In a war of surprises there was no greater surprise for my journalist colleagues or the US military in Vietnam than the Tet Offensive on 31 January 1968 and in particular the assault on the US Embassy in Saigon.

Because US politicians and commanders had oversold progress in the war as a way to quiet domestic dissent, the savage Tet fighting shocked millions of Americans and widened Washington's credibility gap on Vietnam. Within weeks, President Lyndon Johnson would bow out of his race for reelection. Tet was the beginning of the end of the Vietnam war.

But Tet had another long-term consequence. In the years that followed, US military officers would insist bitterly that critical and unfair reporting about Tet caused the American defeat, that the US news media had betrayed the nation, that reporters had gone from being the Fourth Estate to acting like an enemy fifth column. The legacy of poor military-media relations has been passed down like a family heirloom. In turn, the correspondents who covered Vietnam, now in influential roles in their news agencies, are more distrustful of US military officials than their older or younger counterparts.

General William Westmoreland's insistence that the media somehow betrayed the troops in the field rang true with many senior US military officers, those who would have a great influence on future generations of officers. In his book *The War Managers*, General Douglas Kinnard polled the 173 Army generals who commanded in Vietnam. Eighty-nine percent of them expressed negative feelings toward the printed press and even more—91 percent—were negative about TV news coverage. Despite those findings, Kinnard concluded that the importance of the press in swaying public opinion was largely a myth. That myth was important for the Government to perpetuate, so officials could insist that it was not the real situation in Vietnam against which the American people reacted, but rather the press's portrayal of that situation.

#### **Getting History Right**

Margaret MacMillan is a distinguished professor of history at Oxford and the University of Toronto, whose book *Dangerous Games: The Uses and Abuses of History* has had a great impact this summer. The author explores the many ways in which history—its value and dangers—affects us all. She claims the manipulation of history is increasingly pervasive

in today's world: "Sometimes we abuse history," she writes, "creating one-sided or false histories to justify treating others badly. . . . There are also many lessons and much advice offered by history. . . . The past can be used for almost anything you want to do in the present. We abuse it when we create lies about the past or write histories that show only one perspective."

Why are we still concerned about the truth of Tet over 40 years ago? Winston Churchill understood the lessons of history when he wrote, "The longer you look back, the farther you can look forward."

### **First Amendment**

As a lifelong journalist I believe strongly in the First Amendment, but realize it was not because the Founding Fathers admired the press. It was because they understood the problem of unbridled power. They shielded the press, not because they thought journalists were saints, but because they knew it would take unbridled sinners to curb the grandest sinners of them all—the politicians and generals.

### **Did the Press Get Tet Right?**

My hero A.J. Liebling, the Bard of Baltimore, had it right when he said, "The press is the weak slat under the bed of democracy." Did we make mistakes or miscalculations in covering Tet? Of course. Unfortunately we have as many . . . in our ranks as does the Army or other institutions you might examine. And throughout the war, television never lived up to its potential as a tool to educate, inform, or inspire its viewers.

Andrew Kopkind, in *The Nation*, expressed it best: "The intrusive camera could be a metaphor for the eye of America—fixed in Vietnam for a dozen years or more, seeing everything and comprehending nothing." There's an old adage that I think also applies to Tet: When the Government is incoherent, the press is twice as incoherent. Were we fair and diligent in our coverage of Tet? Yes, to the best of our abilities and the resources given to us to cover the Vietnam war.

As a reporter in Vietnam for ABC and later NBC News, I was there to experience Tet 1968 at most of the major battlefields, from Khe Sanh on 30 January to Hue on 25 February, as US Marines secured the southeast gate of the Citadel to end the siege of Hue. But it was at the US Embassy at dawn on 31 January that one of the most important engagements of the war took place and that most fascinated the world.

The Embassy assault would be only a part of the F-100 Special Action Sapper Group's assignment to spearhead the attack on Saigon, backed up by another 11 battalions, totaling about 5,000 troops. There had been little time for rehearsal. What they lacked in planning would be made up for in the intensity, scope, and audacity of the attacks.

The battalion's mission was to gain control of six objectives: the US Embassy, the Presidential Palace, the national broadcasting studios, South Vietnamese Naval Headquarters, Vietnamese Joint General Staff Headquarters at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, and the Philippine Embassy.

## **The Embassy Sappers**

At midnight, heading into the fateful day of 31 January 1968, 15 Viet Cong gathered at a greasy car repair garage at 59 Phan Thanh Gian Street in Saigon. Wearing black pajamas and red arm bands, they were part of the elite 250-strong J-9 Special Action Unit, formerly known as the C-10 Sapper Battalion. They were mostly born near Saigon and were familiar with the streets of the teeming city. Only eight of them were trained sappers, experts in laying and disarming mines and explosive devices. The other seven were clerks and cooks who signed up for the dangerous mission mainly to escape the rigors of life in the jungle. They would be helped by four other Vietnamese, civilian employees at the US Embassy, including one of Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker's chauffeurs. Nguyen Van Giang, known as Captain Ba Den, the commanding officer of the J-9 unit, was designated to help lead the mission.

On the morning before the attack, Ba Den had met with the ambassador's chauffeur, Nguyen Van De, who drove Ba Den in an American station wagon past the Embassy, revealing that it would be the secret target of the Tet attack. Learning the identity of the target, Captain Ba Den was overwhelmed by the realization that he would probably not survive the next day. Pondering his likely death—and since it was the eve of Tet—Ba Den had a few Ba Muoi Bau beers at the Saigon Market and bought a string of firecrackers as he had done for every Tet celebration since he was a child. Ba Den then wandered down Tran Qui Cap Street, looking for the house where he had lived with his wife and children 6 years earlier. Later that night, he joined the other attackers at the garage on Phan Thanh Gian Street. Senior Captain Bay Tuyen briefed them on their mission and handed out weapons. The sappers were told to kill anyone who resisted, but to take as prisoner anyone who surrendered. Ominously, they were not given an escape route.

## **The US Embassy**

Of all the targets, the overriding importance of the US Embassy could not be overstated. The \$2.6 million compound had been completed just 3 months earlier, and its six-story chancery building loomed over Saigon like an impregnable fortress. It was a constant reminder of the American presence, prestige and power. Never mind that Nha Trang, My Tho, Ban Me Thout, or Bien Hoa would also be attacked that morning. Most Americans couldn't pronounce their names, let alone comprehend their importance. But the US Embassy in Saigon? For many Americans, this would be the first battle of the Vietnam war they understood.

At 2:45 a.m. the sappers wheeled up to the front gate of the US Embassy and opened fire with AK-47 machineguns and a B-40 rocket-propelled grenade launcher. Just minutes later, at about 3:00 a.m., chief US Embassy spokesman Barry Zorthian phoned news bureaus from his home a few blocks away to alert them. Zorthian had few details, but he told us what he knew: The Embassy was being attacked and was under heavy fire.

ABC News Bureau Chief Dick Rosenbaum called me after Zorthian had phoned him. The ABC bureau, located at the Caravelle Hotel, was only 4 blocks from the Embassy. As

it turned out, cameraman Peter Leydon and I were in Saigon because of what we thought had been a stroke of bad luck at Khe Sanh the day before. For months any journalist with decent sources was expecting something big at Tet. The ABC bureau and other news agencies were on full alert, R&Rs were canceled, and I had celebrated Christmas with my family in nearby Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on 1 December so I could be in Vietnam, ready for the big enemy push when it came.

### **Lieutenant General Weyand Briefs the Press**

Plenty of captured enemy documents circulating in the months before Tet indicated something big was afoot. One of the most respected and credible military sources at the time was Lieutenant General Frederick C. Weyand, commander of American forces in III Corps, the area around Saigon. In the weeks prior to Tet, General Weyand told many journalists what he was telling General William C. Westmoreland: “The VC [Viet Cong] are maneuvering in large units with reinforcements of North Vietnamese and new weapons. Enemy documents and prisoners indicate that a major Communist offensive is coming soon, probably against Saigon.” There were strict rules against reporting US troop movements, but Weyand told us, off the record, that he was shifting 30 American battalions into better defensive positions around Saigon.

### **Intelligence Not Understood**

In the weeks before Tet, the various civilian and military intelligence agencies, both American and South Vietnamese, knew most of the facts about the enemy, but didn’t understand their significance. Because of hostility and rivalry between the agencies, they rarely shared or compared intelligence and were never able to assemble it into a cohesive mosaic. They knew through an avalanche of captured documents the enemy’s intentions for 1968, but they did not know their capabilities.

### **New Year’s Eve Predictions**

In the New Year’s Eve roundup of ABC News TV correspondents around the world, I predicted heavy fighting in Vietnam in the new year. “Documents captured at Dak To recently indicate the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong are now entering what they call the ‘sprint phase of the revolution,’” I said. “Intensification of the fighting seems the intent here of both sides as 1968 begins. Don North, ABC News, Vietnam.”

It was to be the Year of the Monkey: 1968—a year in which we all experienced more history than we could digest. The week before Tet had been strangely quiet. With nothing else to do, I took a camera crew over to the Phu Tho racetrack in Cholon to produce a news feature on the “crookedest horse race in the world.” Widespread drugging of the horses produced some weird results, and often a lame horse could enter the winner’s circle if it could still stand up by the end of the race. A week later, the Phu Tho racetrack was used as a staging center and resupply base for the VC during the Tet Offensive.

Even on that quiet Sunday afternoon it was likely the VC had been infiltrating Saigon and the racetrack—chances are that the heavy better in line with me at the parimutuel window that afternoon was an NVA [North Vietnamese Army] colonel. Arriving back at the

ABC bureau I was dispatched immediately to the airport for a flight to Khe Sanh, which was where General Westmoreland was expecting the main thrust of an enemy strike during Tet.

### **Khe Sahn**

In Khe Sanh on 30 January, ABC News cameraman Peter Leydon and I came under a heavy barrage of NVA artillery fire. When we dived into a trench, the lens of our 16-mm film camera broke off, forcing us to cut short our stay in Khe Sanh. We returned to Saigon on the C-130 “milk run” that evening. Because of the broken camera, we thought we would be missing the enemy Tet Offensive. But flying the length of Vietnam that night, it seemed like the whole country was under attack. As we took off from the Da Nang air base, we saw incoming rockets. Flying over Nha Trang shortly after midnight, we could see fires blazing. We heard about the attacks through radio contact with ground control.

### **Saigon Under Seige**

But at 3:30 a.m. on 31 January we were back in Saigon, wheeling out of the Caravelle Hotel in the ABC News jeep with a new camera. Just off Tu Do Street, 3 blocks from the Embassy, somebody—VC, ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam], police, or US MPs, we weren't sure who—opened up on us with an automatic weapon. A couple of rounds pinged off the hood of the jeep. I killed the lights and reversed out of range. We returned to the ABC bureau to wait for first light.

As dawn was breaking around 6 a.m., we walked the 3 blocks to the Embassy. As we approached the compound, we could hear heavy firing, and green and red tracers cut into the pink sky. Near the Embassy, I joined a group of US MPs moving toward the Embassy's front gate. I started my tape recorder for ABC radio as the MPs loudly cursed the ARVN troops who were supposed to provide Embassy security.

The MPs claimed the ARVN had “D-Dee'd” (slang for running away under fire) after the first shots. Green-colored VC tracer bullets were coming from the Embassy compound and the upper floor of buildings across the street. Red tracers stitched back across the street. We were in the cross-fire. Crawling up to the gate with me was Peter Arnett of the Associated Press (AP), who was glad to have the company of another journalist who wasn't competing with the AP. Peter had been covering the war for more than 5 years and had picked up a Pulitzer Prize for his reporting. Arnett was a prolific, competitive, and fair journalist, often filing more than a dozen stories for the AP every week. I believe his 8 years of daily reporting from Vietnam are without par in the annals of war correspondence.

Lying flat in the gutter that morning with the MPs, Arnett and I were not sure where the VC attackers were holed up or where the fire was coming from. But we knew it was the big story. Arnett and other AP staffers had been the first to alert the world of the attack on the US Embassy. At 3:15 the first bulletin had gone out a full 40 minutes ahead of competitor United Press International (UPI). “First Lead Attack: Saigon (AP) The Viet Cong shelled Saigon Wednesday in a bold follow up of their attacks on eight major cities around the country.”



Several MPs rushed by, one of them carrying a wounded VC sapper piggyback style. He wore black pajamas, a red arm band and, strangely, an enormous red ruby ring. He was Nguyen Van Sau from a village near ChiChi. I interviewed the MPs and recorded their radio conversation with colleagues inside the Embassy gates. The MPs believed the VC were in the chancery building itself, an impression that later proved false. Peter Arnett crawled off to find a phone and report the MPs' conversation to his office. At 7:25, based on Arnett's calls from the scene, the AP transmitted the first report that the VC were inside the Embassy. "Bulletin: Vietnam (Tops 161) Saigon (AP) The Viet Cong attacked Saigon Wednesday and seized part of the US Embassy. US Military Police on the scene said it was believed about 20 Viet Cong suicide commandos were in the Embassy and held part of the first floor of the Embassy building." The question of whether the VC were in the chancery building or only in the compound took on symbolic importance. I have replayed the tape of that day in 1968, and there is no doubt the MPs believed the VC were in the chancery.

A helicopter landed on the Embassy roof, and troops started working down the floors. MP Dave Lamborn got orders on the field radio from an officer inside the compound: "This is Waco, roger. Can you get in the gate now? Take a force in there and clean out the Embassy, like now. There will be choppers on the roof and troops working down. Be careful we don't hit our own people. Over."

As we prepared to join the MPs rushing the gate, I had other concerns. "OK, how much film have we got left?" I shouted to cameraman Peter Leydon.

"I've got one mag [400 feet]," he replied. "How many do you have?"

"We're on the biggest story of the war with one can of film," I groaned. "So it's one take of everything, including my standupper." There was no time to argue about whose responsibility it was to have brought more film.

I stepped over the United States seal, which had been blasted off the Embassy wall near a side entrance. We rushed through the main gate into the garden, where a bloody battle had been raging. It was, as UPI's Kate Webb later described, "like a butcher shop in Eden."

As helicopters continued to land troops on the roof, we hunkered down on the grass with a group of MPs. They were firing into a small villa on the Embassy grounds where they said the VC were making a last stand. Tear gas canisters were blasted through the windows, but the gas drifted back through the garden. Colonel George Jacobson, the US mission coordinator, lived in the villa, and he suddenly appeared at a window on the second floor.

An MP threw him a gas mask and a .45 pistol. Three VC were believed to be on the first floor and would likely be driven upstairs by the tear gas. It was high drama, but our ABC News camera rolled film on it sparingly.

I continued to describe everything I saw into a tape recorder, often choking on the tear gas. I could read the Embassy ID card in the wallet of Nguyen Van De, whose bloody body was sprawled beside me on the lawn. Nguyen was later identified as an Embassy driver who often chauffeured the American ambassador and who had been a driver for 16 years. The MPs told me Nguyen Van De had shot at them during the early fighting and was probably the inside man for the attackers.

Amid the tension, I was distracted by a big frog hopping and splashing through pools of thick blood on the lawn. It was one of those images that never gets properly filed away and keeps coming back at odd times. A long burst of automatic-weapons fire snapped me back to reality. The last VC still in action rushed up the stairs firing blindly at Colonel Jacobson, but he missed. The colonel later told me: “We both saw each other at the same time. He missed me, and I fired one shot at him point-blank with the .45.” Jacobson later admitted that his Saigon girlfriend had been with him at the time and witnessed the entire drama from beneath the sheets of their bed.

The death toll from the battle was five American soldiers killed. Of the 15 sappers, 12 killed, 3 wounded. Two Embassy employees were found dead and armed and believed to be VC agents. Two other unarmed Vietnamese Embassy employees were killed. The three surviving sappers were later questioned and turned over to the ARVN and were not heard of again during the war.

### **The Closing Standupper**

On the last 30 feet of film I recorded my closing remarks in the Embassy garden:

Since the lunar New Year, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese have proved they are capable of bold and impressive military moves that Americans here never dreamed could be achieved. Whether they can sustain this onslaught for long remains to be seen. But whatever turn the war now takes, the capture of the US Embassy here for almost 6 hours is a psychological victory that will rally and inspire the Viet Cong. Don North, ABC News, Saigon.

A rush to judgment before all pieces of the puzzle were in place? Perhaps. But there was no time to appoint a committee to study the story. I was on an hourly deadline, and ABC expected the story as well as some perspective even in those early hours of the offensive—a first rough draft of history.

My on-the-scene analysis never made it on ABC News. Nervous suits at ABC headquarters had become censors when they thought correspondents in the field were not in tune with the White House spin on the war. Worried about editorializing by a correspondent on a sensitive story, a producer at ABC headquarters in New York killed the on-camera closer.

The film from all three networks took off from Saigon on a special military flight about noon. When it arrived in Tokyo for processing, it caused a mad, competitive scramble to get a cut film story on satellite for the 7 p.m. (EST) news programs in the States. Because we had only 400 feet to process and cut, ABC News made the satellite in time, and the story led the ABC-TV evening news. NBC and CBS missed the deadline and had to run catch-up specials on the Embassy attack later in the evening.

### **Westmoreland’s Spin**

At 9:15 a.m. in Saigon, the Embassy was officially declared secure. At 9:20, General Westmoreland strode through the gate, flanked by grimy and bloody MPs and Marines who had been fighting since 3 a.m. Standing in the rubble, in starched fatigues and shiny jungle

boots, Westmoreland declared: “No enemy got in the Embassy building. It’s a relatively small incident. Group of sappers blew a hole in the wall and crawled in, and they were all killed. Nineteen bodies have been found on the premises—enemy bodies. Don’t be deceived by this incident.”

I couldn’t believe it. “Westy” was still saying everything was just fine. His words were broadcast without comment from me following several minutes of the carnage we had filmed in the Embassy compound. Viewers asked later if he was talking about the same incident they had seen on their living room screens. He said the Tet attacks throughout the country were “very deceitfully” calculated to create maximum consternation in Vietnam and that they were “diversionary” to the main enemy effort still to come at Khe Sanh.

### **Mendacity of the Press**

Following General Westmoreland’s statement, a curtain of silence and secrecy descended over the US Embassy story. Interviews with any of the surviving MPs or US Marine guards were denied. Vietnam reporters were accused of “mendacity” in not emphasizing the heroism and military proficiency of the guards in overcoming a larger force of attackers at a poorly protected Embassy with only small arms. Questions on Viet Cong penetration of the Embassy staff were deferred until an investigation could be carried out. The State Department investigation to my knowledge has not, to this day, been declassified. Following interrogations of the three captured attackers, the garage at 59 Phan Thanh Gian Street, where the attackers had assembled, was raided and a dozen Viet Cong suspects arrested. The press was not told of the raid as the existence of three wounded sappers in custody had not been acknowledged. Although many of the journalists at the Embassy during the attack witnessed the three sappers being led away by US MPs, General Westmoreland’s assertion that “all 19 of the sappers were killed and their bodies found in the Embassy compound” would not be corrected. Today in reviewing Internet reports of the Tet Embassy attack, about 90 percent of them persist in reporting there were 19 attacking sappers who were all killed. Over 100 pages of the US Army interrogation reports from the three captured sappers, held in Con Dao prison in the Mekong Delta, were not declassified until July 2002.

Security considerations are important in wartime, but following the US Embassy attack at Tet the information withheld was denied the American public, not the Viet Cong who were well aware of the facts.

### **Don, Who Are You Going to Believe?**

Late that night after our last stories had been filed and over a few beers at the bar, we joked about Westy’s denial of surviving Viet Cong attackers. “Don, who are you going to believe? Me or your lying eyes?” Most journalists in Vietnam at that time respected Westmoreland—he often generously gave long interviews, which would invariably explain the success of his command. But an incident about 6 months prior to Tet left questions in my mind concerning the commanding general’s understanding of the role of the media in wartime.

## Westy's Memo

A memo signed by Westmoreland was delivered to the ABC News Bureau and to most other agencies in mid-1967 suggesting that news reports of ineffective Vietnamese troops were not helping the war effort. "If you give a dog a bad name, he will live up to it," Westmoreland suggested, recommending that more positive reporting be done on our Vietnamese allies. Most of us had been with crack South Vietnamese Airborne or Marine units and had described them accordingly. We thought the ARVN 1st and 21st Divisions were effective, but we considered the 2d, 5th, and 18th Divisions slacker units, plagued with high desertion rates and questionable commanders who rarely moved aggressively out of their base camps. Westmoreland's ill-advised memo was largely ignored by Saigon journalists. In fact, the MACV chief of information, Major General Winant Sidle, and Embassy spokesman Barry Zorthian had strongly urged Westmoreland not to issue the memo. A television report on an ARVN unit doing nothing doesn't make great news.

Even after Westmoreland's pronouncement that the chancery had not been breached, Peter Arnett and the AP seemed heavily committed to their earlier lead and continued to quote the MPs and others at the Embassy who believed the sappers had penetrated the first floor. As Arnett would explain later, "We had little faith in what General Westmoreland stated, and often in the field we had reason to be extremely careful in accepting the general's assessments of the course of a particular battle." Much of the later criticism of the press for its handling of the Embassy story fell on Arnett for supposedly exaggerating the VC action with his report from the MPs. But a report is only as good as its sources, and the MPs' fears and warnings were trusted more than Westy's briefing.

We often found "grunts" in the field more reliable and accurate about the course of the war than senior commanders and certainly many of the self-serving pronouncements from the "Five O'clock Follies." Most of us were careful about our sources, certainly to back up attempts at analysis. Unidentified sources were frowned on by our editors in New York and even if "senior US Diplomats" were cited as the source, we had better at least let the news desk know who it actually was. Often some of the most important and critical stories of the Tet Offensive came from US military sources . . . as I will relate in a moment.

## Westy at the Follies

Later, at the MACV press briefing, the so-called "Five O'clock Follies," Westmoreland appeared in person to emphasize the huge enemy body counts as US and ARVN forces repelled the Tet Offensive. But MACV had been caught manipulating enemy casualty figures before, and many reporters were skeptical. To add to Westy's growing credibility gap, it was also reported at his press briefing that the city of Hue, in the northern part of South Vietnam, had been cleared of enemy troops. That false report had to be retracted, as the enemy held parts of Hue for the next 24 days.

## Bunker's Spin

Not to be outdone by Westy's vigorous spin control of the Tet story, Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker called a "background" briefing for select reporters at the Embassy 3

days after the attack. “Our reports from around the country indicate the South Vietnamese people are outraged by the deceitful Viet Cong violation of the sacred Tet Holiday,” Bunker said, identified only as a “senior American diplomat.” He added, “No important objectives have been held by the enemy and there was no significant popular support.”

The Ambassador ignored the fact that Hue was still under enemy control and, in Saigon, residents had not sounded the alarm while over 5,000 VC and NVA troops infiltrated the city. In later interviews with Saigon residents with my Vietnamese camera crew, I found none who thought the VC had been particularly deceitful in breaking the Tet truce to gain the element of surprise. Many were, however, alarmed at how vigorously US and ARVN firepower had been directed against VC targets in heavily populated urban centers of Saigon, My Tho, Can Tho, and Ben Tre—attacks that killed and wounded thousands of Vietnamese civilians and created a million refugees.

### **Spiked by My Own Network**

My TV and radio report on those interviews was titled “U.S. Mission, More Out Of Touch With Vietnamese than Ever.” But it never made it on the ABC-TV evening news. It was logged arriving in New York, but was never edited and scheduled for broadcast and was later reported lost. It was, however, broadcast as an “Information Report” on the ABC Radio News Network, which tended to be more open to critical stories from the staff in Vietnam. Again, I had been censured by someone at my own network for presumably appearing out of step with the prevailing winds from the White House.

### **Tet Interviews I Wish I Had Done**

Tet demolished the carefully planned US pronouncements of progress in the war. Even though Tet was a time of travel for Vietnamese returning home for the holidays, it was obvious 5,000 Viet Cong insurgents could not have infiltrated Saigon without the consent of a large number of its inhabitants. In areas of the Delta where US officials told us 67 percent of hamlets were secure in government hands, we pointed out that the attackers did not parachute into the cities, but had advanced through the 67 percent so-called secure hamlets to reach their objectives.

Often history does not reveal itself for years after the event. This was true of Tet. In his excellent book *The Vietnamese War*, Professor David Elliott has a chapter “Tet: The Untold Story.” Elliot spoke Vietnamese and conducted a study in the Delta for the Rand Corporation. “How then, did these battered units manage to pull off the totally unexpected feat of penetrating and occupying part of My Tho city?” It went completely unnoticed at the time, and even decades later is still largely ignored. Unlike Saigon and other cities where a “General uprising was called for but never materialized, nearly the entire rural population was immediately and effectively mobilized in support of the offensive. Taxes were now paid in advance. Civilian laborers who had evaded the cadres before performed hazardous duties. Young men who had escaped the draft now signed up in large numbers. In short, a rural uprising did take place in My Tho,” writes David Elliott.

## Colonel Edward Lansdale

The enigmatic Edward Lansdale who was back in Saigon in a vague advisory job in 1968 is later quoted in his biography “The Unquiet American,” as saying, “We lost the war at the Tet Offensive.” Lansdale said American commanders’ judgment in discriminating between friend and foe, never a very highly developed skill, was totally lost at Tet. “We are a technical nation and we love our equipment,” Lansdale observed.

American commanders relied on artillery to keep the enemy soldiers at a distance and punish them. Their first thought was to radio for artillery support, instead of sending troops forward against enemy fire to overrun an enemy position. Those fire missions killed not only foe, but huddled civilians. Hundreds of Vietnamese now hate Americans and are afraid of them.

Lansdale reported the enemy attacks had destroyed all faith in the effectiveness of the Saigon Government, pushed popular morale dangerously low, and left the countryside vulnerable to further VC exploitation.

In a meeting with Ambassador Bunker and General Westmoreland a few days after Tet, Lansdale is reported to have shouted violently at Westmoreland: “You are doing it wrong.” Lansdale’s biographer, Cecil Currey, said the memories of faulty tactics by the Americans at Tet remained with him the rest of his life.

## US Official Reports Versus the Media

We now know our press reports at Tet were rarely as pessimistic as official US Government sources like the Rand report or from the desk of General Lansdale, a US Embassy adviser. And certainly not as critical as dispatches from the CIA or as we learned from General Earle Wheeler, Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman as published in the Pentagon Papers. “The enemy is operating with relative freedom in the countryside. ARVN is in a defensive posture. The Pacification program has suffered a severe setback. The initial attack nearly succeeded in a dozen places,” etc.

## Tet: A US Military Victory

After the last enemy troops were rooted out of Hue, the US Government could finally declare that the Tet Offensive was indeed a clear-cut American military victory. Westmoreland would claim that 37,000 of the enemy had died, with US dead at 2,500. It was obvious, however, that the enemy operations had dealt Washington a decisive psychological blow. Somehow, more than 70,000 VC, backed by regular units of the NVA, had been able to coordinate a nationwide offensive with attacks on 36 provincial capitals and 64 district towns.

The political consequences of Tet were made worse by the cheery public-relations campaigns that had preceded the offensive. Although some senior US commanders, like General Weyand, warned of a coming offensive against Saigon and had repositioned some US forces, Westmoreland had been determined to keep up a happy face. In November



1968, General Westmoreland admitted to me and a small group of journalists “off the record” that he considered his failure to share his intelligence with the news corps prior to the attacks “a great mistake.”

Just days before Tet, President Johnson gave a State of the Union address in which he avoided telling the American people what his military advisers were telling him—that there would be a large enemy offensive. The official optimism would double the shock felt by American citizens about Tet. In the offensive’s wake, US strategy was subjected to a new and critical reexamination.

There were stunning political consequences, too. On 31 March, President Johnson announced that he would not run again. In the following week, polls showed a drop-off in public support for the war. Soon, policymakers in Washington were hedging their bets and voicing more discontent about the war. Following that official shift, TV news correspondents were given more time for war criticism. Contrary to what some critics of the media believed, it was not that TV editors had suddenly become opponents of the war. Rather, their Washington sources had decided to shift toward opposition and that change was simply reflected in the reporting. TV news followed the change—it did not lead it.

Ten years later, I produced a TV documentary on the Tet Offensive, one of 26 programs in the series “The Ten Thousand Day War.” General Westmoreland was still bad-mouthing the media for the events of that morning. “This was the turning point of the war,” he told me. “It could have been the turning point for success, but it was the turning point for failure. By virtue of the early reporting . . . which was gloom and doom and which gave the impression that Americans were being defeated on the battlefield. It swayed public opinion to the point political authority made the decision to withdraw.” In a lengthy critique of the press, Westmoreland made it clear we were his worst enemy.

At one time we had 700 accredited reporters, all practicing, seeking and reporting news as they were accustomed to in the United States, all looking for sensational stories. If we continue the practice of reporting only the off-beat, the unusual or the bizarre in any future war, the American public are going to be influenced as they were during Vietnam. I think the bottom line on this subject is how an open society, and how our political democracy are vulnerable to manipulation by an autocratic flow of society.

Westmoreland not only failed to understand journalism in our society, but he also failed the lessons of history. Even grave defeats have been perceived as victories of the spirit when clear-cut goals—and shortcomings—are shared with the public. But there was little to inspire confidence in the nation about the military’s claims of victory at Tet. Tet should have taught a hard lesson to American leaders: responsible leadership in wartime will recognize problems clearly and publicize events that are likely to have a serious impact on the nation. Public relations spinning only makes matters worse. But American leaders extracted a different lesson: the need to control images coming from the battlefield. The bad rap the press got in the wake of Tet stuck and became the rationale for the military’s hostility toward the press. The fallout is still with us.

## Cronkite's Sources

A final note on sources. Most journalists in Vietnam considered themselves reporters and not analysts. Sure we liked to share our opinions when asked, but the occasions were rare. US network anchors, like the majority of Americans, backed the US war effort. Walter Cronkite of CBS visited Vietnam in 1965 and said he was “impressed with our effort” so much that he was embarrassed by the “rude challenges” of young reporters at the “Five O’clock Follies.” Chet Huntley of NBC, widely considered a hawk, insisted in February 1966 that “there is no alternative in Vietnam to fighting it out.” On my own ABC News, the co-anchor Howard K. Smith, defended the administration’s Vietnam policies in speeches on college campuses and in a July 1966 broadcast said, “It is entirely good what we’re doing in Vietnam.” At the White House, President Johnson blamed Vietnam-based reporters, rather than the harsh realities of the war, for bleak news from Vietnam.

Viewing the film showing the attack on the US Embassy, Walter Cronkite said, “What the hell is going on? I thought we were winning the war.” Cronkite spent a week in Vietnam and was in Hue while the fighting went on. He offered his conclusions in a remarkable half-hour special broadcast on 27 February. Once a supporter of the US war effort, Cronkite returned from Vietnam doubtful that victory was possible. Cronkite found that even though they suffered staggering casualties and had relinquished practically all the territory they had seized, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong had succeeded in destroying the illusion of security in the cities and setting back pacification in the countryside. The solution Cronkite endorsed was disengagement and negotiation, “not as victors but as honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy and did the best they could.” His commentary was a shocker that stunned Americans, a different Cronkite who until that time had scrupulously avoided expressing any personal opinions on the air.

The question arose, “Was there a single defining event influencing him or was it the sum total of what he had seen on his Vietnam tour?” Former CBS Vietnam correspondent Murray Fromson wrote on the occasion of Walter Cronkite’s death that an important source for Cronkite’s report was, surprisingly, a senior US general. Cronkite’s producer, Ernie Leiser, before he died in 2002, revealed that the last night in Saigon they had dinner with an officer he respected who had been a friend of Walter’s during World War II. After a few drinks before dinner the General said, “Walter, we cannot win this Goddamned war, and we ought to find a dignified way out.” Walter’s source for that famous commentary was his old friend General Creighton Abrams, soon to replace Westmoreland as the Commander in Vietnam. The late Walter Cronkite was a fair but troubled critic of the war. It was an example to all of us in the field to know he had the courage to risk his reputation when he could have remained silent.

## Old Truth

The Tet Offensive also reaffirmed a truth about counterinsurgency wars: “Guerrillas win if they don’t lose. A conventional army loses if it does not win.” Vietnam was first and foremost a political struggle, as the North Vietnamese understood far better than the Americans. Colonel Harry Summers, a war historian and founder of *Vietnam Magazine*

recounts telling a North Vietnamese Army officer in Hanoi after the war, “You know Colonel, you never beat us on the battlefield.” The North Vietnamese officer pondered a moment and then replied, “That may be so, but it’s also irrelevant, isn’t it?”

The psychological impact of the 1968 Tet Offensive and the aura it bestowed on the Communist forces were seen 7 years later as contributing factors in South Vietnam’s eventual collapse. In 1975, a minor setback in a battle near Ban Me Thout escalated into ARVN’s panicked retreat and the fall of Saigon a few weeks later.

Tet also should have taught a hard lesson to American leaders: responsible leadership in wartime will recognize problems clearly and publicize events that are likely to have a serious psychological impact on the nation. PR [Public Relations] spinning only makes matters worse. But American leaders extracted a different lesson: the need to control images coming from the battlefield. The bad rap the press got in the wake of Tet 1968 stuck and became the rationale for the military’s hostility toward—and desire to manipulate—the press, tendencies that continue to this day.

### **Declassified Interrogation Reports**

The three captured sappers disappeared into the Saigon prison system, including Captain Ba Den, who later under interrogation described both the attack planning and how he spent what he had presumed would be his last evening alive. As revealed in the interrogation reports and the after-action reports of VC officers, such as General Tran Do, it is now clear that the Embassy attack was badly planned and carried out by poorly trained Viet Cong troops. Washington military analyst Anthony Cordesman has written, “One way to achieve decisive surprise in warfare is to do something truly stupid.” Yet, in this case, the “truly stupid” changed the course of the war. Those soldiers or journalists who apply the criteria of conventional warfare insist that Tet was a disaster for the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong. Those who concentrate on the political and psychological dimensions of insurgency warfare make very different judgments.

Why the Tet Offensive became a dramatic turning point was explained recently by military analyst Steven Metz, of the Institute for Strategic Studies, who said: “The essence of any insurgency is the psychological. It is armed theatre. You have protagonists on the stage, but they are sending messages to wider audiences. Insurgency is not won by killing insurgents, not won by seizing territory; it is won by altering the psychological factors that are most relevant.”

### **Pham Xuan An**

A fascinating sidebar to the Tet story concerns the Communists top spy in Saigon, who was also the most respected Vietnamese journalist to many Western news agencies. Pham Xuan An worked for *Time Magazine* and I knew him as a valuable source. In two recent biographies, it is revealed An was the key agent in choosing the Tet targets in Saigon, including the US Embassy. An’s role as a spy had nothing to do with spreading disinformation in the Western press. He didn’t create the analysis that Tet was a psychological victory. Tet was a psychological victory. It proved that no Western position from the Embassy on

down was secure from attack. An's job was to report to North Vietnamese intelligence and General Giap on this Western analysis and convince them of its importance. Hanoi was focused on the number of dead soldiers heaped around South Vietnamese targets. An was focused on Western anxiety and loss of certitude. President Johnson bowed out, Westmoreland got fired, and the United States headed to the negotiating table in Paris. An's job as a spy was to translate Western tactics and strategy into Vietnamese intelligence, which he did brilliantly.

## **Last Survivor**

Several decades after the Tet battle—long after the Vietnam war was over—I received a call from “Stan,” a Vietnam veteran who had become a resident businessman near Saigon, which had been renamed Ho Chi Minh City: “Don, would you like to meet Nguyen Van Sau, the last surviving sapper of the Embassy attack.” In the gutter in front of the US Embassy, I had lain next to Nguyen Van Sau in the street as US Marines and MPs exchanged fire with the attackers. Sau had been one of the first VC through the hole blown in the Embassy's wall and was immediately wounded. Stan said Sau had spent the rest of the war with the other survivors from the Embassy attack in the infamous French-built prison on Con Dao Island. He was released in 1975 and returned to his village north of Saigon. Within a month of Stan's phone call, I had flown back to Vietnam in pursuit of the interview. However, over a serving of spring rolls, Stan passed on some bad news: “Sorry, Don, Sau died just 2 weeks ago.”

Time has taken its toll in other ways, too. The imposing US Embassy that withstood the attack 40 years ago was torn down by the Vietnamese shortly following the war's end. A modest US consulate has since taken its place. A small marker in the consulate's garden, closed to the public, lists the names of the American Marines and MPs who died there. Outside the consulate gates is a gray-and-red marble monument engraved with the names of the Viet Cong soldiers and agents who also died. As I again visited the scene of this unique military encounter, I imagined two of the soldiers who fought and died there—Private First Class Bill Sebast and Nguyen Van Giang—returning to the Saigon of today and marveling at what has happened over the past 40 years. What would they think about Vietnam's economic progress? about the close relationship that now exists between the two former enemy countries? the political futility of their sacrifice? And what would they see as the meaning of that war, which pitted them on opposite sides of the Embassy wall so many years ago?



## **PANEL 3—THE Vietnam WAR**

### **Questions and Answers**

(Transcript of Presentation)

**William M. Hammond, Ph.D.**

**Mr. Donald North**

**Moderated by Lieutenant Colonel Scott Farquhar**

#### **Audience Member**

What do you think of the efforts of the US military to communicate with the local and national media from Vietnam and various organizations right now in Iraq?

#### **Mr. North**

Your question is how does the military in Iraq, in setting up or working with the Iraq Media Network, compare with what they did in Vietnam? Well, I would say that they certainly dropped the ball in Iraq. There was a marvelous opportunity to resurrect the television and radio network of Saddam Hussein into a democratic and fair news and entertainment network. And instead, Ambassador Bremer made the Iraq Media Network a tool for his agenda. In other words, he made it into a little Voice of America that became irrelevant to the Iraqis and they ignored it completely. And unfortunately, the Iraqis learned very quickly from Americans, and they learned from Ambassador Bremer, when they in turn took over the Iraq Media Network, to make it into their tool for propaganda and their agenda. And after millions of dollars of our taxpayer money and 2 years of Americans managing the Iraq Media Network, the most militant Shia elements in Iraq took over that network and started dispensing anti-American news, false news, and militant anti-Sunni propaganda. I always feel that it was a very sad day and that we lost a great opportunity to give the Iraqis a gift of what we here enjoy—a free and open media. It's finally coming around a little. Commercial television. I've just been back to Iraq a couple of weeks ago training some journalists and I was glad to find that commercial TV and radio is prospering and there's much more openness and freedom. But it seems that the government sponsored and government financed Iraq Network is still a propaganda organ.

#### **Audience Member**

Good afternoon. My name is Bud Nutter and I'm in the Department of Military History. Mr. North, if we could get your opinion, if we could go back to the scene of the dinner between Mr. Cronkite and General Abrams in which General Abrams opined to Mr. Cronkite we couldn't win the war. Could you give us some more context to General Abrams' comment? If you think he was saying you can't win the war because the combination of the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong is too strong or the entire event is too complicated, fears of, for example, perhaps Chinese intervention, or is it your opinion or your



insights that General Abrams may have been saying that because of constraints placed on the military with respect to the conduct of that war?

**Mr. North**

It's an excellent question, and I intend to follow it up actually. But to give you the exact source and how I came by that story, Murray Fromson was a friend of mine in Vietnam and recently Vietnam war correspondents, we have formed a little group on the Internet called the "Vietnam Old Hacks Group." And my God, we exchange two or three discussions everyday and anything that happens—McNamara dies, there's a hundred e-mails discussing it. When Cronkite died, everybody had a Cronkite story. And my friend, Murray Fromson, who is Professor of Journalism at Stanford now, wrote a two-page letter describing Cronkite's last evening and the quote given to him by General Creighton Abrams that I quoted. In many ways, Cronkite paraphrased and replayed exactly what Abrams had said, but Murray didn't expand on it any further. His source for that story was Ernie Leiser who was Cronkite's producer of that story, who was responsible for writing the script with the input and veto power of Walter. Murray got that story from Leiser in 2002, just a few months before Ernie died. But I intend to follow up with Murray and see if he has any more details of what Leiser told him about that evening.

**Audience Member**

Bill, this is Chuck de Caro. I'm a former CNN specialist and like my older friend, Don, there, we're both friends of Peter Arnett. I served or I reported for Peter in Grenada. I have a point of contention about what you said about my friend, Peter, and I have to—I don't always agree with you, but I have to stick up for a friend. You said that this dislike of the politics of Vietnam led him to do the story—is that what I heard you say?

**Mr. Hammond**

It's my surmise that that's what happened. I was there when they filmed it and they filmed the interviews in the Center. And I saw how they did it and I sat with Peter for 2½ hours and briefed him and told him that his sources were very dubious, that Singlaub had an agenda and he had people to pay back, and God knows what he was using Peter for, but he should be very careful and that we had another historian, Dale Andrade there, who had researched a good piece of this thing and gave them a great interview, none of which was used. It's not Peter, per se, it's April Oliver who did it. But Peter knew better. He was there.

**Audience Member**

I understand. But to hang everything on Peter, I don't think is fair.

**Mr. Hammond**

It's just that I didn't have enough time to really go into it.

**Audience Member**

It's another bigger thing there, the networks, the unification of Time-Warner with CNN. As you recall, everybody fails to recall that *Time Magazine* did a cover story because they wanted to do a cooperative thing between Time-Warner and CNN and *Time* and it was huge. Let me underscore that. Huge management pressure and huge misjudgments by

CNN staff. Leaving Oliver in charge of this and her deputy, whose name escapes me right now.

**Mr. Hammond**

Jack Smith.

**Audience Member**

Peter had a sin in this because he didn't check everything as carefully as he should have. But to blame everything on my friend, Peter, is not . . .

**Mr. Hammond**

No, no, no. It was not that. That was not the thing. But I think he was disposed to believe the worst. I know him, and I've known Peter for years.

**Audience Member**

With respect to the attack on Saigon, it is my opinion that US Army General Fred Weyand had sniffed this thing out some hours before, 24 to 36 hours before ballpark, and had some suspicion that something was amiss and in fact caused much of his forces to be redeployed and pretty well intercepted the attack. What does your source have to say, or sources, have to say about that, about the decision of when?

**Mr. Hammond**

If you look at the December issue of *Army History*, that's the Center's quarterly bulletin. It's on the Center of Military History's Web site. You will see an article in there by me in which there is a couple of pages that look like they're from Weyand's memoirs, that he gave to Barry Zorthian and that Barry Zorthian gave to me. And mine's quite old now. But he permitted us to use it. In these pages he says that he sat down with Walter Cronkite and briefed him on everything they knew before the Tet Offensive. They knew the date, they knew the name of the offensive, and they knew pretty much what was going to happen in Saigon. He had briefed Westmoreland. They had set it all up and had laid the whole thing out. Westmoreland told him to brief Cronkite on the whole deal, which he did at length. At the conclusion, according to his memoirs, Cronkite said to him, "That's all well and good, sir, and I appreciate the briefing and everything, but I probably won't use any of this. I'm going to put an end to this war. I've been up in Khe San, I've been at Hue, I've been in all these places and I've seen all the civilian casualties and I want to end this." That was what he said, and he didn't use anything Weyand gave him and Weyand was naturally a little put off. But that wouldn't mesh very well with what Don is saying. In fact, he may have had a stronger source—Abrams had a lot of weight. Now, I don't know. I haven't seen the Fromson thing, so I can't judge it. But I have seen Weyand's memoirs, and it's in that. I use that in that article and it lays it out. I try to suggest in there that he's not obligated to use that information. He is his own person and if he has another point that he thinks is more important as a journalist, he has every right to write it.

**Mr. North**

General Weyand was really a very frank and open officer. We respected him greatly. Just before Tet, I can remember going down to his headquarters in Can Tho, and he leveled

with us completely. He told us he was going to move 30 battalions closer to Saigon to defend Saigon against what he truly expected was going to happen. Of course, we could not report on future troop movements, but it brought us into the picture and we set our own schedules accordingly. I moved my family out of Saigon to Kuala Lumpur and we knuckled down. Our R&Rs were all canceled, all on General Weyand's briefing and his frankness with us. General Westmoreland, of course, was not as frank, and in November of '68 in Washington with a small group of correspondents, Westmoreland told us that he considered it now a big mistake that he had not leveled with us at that time about what he expected at Tet.

**Lieutenant Colonel Farquhar**

Any other questions? If there are no other questions, gentlemen, I'd like to give you a small gift, a token, from the Combat Studies Institute: *Three Centuries of Service: A Brief History of Fort Leavenworth*. A big hand for these gentlemen please.

## DAY 2—FEATURED SPEAKER

**Mr. John Burns**  
*New York Times*

(Transcript of Presentation)

Good morning. It's a pleasure to be back here. I was here a couple of years ago as a guest of General Petraeus. On my way here, I was reading or rather rereading a biography of General Patton who spent some time here, as I'm sure you all know, in 1923. And I thought you might be interested to know what he had to say about Leavenworth. He brought his polo ponies and then he discovered that nobody else had any so he brought in a second string of polo ponies so that he could have matches. And here's what he said. "I don't think much of the place." I wonder how much of this will strike any resonance with you. "All the men have a haunted look and all lie heavily about 75 percent claiming to have good marks while having bad and 25 percent claiming to be getting zeroes when they're really at the top. To add to the joys of the prospect, there are three large penitentiaries in view at all times, also a lunatic asylum. Still, as one must go and as many fools have survived it, I suppose I will. Most of the men are fat,"—I don't recognize that, I have to say—"and dressed badly. All of them play golf??? A hell of a game for heroes." Well, I know from my past experience here and the last 12 hours that much of that has changed and changed for the better. I'm pretty sure General Patton would not have been pleased to see the likes of me being invited, least of all to address a distinguished audience such as yourself. I only hope that I won't damage the career of General Caldwell who was a widely admired and popular command spokesman in Iraq.

That falls into the category, as we say in England, "Well, he would say that, wouldn't he?," but it's actually true. He performed that task, which is one of the least rewarding I would think, and probably one of the least sought after general officer's assignments in the US Army, with great candor, fairness, openness, and made our lives—and I speak not just for the *New York Times*, but for many of the journalists in Baghdad at the time—a great deal easier. So I'm grateful to him and I hope that I, as I say, that I don't hold him below the water line by making—how much damage am I doing by saying this, by the way, General?

I feel it's a little bit upside down here. I should be up there and you guys should be down here. It's not the most natural place in the world for journalists to be addressing an audience like this. It's somewhat uncomfortable, especially as I look around the audience and I see so many of you in military uniform and know well that most of you will have done tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. In fact, I have already met one officer here this morning who has done 42 months in Iraq. I know something about that myself having spent a long time there. I know the strain it places on families and you, as I am now, relieved and based in London, which I can't afford. I know that for you it's altogether likely that you will go back there. Last time I was here, I was taken for a visit to the two cemeteries, the large one, the Cemetery of Honor, and then the one I believe overlooking the river where people exited this world after spending time as prisoners, including the German prisoners.

But to speak of the main cemetery, it was extremely moving and is a reminder, going back to I think before the Civil War, of the tremendous price that all of you have to be prepared to pay to defend your country. And I am honored and a little bit awed to be in a position of standing here talking to you today.

We're here to talk about media and war. Ours is not a relationship made in heaven. It's not a marriage. Nothing as fraught as that. But we are tied together in our different roles and the great enterprises that determine the fate of nations, especially of this great nation. We're not enemies, but we're not exactly allies either. We are thrown together. We cannot cover the wars without your support. Indeed, we can't even get to the wars, to the front lines, without embeds, HMMWVs, Black Hawks, MREs, and the brave young men who protect us. On the other hand, you cannot maintain the support you need here at home without our telling your story, and we may hope fairly and comprehensively. There's plenty of potential for grief in this relationship; plenty of potential for it to turn bad. There are officers and soldiers who see us as the enemy within, to be carefully watched and channeled, to be kept away from the hard truths. I know where they come from because my own father was an officer, indeed an officer of general rank in the Royal Air Force, World War II fighter pilot, who stayed on for a 40-year career. To his dying day, he regarded what we journalists do as the devil's work. I think he felt a little bit easier when I washed up on the shores of the *New York Times*, which even he could recognize was a little bit different from the kind of Fleet Street newspapers that made him feel so uncomfortable. He used to say of them—let's see if I can get this right—it was commonly said at the time by people like him: "You believe only half of what you see," meaning the photographs, "and none of what you read." So, he was unreconciled to what I do for a living.

In the US Army, there are people who take a similar view, and indeed, among my colleagues, there's a kind of equal and opposite, and I'm very glad to say minority view, a kind of—if I can put it this way—post-Vietnam, post-Watergate instinct to think that governments and armies, in particular the US Government and Army, are by nature up to no good. That we are appointed unto God or under our editors to keep watch on you and catch you out—prosecutorial journalism. I don't want to dismiss entirely that view. Investigative journalism, watchful journalism, holding public officials and officers and soldiers in the US Army to account is of course a good and essential thing in a democracy. But the attitude I've described is fortunately, I think, a marginal one, a minority one. It's not, at least in my experience, the prevailing attitude among journalists in my generation any more than my father's attitude any longer represents the attitudes that we've come to expect in our dealings with the US Army.

The fact that I am here today speaks, I think, for the fact that we've moved beyond those stereotypes. Although it's also possible, I suppose, that you could regard my presence here as, what I learned to call when I was in China during the cultural revolution, "education by negative example." I first learned that phrase when Lin Biao appointed heir to Mao Tse Tung attempted to overthrow Mao and fled the country in an aircraft, which was short on fuel and crashed in the Mongolian Desert. The bookshelves at the time were filled with the works of Lin Biao. The Chinese, ever practical, you might think would just dump the books in the closest dumpster. But not the Chinese. They simply overnight printed little

wrappers that went on the front of these millions of books, which said, “Sold at half price for education by negative example.” So for good or ill, I hope that what I say to you today will be of some educational value.

The 8 years since 9/11 have been a learning curve for all of us and I think a curve that has trended upward. To speak of my own experiences of that span of time, I went to Afghanistan very shortly after 9/11 and my first experiences with the US Army were not that encouraging just shortly after the Army moved in in force. There was an occasion, I had been up to Anaconda, the Battle of Anaconda, which I’m sure will be familiar to some of you. Indeed, some of you may have actually been there. And come to the conclusion from walking those mountainsides myself that the officially claimed death toll among the Taliban was improbable. I went back to Bagram and said I was—what do you call it? A non-embedded? Somebody’s writing about it. Remind me of the phrase. Unilateral. Thank you very much. Unilateral. In fact, I came closer that day than I have ever done before or since to kissing my backside goodbye. I was at the entrance to the valley in which the battle was fought when a swarm of Apaches came up the Valley and I was in a Land Cruiser with Afghans dressed indistinguishable from Taliban. And at the last moment, the Apaches, three of them, broke their course 45 degrees to the right and headed straight for us and did that ominous thing you see with attack helicopters when the nose goes down. I had just enough time to tell my Afghan companions to spread out, put their hands in the air, which I did too, and wait for the missile we thought, which never came. Two days later I was back at Bagram, and they said, “This chap here would like to talk to you.” He was one of the attack helicopter pilots who said, “You were dead men walking, but we were looking at you, and you didn’t look like a Taliban.” I think it was a reference—I think it was a reference to this, which by the way, might be a good excuse.

I got a question on our war blog the other day, the *New York Times* war blog. A lot of interesting—300 to 400 interesting questions. But question 57 was the one that I liked best. It was, “What’s with the crazy hair?” I haven’t answered that one yet, but I’ll get around to it.

Back at Bagram, I asked—forgive me, he went on to be Commandant at West Point, the general, the commanding general of the 10th Mountain Division? Sorry?—Hagenbeck. During that, it was after a medal ceremony in a hangar, and I asked him about the body count. But before he had a chance to answer, a staff sergeant stepped forward, and he stepped straight out of “Full Metal Jacket.” I’m sure everybody here knows that sequence in “Full Metal Jacket.” He was about this high to me and he had a cap on, which I couldn’t actually see his eyes, and he was addressing me as if I was on a parade route. He was using pretty rich language, the gist of which was, “If you ever ask another question like that of the general,” and this was sprinkled quite liberally with the f-word, he said, “I’m going to shoot your —— head off.” That was the low point and I—you know, I just sort of apologized and pulled back. I never did learn what General Hagenbeck thought of that. That was an exceptional experience. The rest of my experiences have been in a continuing onward and, as I said, upward curve.

We went through a period initially in Iraq of, on the part of the US military in dealing with us, of weariness, and I would say of some illusionism. I think that’s not any longer



in dispute. I don't condemn that. That's not my business to condemn. I think it was an extremely difficult time. US Army, as we know with great help from you folks here at Fort Leavenworth, was on a headlong sprint to revise counterinsurgency warfare strategies and to be dealing with a press that was chronicling the chaos and confusion at the time couldn't have been very easy. But the US Army and I think of this as a deeply embedded feature in the American character, in my experience, the US Army is extraordinarily good at reinventing itself. We can only stand in awe, frankly, of how quickly against the sweep of time the Army did reinvent itself and move from illusionism to realism. As I date that, one of the most significant moments involved your commander here. He won't probably remember this. There had been a long trend toward realism eased by the fact that you guys were learning how to fight the insurgency in Iraq. But things were very fraught still in the fall of 2006 with the approach of the mid-term elections when the command spokesman, then Major General William Caldwell IV—and by the way, I had to fight with the *New York Times* to get the “IV” in. I'm not quite sure why. I think II and III were okay by our style book, but the IV was a bit of a reach—held a news briefing—and he could help me here, I should have looked this up in our archives—in which he used a word, which he told me later he and his staff officers had spent a long time thinking about. I think it was “dispirit-ing.” General, was that the word?

### **General Caldwell**

Disheartening.

### **Mr. Burns**

Disheartening. My editors, I spotted this—and of course you have to put this in the context of the fact that we were at that time probably only 3 weeks away from the mid-terms and led the paper with this. We went back and forth in the kind of passing of exactly what was meant by this. Their conclusion, not wrong as it turned out as some of those involved told me later, was that this was by no chance that this had been said, that the Army wanted a message to go out. Obviously, the command spokesman was not going to get up and say what some officers have said since, which was that there was an apprehension that the war was on the way to being lost. But within the realms of what was possible for a command spokesman to say, it was an extraordinarily candid statement and I would say in the history of that war an iconic moment. Thankfully, my editors spotted it as such and led the paper with it.

My own experiences of dealing with the US military, personal experiences in Iraq, was as far removed from that moment with the staff sergeant at Bagram as they could possibly be. First of all, I was a unilateral in the sense that I was in Baghdad for the last 9 months under Saddam. I've often said since then when people say, “Well, that was a brave thing to be doing, to be writing about how many people Saddam was killing from Baghdad.” Actually, I had a suit of armor on because I was a correspondent of the *New York Times* and he was, as we know now, very keen to avoid war by all means. Thus, among other things, the deliberate obfuscation about weapons of mass destruction. The fact that got lost in the fog of the discussion about weapons of mass destruction is that Saddam wanted us to believe that he did and he had a track record of a very long time as you guys all know,

which lent great credence to the idea that he did have them. Of course, people now say that there was deliberate obfuscation and rewriting of the record on that, for all I know there may have been at some length, it's a big issue in British politics because of the so-called dossier. But that fact, that Saddam was keen to persuade us that he had them has been lost sight of. I experienced it with the weapons inspectors in Iraq, leaving the UN headquarters at 6:00 a.m. and heading off ludicrously first north, then west, then east, then south to try and shake off pursuers. Of course, sooner or later, you have to take a dead reckoning for your target and the moment that that was settled on, you could see the Iraq guys—and we're all traveling at 120 miles an hour down rain-slicked highways—getting on their radios to say, "Okay, the target is" wherever it was. Then we'd arrive at the gates and somebody would be there saying, "Sorry, the general is not here," and you'd see people coming out of the doors of these institutions carrying loads of documents and getting into cars and driving out the back gate. You know, it was not hard from that to conclude that Saddam had something to hide. I mean, this is a little bit irrelevant to the subject we're discussing here, save that I'm not sure the media have done an adequate job in putting that whole issue in context.

In any event, I was a correspondent there and I felt I had a suit of armor. He wasn't going to knock me on the head as long as there was a chance of avoiding war. Because distress for a *New York Times* correspondent is not likely to weigh very heavily, it also means nothing in the calculations of the people in the White House, the Pentagon, and the State Department. So I thought I was safe and I could do what I liked. The Information Minister used to mock me at news conferences, saying, "Ha," when I asked a question, "the bravest man in Iraq." He didn't mean that at all. What he meant was, "It's easy for you now to get up and ask these questions about our murderous president, and you go on doing that until we've decided that we don't have to—we have no reason any longer to protect you. Then we'll see how brave you are." Well, that moment came, and it came when Saddam decided to defy the 72-hour notice of eviction that was given by President Bush. You know, "You and your sons have got to leave." Then it became obvious there was going to be a war. In fact, the war came very quickly, quicker than we thought. It was, I recall, at dawn on 19 March in Baghdad, the airstrike against the Dora Farm complex. We were very exposed. In fact, I assumed they'd come for me, and they did come for me in the middle of the night. It's all kind of B movie stuff. They said they were, it sounds ridiculous now, they were going to take me somewhere from which I would not return. Meaning, Abu Ghraib. The nasty little thug who made this threat, I said to him—part of this was true, much of it was invented—"Your name," I knew this guy. He was an assistant director or something who had been assigned to keep watch on me. I can't remember his name now. It's the name of one of the southern provinces of Iraq. Sunni from the southern provinces. Anyway, doesn't matter. I said, "Your name is known in the United States and it's known personally to President Bush." Invention, of course. "If I disappear, the US military bearing down on Baghdad, they'll come for you and you'll be one of the first to be put in front of a firing squad." Invention. He said, "You're threatening me." I said, "Yeah, I'm threatening you just as you're threatening me." He then scurried away to consult with his superiors, and I told the five thugs who were left that they had probably a few minutes only to decide what they were going to do and that there was a lot of money in the room, a lot of money

in cash, actually hidden in the air conditioning duct. I said, “If you wait for him to come back, that will be his money. If you let me out of the door now, it’s your money.” There was a quick hurried discussion. They walked outside and I ran through the door and down the staircase and out into Baghdad. Frankly, I was pretty frightened. I was on the run for quite a long time, listening to shortwave radio, for the advance of the US forces on Baghdad, and I became deeply invested, as we are not supposed to be, in the success of the US Army. We all should be. Every battle is very personal to me.

Then the 3d ID took the airport. The bad guys all ran away from the hotel. I was hiding very closely to the hotel complex and I decided I could reappear. I think it was on the morning of April the 9th, maybe the 8th. The 3d ID had already arrived in what became known as the Green Zone, the Republican Palace. I was comfortable having had very little opposition, and some of the soldiers had taken their boots off and were sitting on the end of a pier dangling their feet in the water. We could see this from the Palestine Hotel which, those of you who served in Iraq know, is just 800 or 1,000 yards from the Republican Palace. We got our last briefing from the aforementioned information minister, otherwise known as Baghdad Bob. In England, he was known as Comical Ollie. Comical Ollie stood, as I stand now, with the river behind him on a mezzanine roof, telling us that the US Army was in fast retreat, that the American empire was collapsing, and that thousands of US troops had died on the walls of Baghdad. I said to him, “Minister, I think if you turned around and looked over your shoulder, you’ll see that at least some soldiers of the US Army have gotten to the heart of the city. They’re quite visible.” He had Coke bottle specs, he didn’t look over his shoulder, he just looked at me with a sort of withering pity, and he said, “Mr. Fisher”—they called me by my middle name as they often do in the Middle East—“Mr. Fisher,” he said, “I am here to tell you that you are too far from reality.”

In fact, I was too far from his reality. It was kind of a metaphorical, a strong metaphor for where they’ve got themselves to. They have lived for so long in a world where acknowledgment of truth was dangerous that they’d invented their own truth, their own virtual world. So in his virtual world, the 3d ID was not across the river. It was in retreat. I think he somehow—it’s an extraordinary thing, which having lived 25 or 30 years in authoritarian countries, including countries of the left and the right, Communist countries, apartheid in South Africa, the phenomenon that you often see, this ability of people under duress to believe what they want to believe. So that, I got a great attachment for the US Army in that period, and if I had had flowers to throw, I would have been among those who threw them. Not at the Army, I’d have to say, because we were on the east bank of the river, but the Marines when they reached Canal Expressway. I abandoned all pretense of impartiality because the first Marine commander I met asked me for a briefing on how many troops there were, Iraqi troops, between the Canal Expressway and the river. We had walked all the way to the Canal Expressway and the truth was there was nothing. There was nobody there. Now, according to the *New York Times* rules, of course, and by the standard rules of journalism, I should have done no such thing. I should have said, “We’re impartial here. We have to cover the war, we’re not here to aid you.” But I have to say, I was so keen for those Marines to reach the Palestine Hotel and seal the deal on my own behalf as well as Iraq’s.

I was very fortunate in that I was the *New York Times* bureau chief, so I did what all the other reporters did and I spent probably more time than many of them with senior commanders. This also, I think, speaks for how far we've moved in managing this awkward relationship between you and us. All three commanders in my time, Generals Sanchez, Casey, and Petraeus, I was given extraordinary access to. I used to see General Caldwell regularly, as much as once a week in his office, and was given very candid briefings. When I traveled with the generals, I still can hardly believe this. In every case, I was allowed to attend, sometimes these were 2-day trips on Black Hawks. All over the country. I was able to attend almost all, not all, but almost all the meetings, including intelligence briefings. All they ever asked of me was—to use the phrase that General Petraeus used to use when something sensitive would come up—“Take it easy on us here.” This was his standard phrase: “Take it easy on us.” I knew what that meant. By the way, it's not difficult to determine in any given circumstance what's reportable and what's not reportable.

It's probably worthwhile to take a minute here to talk about the “on the record, off the record” issue, which I've always felt is an entirely inadequate measure on the occasions when disputes arise. Our rule, of course, the standing rule is, “Did they say they were off the record?” If they didn't, they're on the record. I've argued for probably not 30 years but certainly 20 years, that that's an entirely inadequate measure. Why? Because by the nature of the circumstances in which disputes arise over this, it's very often the case that the reporter and the soldier, official, general have developed a personal relationship. You travel for 2 days in a Black Hawk together, you've eaten MREs together, you've bunked down together. This generates a kind of climate of trust. So the real question is, to my mind, when you were told this, when this was said, did the people saying it, did the individual saying it have any reasonable expectation that they would end up being quoted in the *New York Times*? Very often the answer to that question is “No, they didn't.” Now, there are circumstances in which the information divulged—very, very few that I can think of—would be of such overwhelming importance. Even then, it's not necessary usually to name the individual concerned. But you can, there are exceptions to every rule. But in my view, it's almost always very clear whether or not it's fair to quote somebody in circumstances like that. I think it's a distinction that's worth pointing out and it might even be worth making this explicit when you deal with reporters and saying, “I can't spend my whole time with you saying, ‘on the record, off the record.’ What I'm going to say to you is that I'm going to trust you.” (You wouldn't do that, of course, unless you'd already made a judgment as to character and professionalism of the individual concerned.) “But you're going to hear and see things that we do not expect to see in the paper or television screen. We're going to trust you. We hope that you'll honor that trust.” That's a big leap to take. You should be aware that there's a great risk involved when you develop that level of trust. You'll enter into a kind of no man's land where the reporter can say, “But you never said it was off the record.”

Well, I don't need to go on too long about this, but I had a very happy relationship with those commanders. I'll give you an example. One of those commanders—I was on a long Black Hawk ride with him at one point and I had a headset on, and he said, looking out of the window on the city below, he said, “I must have been crazy not to have taken that

civilian job.” It could have been said and it probably was said half ironically. I’m pretty sure the commander concerned was not sorry not to have taken the civilian job, but you can imagine how destructive it would have been to have quoted that at a critical stage of the war. It was perfectly, if you apply the test I’ve just suggested, clear that there was no intent for that ever to be quoted. It’s not difficult for the reporter to determine where that moment lies. Is it legit or is it not legit? I’m sorry to go on about this, but I feel very strongly about that point, and I feel that I was dealt with with great respect.

I have to tell you one story because it came up last night. I was waiting at O’Hare after 2½ hours clearing through immigration. I found a wonderful thing at an airport newsstand, which is the \$10 pair of American spectacles. What’s that got to do with my time in Iraq? Toward the end of my time, I went on a trip with General Petraeus, who was on his third tour—come from here as commander. We stopped to refuel in the desert. We got out of the helicopter and I’d been talking to him and taking notes and I had a very expensive pair, daresay 500 pounds worth, of spectacles, and as we ducked under the rotor blades to get in that sort of little area marked by white stones where you stand to wait and the CG, of course, is in his own little circle of white stones 20 yards away. My spectacles were blown off and bounded out into the desert. I went to go and get them and the load master who was standing there gestured saying, “no, no, no,” and ushered me back into the helicopter, ahead of course of General Petraeus, and we took off. As we took off, I said to him, “I just left a 500 pound pair of spectacles down there in the desert.” He said, “What do you mean?” So I told him the story. He gets on that thing and talks to the pilot and says, “Get on to them and tell them to pick up those spectacles and send them to my office.” About a week later, I got a call from General Petraeus’ executive officer who said, “We’ve got your spectacles. Could you send somebody out to pick them up?” They duly arrived, smashed into about 400 pieces of plastic. I can only imagine that somebody had driven a HMMWV over them. Whether this was somebody who didn’t like the press or it was just bad luck, I don’t know.

How are we doing for time? Twenty-five past. I think we’re good ‘til 10, am I right? Because it’s time for me, surely it will be time for me to stop banging on, as my wife would say, and ask if you have anything to shout back at me. You know, it’s a good thing to travel with your wife, as I’m sure many of you would know who have had to address a public audience because mine at least—and mine fortunately just came back from some time in Afghanistan where she has been trying to sort out things in our bureau there—she’s in the hospital at the moment, so she can’t be here. She’s got some bug, virulent bug in Afghanistan. A lesson learned by the way, that you guys don’t need because you were traveling on your US military transport to Bagram, don’t fly on Afghan aircraft if you can avoid it. And if you do, don’t eat the food. If she were here, she’d be doing this. She’d be drawing her finger across her throat.

When I was here last time, I was terribly impressed at the Lessons Learned Center here. I’ve learned a lot. I’d like to think I’ve learned a lot from my interaction with the US Army in terms of the way to look at, understand, and resolve problems. I’m not sure—it’s something I tended to say to reporters. I now say to my kids at home. I heard repeatedly senior officers talking to troops in the field, to field commanders, saying—and I’m not sure



whether the word is tier or dimension, but don't just make your decisions on the one, the first dimensional, the first tier basis. Think of the second and third tier. Typical example—insurgent is planting a bomb, you see them with the Predator, they make a run when they see the Predator for the closest house. The Predator fires a hellfire missile and as I heard said on numerous occasions, “Now you've got rid of two enemies, but you may have created another 20.” Of course, it's just plain common sense. But I think you guys are pretty good at common sense. I think you are hardened by extreme experience into refining the ways in which to deal with these problems. That was one lesson that I learned.

The idea of learning in a systematized way from your mistakes is something that many institutions in private life, indeed many families, could also do well to learn. I think it's the case, if I recall correctly from my last trip here, that if there is, for example, an IED [improvised explosive device] in which people are injured or killed, in as little as 24 hours, the system works so that the lessons to be learned from that are back down in the field at the platoon level—I found that very impressive.

I'm going to see if I can summarize one or two lessons that can be learned from the media/military relationship over the last few years. And this, you'll forgive me, my own mother now long gone used to caution me against—a strange English phrase, I don't even know where it comes from—“don't teach your grandmother to suck eggs.” I'm not quite sure why you'd want to teach your grandmother to suck eggs, but in any event, I'm going to say some things that are probably blindingly obvious to those of you who have dealt with the media.

Be watchful, as you certainly will be, in dealing with reporters and make your own assessment of their reputation, their fairness, and their intent. Specifically, I think it's perfectly fair, in fact probably imperative from your point of view, to determine in dealing with a reporter what he or she is about. What's the story? Now, very often we don't know what the story is. We arrive and we go looking for the story. The story presents itself. But there are occasions when there is a specific story. And I think just as we expect you to be candid and straight with us, I think it's fair for you to expect us to be candid and straight with you, because there's a danger otherwise and there may be some of you here who have had this experience of being put in a frame that you never thought you'd be put into. You know, a question that sounds unweighted can take on a whole new momentum and import once you understand what the frame is. I won't delay you by giving examples of this, but I'm sure you can think of them for yourself. I think it's fair for you to say to a reporter, “You know, what is it that you're interested in here?” So that you know what you're dealing with. And I do think it's incumbent. There are occasions, of course, where reporters can legitimately be discreet about that. But we're not in my view in the clandestine business. We're not certainly in the deceit business, and I think it's good, as I say, imperative that you should ask people what's their intent.

I have to at this point enter a kind of, if you will, *mea culpa* because the last trip embed that I made and Colonel Edmonds and I were discussing this, he was at Tikrit in the summer of 2007 when I asked for an embed with MND [Multi-National Division] North. Of course I was asked, “What do you want to do?” I said, “Well, I want to talk about what's going on in the north and I also want 1 day to myself. I need to be able to tell the story from



both sides and I'd like to get into Tikrit and have some time by myself." At the time, it was not clear because the US Army doesn't like to use its Black Hawk helicopters as taxis. So it followed from that that there was some unease about the habit of embedding and then dis-embedding and re-embedding. So I had to find my way past this. My real purpose, beyond reporting on MND North, was I wanted to get as nobody else had to the site of Saddam Hussein's grave at the town of Awja just southeast, about 5 miles, of Tikrit. Problem was that it was a heavily insurgent infested area so there were certain risks even if I could get the US Army to release me. There were certain risks that I had to take to do this. It wasn't wise to commit yourself to the trust of those guys. I dealt with Saddam Hussein's tribe and I felt, given that it was Saddam, his place of burial, the tribal leader had said they would take me there. I'd cleared that hurdle and then I had to get myself, if you will, free of entanglement with the US Army for a few hours. And on the morning it was agreed that they would do this. In fact, Colonel Edmonds was a party to arranging this. We gathered three or four HMMWVs for the briefing by the platoon commander and there was a moment when I thought I'd—by this time, it was evident to me that the 15 kilometer drive down to Tikrit was one of the most dangerous stretches, still at that point, of roadway in Iraq. I assumed that there was a daily shuttle; there wasn't. It was clear during the briefing that the only reason these soldiers were taking this trip was to take me and a photographer to Tikrit for a venture about which I had not been candid.

Looking back on it, as you'll understand from the sequel to this story, I should have done what was my instinct to do that morning at 6:00 a.m. and say, "I don't think I can ask 10, 12, 14 soldiers of the US Army to take a deadly risk just so that I can get a front page story." I think it's wrong. So I'm going to take this occasion publicly to say I regret not having done that.

We got to Tikrit. There was some awkwardness on the part of the captain when we arrived at the governor's offices to leave. He said I could use his radio to talk to probably Colonel Edmonds. Said, "Okay. Be it on your head." So they left, we got into a vehicle, we were driven across town and put in other vehicles and then headed at great speed down the road to Awja where we were taken in to see the grave of Saddam Hussein. A problem arose that I hadn't anticipated, which was that insurgent TV was there. They asked me to sign the visitor's book, and I read through this. They had a little desk, and I read through it. I don't read Arabic, but I could read some of the stuff that was in English and I had an interpreter. The "Oh Eagle of the Arabs, protect us," and so on and so forth. I thought, "What the hell am I going to write in this book that is true to the *New York Times*' intent and still going to get me out of here." Fortunately, there must have been an angel sitting on my shoulder, because it came to me that there were four words that would meet the requirement. I just wrote, "A place in history." This was duly translated to the enormous delight of all the sheiks and others standing around and there was applause. I had recognized the place that Saddam Hussein had taken in history.

Taken back to Tikrit and then finally got back, under my own steam, to the gates of Captain Spiker where my first appointment on readmission to the base was an interview with General Mixon, commanding officer. I was taken into his office and I was, at this point, quite pleased with myself. I had pulled it off—I knew I had a page one story. Walked

into his office and he came and said, “Oh, I saw you on TV.” He said, “Nice to meet you. How did you enjoy your trip to Awja?” I said, “How the hell did you know that?” “Oh,” he said, “Where else could you possibly have wanted to go?” Right? It wasn’t hard to figure out. He said, “We kept a watch on you.” I said, “How did you do that?” He said, “Well, we have our means.” I said, “You mean, what would you have done?” He said, “Well, just leave that to history. You got back safely.” Lesson learned? Be straight, especially when you’re asking the Army as I was to take risks with young soldiers’ lives. Be straight. I failed on that occasion. I like to think it wasn’t too often that I did fail the standard. It all worked out okay. Nobody got hurt. I got back. But it’s well for us to remember that you guys are at least as smart and probably a lot smarter than many of us are and we have our own obligations too in terms of candor.

I’d like to talk a little bit about embeds. We were discussing this over coffee before I came in here. Embeds are inevitable and they’re a tremendous opportunity, both for the military and for ourselves. I’ve been very uncomfortable in recent years with the altogether too frequent suggestion that embeds were invented in the age of Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld as a means of restricting, containing, capturing, and misleading the journalists. You know, they may sometimes be for all I know. But it’s not been my experience. Indeed, the embed is inevitable. When William Howard Russell went to the Crimean War, I think he’s regarded as the first of the real war correspondents. There are, no doubt, people who covered the Revolutionary War in America who would disagree with that. But in any case, when he went there, wasn’t he embedded? Yes, of course, he was. Was Ernie Pyle, Edward R. Morrow, Walter Cronkite, and some people who lasted into my generation of journalism covering General Patton and others, were they not embedded? I think they were. They were wearing uniforms, and as I recall, they were given the honorary rank of major. And by the way, they were much more constrained either by their own conscience or by the nature of that war or by the absence of satellite telephones or by the prevailing culture than we are. In the Patton biography I mentioned as I opened my remarks, they tell a story of the slapping of the soldier in the tent, actually two slappings of soldiers in a tent in Sicily. There were some very accomplished reporters in that tent and others learned about it very quickly. The book tells us that some of those reporters went to see—I’ve forgotten who—they went to the commander in North Africa to describe what had happened. It was dealt with as an internal issue until Drew Pearson, who had for one reason or another conceived a great dislike and hostility for General Patton, more than 2 months and I think more like 3 months later wrote about it in Washington. That’s when it became a public issue.

So the notion that the embed was invented in our age for maligned purposes is to my mind absolutely ridiculous. How could we cover these wars if we can’t—if we don’t have your help to take us to them. It’s absolutely essential. You only have to look at the history of the very brave people who were so-called unilaterals during OIF-1 to see how dangerous that is. Some of them got killed. Some of those who were embedded got killed too. But we need you guys. We can’t cover these wars without your help, and I would say overwhelmingly the embeds work out well. As the move from illusionism to realism set in in Iraq, and I’m talking about the period from I would say certainly by mid-2005, embeds became much more frequent and I’m inclined to think, although I don’t know this for sure, that that

was because commanders wanted the story told. I don't think they were happy with the notion that America did not know just how difficult this war was. So long live the embed. The issue is not whether or not we travel with you, it's how we manage it on both sides.

I'd like to close with, at the risk of sounding somewhat maudlin, taking this opportunity to say to you and through you to the US Army how greatly I, and I have to say in this respect, I don't think that my colleagues in Baghdad would differ. Not the best of them. Certainly, not people like Dexter Filkins, Alissa Rubin, the ones I know best, in saying what a great institution the US Army is. I learned a lot from you guys and I'm inclined to think—and this is a new thought in the last 18 months—it's not just that you protect this nation and that you confront problems of extraordinary difficulty with great courage, tenacity, flexibility, and intelligence. But I think that you are, and I don't think that there would be many Americans who disagree with this, I think you're guardians of something else and that is the enduring values of American society. We all know from the experiences of the last year, in particular the disaster of 2009, the economic disaster, about the excesses that have affected certain aspects of American life. I think that as the Chinese would say, "Out of all things good, something bad; and out of all things bad, something good." I think we're all going to be better off when we've worked through this for the lessons we will have learned from this. It seems to me if we want to look at where an institution, which perhaps more than any other has stood as an emblem of the enduring values that made this nation great. I can say this because I am not an American citizen as I found out at O'Hare airport yesterday—2½ hours to clear immigration. This is a great nation. It didn't happen by chance. It was made by men and women of extraordinary imagination and courage, practicality, decency, and compassion. Those are the values that I feel I encounter every day when I'm with the US Army. I thank you for that and for you as a collective, and especially those of you who will be heading back to the wars, I wish you well. Thank you very much.

## DAY 2—FEATURED SPEAKER

### Questions and Answers

(Transcript of Presentation)

**Mr. John Burns**

*New York Times*

#### **Audience Member**

John, a few days ago in the *Stars and Stripes*, there was a story that the Pentagon was hiring a random group to vet us journalists and make an analysis of our backgrounds and our stories when we're being embedded. On the outset, I don't have a problem with that. I don't have any stories that are written that I would try to hide from the military, but as a journalist, I'm uneasy about this and I wondered how you felt about it?

#### **Mr. Burns**

Gosh, you know, there's a danger of mine when I tell you these things. I'm marking myself down as an old man, or as they say in England, an old codger. I learned some very valuable lessons from a reporter who to my mind was an icon of our profession, Kurt Schork. He's an American Rhodes Scholar, former executive director of the MTA [Mass Transit Authority] in New York, who at the age of 40 turned himself into a reporter, and was killed in Sierra Leone—a war of no great consequence that is not much remembered. But Kurt Schork taught me a lesson that was invaluable: we are citizens first and journalists second, just as you are citizens first and soldiers second. But there are civic values that should inform what we do. This is an oblique answer to your question. But it seems to me that everything depends on, if you will, whether those values are operational in an enterprise of that kind. There's nothing wrong with the Pentagon asking people to, if you will, take a look at what we write. We should be accountable. We're a lot more accountable than we used to be because of the Internet. We should be accountable, but the people who contract with people like that have got to make sensible judgments. You know, this should not be a recriminatory exercise. It certainly shouldn't be an exercise to choose only the Army's friends. Imagine if that were the case. Imagine what would have happened to Sy Hersh. Imagine what would have happened to the reporters who covered Abu Ghraib, and I think everybody here would agree, or Haditha. I'm sure everybody here would accept that stories of that kind, while extremely damaging in the short term, were in the long term for the health of the US Armed Forces. That if these things are not written about, looked at by journalists—and I've lived in countries where they're not—then the wheels come off. So it's just a question of being reasonable by commanders taking a look. The question is not, "Is he our friend?" The question is, "Is he fair and responsible?" Right? And I would very much doubt if there would be a single person in this room, especially not those in uniform, who would want it any other way. You don't want a craven press. Look what happened to the Soviet Union. They had a craven press. Leonid Breshnev, who I had the pleasure of covering for 5 years and attended his 75th birthday party through which he slept, he had a

craven press. Look at what happened to the institution he was running. There are dangers in that. Yes, there are dangers in it, but as long as the people appointed to positions of authority hold to the values that those uniforms represent, it seems to me that it's manageable.

**Audience Member**

Mr. Burns, it's my opinion that there's been a decline in the ethical standards of reporters since the Vietnam era. As a bureau chief, do you . . .

**Mr. Burns**

I'm having trouble seeing who's asking the question.

**Audience Member**

I'm over here. Right side of the room to your left.

**Mr. Burns**

Oh there, sorry.

**Audience Member**

The decline of, or in my opinion, the decline of ethical standards and fairness and reasonable reporting seems to have declined since Vietnam. As a bureau chief, do you apply ethical standards to your correspondents? Do you have expectations of them as far as fair and reasonable reporting goes?

**Mr. Burns**

I do and my editors do, too. Look, we all make mistakes. The Army knows that. It's had its own experiences of error, including grievous error, which did not define you as an institution. This happens with us, too. But yes, there are ethical standards and, of course, reporters, especially reporters who are new to situations of stress, who are looking to make careers in a hurry, that we sometimes have to remind them of the need for balance. And by the way, as a bureau chief, I was not, I was a kind of capture in this, but we have a whole system in New York. They say there are 14 pairs of eyes that pass over everything we write before it appears in the print edition. I think we're having trouble making that true of the Web, for reasons you all understand, because of the demands of time. But yes, I think that—if I can answer your question in a general fashion. I think it's incumbent on us who are holding others by the nature of what we do to a standard, to an ethical standard, to a moral standard, to a standard of decency and accountability, as I hope I've made clear in my remarks about other things. It's perfectly right that we should be held to those standards ourselves, and I think that perhaps more than we have been. I think that we need to look at some of these issues. I'd like to think that the *New York Times*—and we might have some dispute here about this—but I'd like to think that we're pretty good at this on the whole.

I work for people you would recognize as fundamentally decent people. I can tell you that I've been spending the last few days writing about the Lockerbie bomber, and that's a complicated issue. It's also an outrageous issue. I'm of Scots origin. I've seen the damage that people like Mr. Abdelbaset Ali al-Megrahi can do. I'm deeply invested in the relationship between Britain and the United States, and I've found what happened last Thursday

afternoon deeply, deeply objectionable and offensive on a personal basis. Now, I think that found its way into what I was writing about. My editors, although they never made that explicit, they were on the phone. Some of these stories took hours to knock into shape. They weren't happy when I talked about Colonel Gaddafi's capricious mischief making. Actually got it into two editions before it was struck from the paper.

As to whether the standards have declined or not, I'm inclined to say not. I think there's been an improvement in my time and there's quite a lot of insistence on these issues at the *New York Times*. It's incumbent on us to look at these issues, and not to expect of others more than we are prepared to deliver ourselves. Yes, there were issues. Some of the officers present in this room know of one or two of those issues that I'm referring to where I, as bureau chief, even before the editors got involved, had to in effect insist on balance and fairness more than was immediately apparent. I don't say that there was a willful headlong intent on any occasion to be unfair, but we have a potential. We walk around with a club in our hands, and we need to recognize that that club needs to be wielded with great care, because we have tremendous potential to inflict damage.

Just one example I'll give you because we're running out of time. I've always said to my colleagues that before you commit, press the buttons as we do now, a story to New York, take a look at it and see who's going to be damaged by what you write and whether the damage is offset by any kind of countervailing social, political benefit. That's a little bit preachy for most people, but at the margins it can be a useful standard. For example, it's very often not necessary to mention people. When a soldier who's standing at the scene of a suicide bombing and in a state of tremendous distress says something that you know perfectly well is going to have his commander angrier than hell, we don't need to name him. The *New York Times* doesn't like unattributed quotes, but they're perfectly open if you can explain why the quote is unattributed. You can say this guy was in a state of great emotional stress when he said this, but if we print this he's going to be up on a charges tomorrow. It's not necessary. You can explain that. So yeah, we need to, what do they say? Beam, the mote and the beam. You need to look sometimes at the beam in our own eye.

### **Audience Member**

Mr. Burns, this is something that kind of jives with your—since 2003, you are the primary reason I do not stop reading the *New York Times*.

### **Mr. Burns**

That's a kind of two-edged sword if you think about it.

### **Audience Member**

But your reporting was superb and certainly fair. You nailed it in what you wrote and I believe that you are totally in the tradition of William Howard Russell, Richard Harding Davis, Edward R. Morrow—you earned that. I'm not sure who's going to be next. Now, bad part. What I've read in the *New York Times* in the last half dozen years or so, it's a schizophrenic paper. It is still a schizophrenic paper. I would read your stories on the front page or inside and I felt I was getting an accurate picture. Your byline was good as gold. Then I would read the editorial and of course op-ed pages, and the editorial line seemed



utterly at odds with what Baghdad's bureau was reporting. It was Frank Rich in particular that gave me pause. So it was hard to square the fact that the editors at the *New York Times* are getting a first rate, firsthand picture, and then they're indulging in fabulous fantasies that eventually boiled down to get Bush. It seemed the paper was part the *New York Times* and part rattle. Did this ever trouble you?

### Mr. Burns

Specifically relating to our editorials and our op-ed pages, no. I think there's a firewall between us and them. As a matter of fact, there's an understanding that we don't talk to them. Sometimes I thought that was unhealthy, particularly when we ran editorials. I think there are exceptions to every rule. We ran editorials saying, "Out now before the surge." I thought it might have been helpful if the people who wrote that had actually talked to us in the field about what the consequences of that might be. But the rule, the principle, the rule's a good one. We are separate and we should be a smorgasbord of opinion, however difficult some of those opinions might be. And I grant you that it does sometimes look schizophrenic, but it's better than what you have in the UK where in most newspapers there is no such firewall and the paper's become highly politicized. I should tell you the first President Bush invited me to his library at Texas A&M 2 or 3 years ago to talk with General Franks, already retired then, and himself about the war. It was a very large audience; people who I think were mostly very wealthy people, who had come for dinner, donating to the library. A gentleman who actually had what we in England call a ten gallon hat—don't know if that's the right term—sat in the front row. Of course, it would be inventive to say he was chomping on a cigar. He was an extremely wealthy Texas oil man. This was being covered on C-Span. At the end of this, when questions came up, he got up and he said, "Mr. Burns," he said—you'll forgive me my appalling imitation of a Texas accent—he said, "Did I hear correctly that you are a correspondent for the *New York Times*?" This was after 2 hours. I said, "Yes, sir, I am." He said, "I'm amazed." I thought, what's coming now? "How did you ever get a job at the *New York Times*?" I thought, this is pretty offensive. He paused for dramatic effect and said, "Because you ain't an idiot liberal."

Well, without editorial comment on whether idiot liberals are represented, underrepresented, or overrepresented in our business, what I realized immediately was that any answer I gave to that question, and there was no answer required, would likely put me in big trouble with my editors who I correctly guessed were probably watching this on C-Span.

I want to read you something I read in the paper on the plane here. It's not got a lot to do with this, except it has to do with truth and I liked it and it made me laugh. It's called "Shaggy Dog." Here we go:

A man sees an advert for a talking dog in the paper. Goes around and says, "I've come up to talk to you about the talking dog." "He's in there," says the owner, "go and say hello." The man goes into the living room, sees a dog stretched on the carpet. "Hello," he says, feeling more than a little foolish. "Oh hello," says the dog, turning to face him. "My God," says the man, suitably amazed, "you can talk." "Oh yes," says the dog, "I can talk."

Not just English either. French, Spanish, Italian, conversational Arabic, a bit of Russian. I can write too. Written a novel, as a matter of fact, a couple of film scripts. Won an Oscar and I play the violin. Good at football too. Scored a winner in the FA Cup a few years ago. Been over in Afghanistan a lot recently helping the Army do bomb disposal.” The man selling the dog comes into the room. “Your dog is amazing,” says the first man, “I just don’t understand why you’d want to sell him.” “Because,” says the owner, “he’s a bloody liar.”

So truth has many dimensions.

### **Audience Member**

Just for historical accuracy, when you talk about ethics, journalistic ethics, you talked about in World War II, there was also an Office of War Information, a Ministry of Propaganda, and an Office of Censorship, so information was highly controlled. So can you tell these folks who John Rendon is so they understand?

### **Mr. Burns**

I’m not sure I know. You tell me.

### **Audience Member**

Rendon, John Rendon, as you probably know, is the guy who invented the war room for the Clinton administration, called it [*inaudible*] who was neither in the military or a journalist and having vet other journalists.

### **Mr. Burns**

Yeah, I should have been more cautious. I don’t know background to that story. It may be that it’s obnoxious, but if I’ve made one point today, I hope it would be this: We should be expected to be held to account by others just as we hold others to account. It’s fair enough. I’m not sure it’s necessary to spend the public money on hiring somebody to do it for me. I’d be more happy if it was an in-house enterprise. I’m pretty sure that when General Caldwell was command spokesman in Baghdad, it may have not been a formal exercise, but certainly informally he and General Casey and others would have formed their own opinions, knowing I think a little bit about both those two generals, as to who was pliant because these are serious people. You don’t get to be a three or four star general in the US Army unless you’re a serious person. In my judgment, they would probably have said, “Okay, is this person fair?” Am I right? That’s the standard. It’s not, “Is he pliant? Is he going to,” excuse my vernacular, “kiss our rear end?” It’s, “Are they going to be fair and responsible?” There was never any intent, never any effort that I was aware of when I was in Afghanistan or Iraq, other than possibly the staff sergeant out of “Full Metal Jacket,” to inhibit. I can’t think of an occasion when anybody tried to mislead me. There were times when I didn’t get to where I wanted to go, either geographically or you know in other ways, but I found a readiness to front up when things didn’t go right. I think, I may be wrong, but I think that the lessons learned thing is pretty deeply embedded in the US Army. It doesn’t mean to say that there aren’t mistakes, and God knows there were pretty serious mistakes made over Abu Ghraib and Haditha.

I just would give you one last example because I know it's now 5 minutes past the hour and everybody wants to go and get on with their lives. On the last afternoon of General Sanchez's time in Iraq, there had been a transfer, a command transfer ceremony at Camp Victory. It was an extremely awkward occasion for him as you all know. John Abizaid made a speech which was, I thought, one of great wisdom and understanding. Afterwards, General Sanchez came over to me, he was biting his lip while General Abizaid was talking, and said he didn't feel like going to the lunch, would I like to have lunch with him in the office to which he had moved. He was leaving on the night plane.

We sat all afternoon just talking. No notebook, just talking. But I don't think he would object to my saying to you that we did talk about Abu Ghraib. He took something I asked him about as my inviting him to excuse himself from any responsibility for what happened. I know this was an uncomfortable subject, of course, because no senior officers ever that I know of were disciplined other than one brigadier general, correct. It's a controversial issue. So I'm telling this story. He turned around in his chair and pointed toward the northwest. He said, "You know how far Abu Ghraib is from here?" I said no. He said, "It's about 2½ or 3 miles." And he said, "You know, there's a lot to be said about this. We were under tremendous pressure to get intelligence, etc., but," he said, "you know, I made a mistake." He said, "When I was a young officer, first lieutenant, freshly commissioned," he said, "my first unit commander said to me, 'Sanchez, you're going to find in any unit that you command that there are people who are potential criminals. You're giving them weapons and many of them are young. There's all kinds of potential for trouble. Your responsibility is to discipline those tendencies out of the men you command. You've got to be watchful.'" He said, "I went to Abu Ghraib," I think he said twice, three times, and he said, "I was there for 1½ or 2 hours each time." He said, "I just forgot that lesson." He said, "I should have been more watchful."

I thought that that was a brave and candid thing to say, but in character with what I've encountered at all levels of this Army. That is, if you get it wrong, say so. I'd appreciate if there are any reporters here. I don't imagine that the *Kansas City Star* or anybody else is the slightest bit interested in anything I have to say, but spare me on that, because I'm breaching a sense of confidence that I ever had that conversation with General Sanchez. But I thought that was eloquent of the character of the man and of the institution that he represented.

## PANEL 4—THE COLD WAR

### **Professionalism's Impact on Public Affairs Education at the Army War College, 1950–1989**

(Submitted Paper)

by

**Mr. Paul Gardner**

With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed.<sup>1</sup>

—Abraham Lincoln

#### **Introduction**

Since the early 1940s, senior leaders of the Army, specifically the Chiefs of Staff and Secretary, recognized the need to talk to the public, because they believed it was an Army that belonged to the people. Prior to World War II, the Army was small and some have argued it was physically and socially isolated from the public. General Dwight D. Eisenhower, looking back on this period, wrote, “The general public, either as an interested audience or as a source of support, was largely ignored because of a long tradition, accepted by the Army, that the soldier should be seen but not heard.”<sup>2</sup> An indication of the increase in awareness of the importance of Army public relations was based on the location of the public information office. In the 1920s and 1930s, public information was a staff function of the intelligence service.<sup>3</sup> However, during World War II, General George C. Marshall created a Bureau of Public Relations in the War Department in an attempt to keep the nation informed.<sup>4</sup>

After World War II, there was a paradigm change. In the late 1940s, there was a question as to whether there was a need for an Army at all, due to the perceived dominance of air power and the United States' sole possession of the atomic bomb. Thus, the Army fought for institutional survival. As the United States assumed a larger role in the world, its foreign policy became broader and it required a different kind of Army than had previously existed. The Army needed to foster the public's understanding of its role, mission, and programs, and explain to the public, Congress, and its soldiers why it was needed and what resources it required. Simultaneously, at the local level, each Army post's community relations office affected the community's perception of the Army, which in turn affected the Army's ability to gain support for its program. The aforementioned was accomplished under the umbrella title of public affairs.<sup>5</sup>

In 1946, the restructure of the War Department created the Office of Information, with Lieutenant General J. Lawton Collins as its first chief. General Collins was responsible for three areas: Public Information, Congressional Relations, and Troop Information and

Education.<sup>6</sup> Community Relations was a subcategory of public information.<sup>7</sup> The establishment of the Office of Chief of Information was based on Walter Page's recommendation to Secretary of War Henry Stimson in an effort to shape the public and/or Congressional reaction to any proposed Army action, policy, or procedural matter.<sup>8</sup> It also was an attempt to respond to criticism about the Army's transition from a fighting force to its early Cold War activities as an occupation force.<sup>9</sup> The Army's senior leaders understood that public relations would continue to be a requirement in the future; therefore, it had to be part of the Army education system. General Collins, when discussing the professional military education system wrote, "Through the G3 of the War Department, we have had brief courses on Public Information introduced into all of our schools—at the Military Academy, Benning, Sill, Belvoir, Leavenworth."<sup>10</sup> Collin's statement demonstrates that at the War Department, Army leaders recognized the need to educate Army officers on aspects of public affairs in an effort to inform American citizens on the Army. With this understanding of public affairs components, we can begin to examine how Army officers were educated.

The Army's educational system has evolved since its inception in 1802 with the establishment of the Military Academy at West Point. A critical event in 1881 was the founding of the School of Application for Cavalry and Infantry at Fort Leavenworth, later renamed the Command and General Staff College. The Army's School of Application was an effort to join the ongoing military professionalism process seen in Europe. Later in 1903, with the opening of the Army War College, the Army developed a progressive officer education system that still continues today. Thus, since the early 20th century, the Army education system was based on matriculation from the branch schools, then to the Command and General Staff School, and finally to the Army War College. These institutions existed to help educate the small professional Army officer corps, in brigade and above, tactics, incorporation of air power, and War Department level activities. The Army War College curriculum, and specifically public affairs instruction, demonstrated the Army's commitment to educate the Army's future leaders on the importance of and requirement to inform their soldiers, the public, and Congress about the Army's efforts.

In 1940, the US Army suspended Army War College instruction, similar to World War I. At the end of World War II, Generals Marshall and Eisenhower supported unification of the services, especially in officer education. In 1945, General Eisenhower approved the recommendations of the board chaired by Lieutenant General Leonard T. Gerow, commandant of the Command and General Staff School, not to reactivate the Army War College and to conduct a study on officer education. With approval, Eisenhower gave the buildings that previously housed the Army War College to the newly established National War College.<sup>11</sup> This remained the situation until Lieutenant General Manton Eddy's board released its findings, which recommended that the Army War College be re-opened in 1949.<sup>12</sup> The Army War College re-opened at Fort Leavenworth for academic year (AY) 1950–51, and its mission was "To prepare officers for duty as commanders and general staff officers within the headquarters of the army group and corresponding communication zone activities, the theater army, the theater, and zone of interior army, and the Department of the Army with emphasis on the Headquarters, Department of the Army."<sup>13</sup> For AY 1951–52, the War College moved to Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. Since the Army War College

was the pinnacle of the Army's educational system, it is of critical importance to see how it educated senior leaders to conduct public affairs.

During the Cold War, the national and strategic environments underwent numerous changes. The US Armed Forces, especially the Army, was constantly trying to understand the situation and remain prepared to play its part in the military support of the nation's foreign policy. There was a correlation between the changing view of professionalism as stated by theorists and others and the amount of hours allocated to educate Army War College students on public affairs. This author will argue that the changing concept of professionalism had an impact on the public affairs education at the Army War College from 1950 until 1989. Four main periods will be examined. First is the "Age of Justification," which occurred when the Army was trying to justify its continued existence and demonstrate its part in the overall national defense. The next is "Age of Tradition," which represents a period of traditional professionalism and relations between the military and civilians.<sup>14</sup> Then came the "Age of Civilianization," which covers the merging or fusion of the military and civilian spheres.<sup>15</sup> The last period highlights a combining of the two previous ages and underscores where military and civilian parts were similar and different and is called the "Age of Progressive Professionalism."<sup>16</sup> The overall intent is to analyze why the Army, which recognized the need to communicate not only with the executive and legislative branches of government but also with the public, placed an inconsistent amount of emphasis in the education system, specifically at the Army War College, on such an important issue. This paper is based on the Army War College's curriculum, military and civilian journals, and the stated theorists.

Prior to this examination, a short inquiry must be made as to what transpired regarding the concept of public affairs between the end of World War II and the opening of the War College in 1950. During most of this period, Chief of Information continued to report directly to the Army Chief of Staff. He was responsible for the Public Information Division, the Legislative and Liaison Division, and the Troop Information and Education Division. In 1950, the Legislative and Liaison Division was separated from Chief of Information and became its own staff section.<sup>17</sup> Lieutenant Colonel J.H. Minton, a senior public information officer, wrote, "The Army Information Program assumes the task of furnishing timely factual information, so that both the American soldier and the American people will be the best informed in the world and, therefore, the least likely to be influenced by the mental stress that any enemy may attempt to create in them."<sup>18</sup> Also, great strides were being made in the field of community relations, and Major General Manton Eddy was a key figure. He started the Army Advisory Committees as a means of liaison between the local community and the Army. The Army has a distinct obligation to provide the committees with factual and timely information on military matters that concerned the local public. Nothing was to be concealed that should be released.<sup>19</sup> General Collins summarized the Army's information requirements when he said:

There are three main elements in the business of furnishing information about the Army. First, we have our dealings with the public at large—direct public relations. We frequently forget the next part of our program, and that is our relations within the Army itself—between the various



elements of the Armed Forces and with our men, which I like to regard as our internal public relations. Finally we have our relations with the Congress, which is a very important element of our public relations.<sup>20</sup>

This sets the environment to begin the examination of the Army War College curriculum.

### **Age of Justification**

Among all the contemporary skills which a soldier these days must concern himself, not the least important is public relations—a phrase almost unknown to the Army and a profession little practiced by it until World War II.<sup>21</sup>

In 1949, Secretary of Defense James Forrestal wrote:

If the Army is to function as an effective member of the national security team, there must be a clear public understanding that land forces will continue to be indispensable as a primary fighting arm.<sup>22</sup>

As a result of World War II, the US Government accepted that it would have to play a larger part in the world environment. This was seen in the Government's fostering of the United Nations and the commitment to garrison Germany and Japan. With this newly accepted requirement came a much broader foreign policy and the need for military strength to back up that policy. Initially, many Americans felt that the country could return to isolationism and depend on the threat of aerial delivery of nuclear devices to make other nations adhere to the wishes of the United States. Simultaneously, the Army was rapidly demobilized due to societal and Congressional demand. After World War II, the Army had to justify its existence, and senior Army leaders, specifically the Chief of Staff, emphasized public information and the Army War College's curriculum reflected this focus. During this period, the Army conducted multiple studies that examined numerous issues, such as the failure to get approval of universal military training.

The Army conducted many different studies between 1946 and 1950. In 1946, as previously mentioned, the Gerow Board investigated officer education and recommended that officers needed to have a general understanding of multiple subjects, including public affairs.<sup>23</sup> Another board held during 1947, with Lieutenant General Wade Haislip as its president, reviewed current War Department policies and programs concerning Regular Army, National Guard, Organized Reserves, and the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and made recommendations.<sup>24</sup> The board found that the public misunderstood the nation's capacity and strength at hand, because they believed capacity and strength were the same, and did not take into consideration the time factor necessary to change capacity to strength. The report also stated that a clear public information campaign, based on future wars and preparedness, would remedy the issue.<sup>25</sup> The board reiterated the requirement for public support, but also cautioned that some people confused public information with propaganda and this must be avoided. Therefore, the Army must build up its prestige and public confidence. A key aspect to achieve this was to disseminate information without using propaganda and to ensure officers understood their responsibility for public information

and troop information. It suggested that officers get this education through the chain of command and the school system.<sup>26</sup> Finally, in 1949, the Eddy Board recommended that the Army War College be re-opened, because it felt that the National War College instruction had not met the Army's needs. It stated that the Command and General Staff College would instruct division, corps, and army, and the Army War College would concentrate on army group, theater army, and Department of the Army (DA).<sup>27</sup> The aforementioned studies demonstrate that the Army leaders were deeply involved in the development of the Army education system, and they recognized public affairs as an important part at the beginning of the 1950s.

The Army War College re-opened at Fort Leavenworth in the summer of 1950. The first year of the school was taught there, and then in 1951 the War College moved to Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. Its mission statement for the initial 5 years was to train officers for being a commander or staff officer in the highest level of Army field organizations, within the Department of the Army, and in the last 2 years of this period it added the requirement of working in other governmental agencies.<sup>28</sup> The curriculum was divided into three phases: the Army, national security/international affairs, and war planning. Army topics received the majority of the weeks of instruction.<sup>29</sup> As part of the educational validation, a civilian advisory group examined the War College in AY 1951–52 and made some suggestions. One suggestion was that greater attention be paid “to the whole complex of problems that bear upon the relationship between the armed services and the civilian population both at home and abroad.”<sup>30</sup> Also, that the Army understand the domestic implications of mobilization, use of reserves, and National Guard because “The impact on the Army, budget wise and in terms of morale, is obvious and wise public relations may assume an even greater significance during such periods than in periods of heightened tensions.”<sup>31</sup> These recommendations underscore a civilian perspective of public relations importance.

The Army War College curriculum was continuously being refined. It averaged 7½ hours annually that directly discussed public affairs and about another 7 hours contributed to the understanding of the concept of public affairs.<sup>32</sup> Examples of this were seen in lectures and when seminars discussed assigned problems, some of them had to consider the issue of public opinion as part of the solution.<sup>33</sup> Also, the College suggested some topics for the student's individual paper, and during AY 1953–54 there were three topics related to public relations: “Public Opinion and the Army,” “The Role of the Army in Public Affairs,” and “Press Relations in Combat.”<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, there were a total of four student papers that addressed public affairs or public opinion in this era. One of the AY 1953–54 papers was written by James E. Harper and was titled “Public Opinion and the Army.” He found that public opinion did influence the Army and it is up to Army officers to ensure that the public was given the facts from which to make their decisions. He covered not only public opinion but also the Army's relationship with Congress. He concluded that the Army needs to understand the media and respond quickly to their inquiries; command support was required for public and troop information; and officer education was an important means of getting the message across.<sup>35</sup> The instructional hours and student papers are an indication that Army and War College leaders understood their responsibility to inform the public and the troops and were actively pursuing that objective through education.

Other events demonstrated the Army's comprehension of public relations. In 1954, General Matthew Ridgway sent a note to subordinates on public and troop information. He explained:

We must modify the philosophy which has for years guided the Army's actions in the field of public relations. This philosophy has influenced officers to remain aloof from the public and reticent on their few public appearances. We must become more articulate and develop a positive public relations attitude throughout the Army. Too many officers look upon public relations as a defensive operation rather than a living, dynamic one.<sup>36</sup>

Next, he highlighted that he wanted post commanders to give community relations their personal attention. Finally,

The creation of a public relations-conscious Army also calls for adequate, progressive instruction in troop and public information throughout the Army school system for officers and prospective officers. Maximum use should be made of the Army's facilities to train officers and enlisted personnel in this important field. Personnel specialization therein must not be penalized in regard to selection for promotion or higher training by reasons of such specialization.<sup>37</sup>

Starting in 1955, the Army War College began holding a national security seminar. It was here that civic leaders were invited to a weeklong seminar to participate in discussions as the students finalized their recommendations for a national security strategy. The civilians were encouraged to ask questions and provide input in the process. This was seen as a way in which prominent citizens and future military leaders could discuss critical issues about the nation's security. This was a means for the two groups to grow more understanding of the other's point of view and fostered public information. Finally, in 1955, the Association of the United States Army (AUSA) held its first annual meeting with General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, US Army, as the president.<sup>38</sup> This meeting was about increasing membership, but also a means of informing the public. These occurrences show that the leadership of the Army and the War College were developing multiple ways to keep the public informed.

The Army's effort to justify itself was also visible in journal articles. One of the first was written by Lieutenant General Raymond S. McLain, Chief of Information: "In the Army we must take care that adequate emphasis be given to the role of the ground forces. That is *our* great concern. Nobody else is likely to carry *our* problem. They have their own. Yet we must be ever cognizant of the part other services will play, because what they can properly do reduces our problem that much."<sup>39</sup> Also, General Collins wrote "Why We Must Inform Others?" In the article, the Army Chief of Staff addressed the fact that since the Army was part of a democracy it requires public support. He stated that the public must be informed, and that this was a command function. Moreover, officers must also keep their troops informed. In the last part of the article he stated, "From the rawest recruit to the highest commander, this task of informing others is an important responsibility which all of us must shoulder well."<sup>40</sup> Noteworthy among the articles was an anonymous article

titled “Is Still: But It Must ‘Sell’ Itself If It Is to Stay Solvent.” The authors, two field-grade officers, argued that the Army required a solid doctrine and needed to take firm positions on controversial issues and stand up and speak clearly. The Army must make its case, present the information, and let the public and Congress decide.<sup>41</sup> These articles are representative of the Army’s mood during this period, providing justification for the nation’s need of an Army.

Meanwhile, the Army was not the only group trying to grasp the issues of public relations. The civilian community was also trying to deal with it. There are many articles written in the *Public Opinion Quarterly* magazine that represent the scholarly discussion of public relations.<sup>42</sup> During this period, the academic community was also trying to define public relations and what constituted public affairs training.<sup>43</sup> These pieces highlighted that the Army was not very far behind other professions in grasping the necessity of public relations.

The Army used public relations as a means to inform the public and the troops as to why they were needed. This was seen in the Army’s senior leaders’ writings and within the Army War College’s curriculum. Not only were the students exposed to lectures, but they were required to consider the impact of public opinion as part of their solutions to assigned problems. In addition, as the students made recommendations for a national security strategy, they had civic leaders question and watch their deliberations. This exposed the students to an experience that they may have to deal with in the future, when they tried to inform civilians of their recommendations. Holistically, this demonstrated how the Army leaders dealt with a few of the critical topics of the age.

### **Age of Tradition**

This cycle saw the Army return, in part, to what it was prior to World War II, which focused on military victory and its view of traditional professionalism. This perspective was within the context that the nation’s leaders authorized the need for a larger military, and the Army was accepted as an important component. Although there would still be issues that needed to be resolved, the Army no longer believed its existence was in danger, but also found itself continually fighting against the perception that the Army was a second-class citizen in the military community. Samuel Huntington, in *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, described a kind of professionalism and civil military relations that would enable a conservative natured military to deal with society’s liberal values. He defined professionalism as being composed of expertise, responsibility, and corporateness. He focused his argument on officers being managers, not executors, of violence. The two key aspects are responsibility and corporateness. In the aspect of corporateness, he wrote, the officer “normally lives and works apart from the rest of society; physically and socially he probably has fewer nonprofessional contacts than most other professional men.”<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, the officer must use his skill for the society’s benefit and in a manner the society approves. The officer’s responsibility must be clearly stated to fellow professionals, his superiors and subordinates, and most importantly to the state that he serves. It is his responsibility to ensure that the public understands what the Army needs to achieve society’s security.<sup>45</sup> Huntington also conducted an examination of

the military mind, which he concluded was authoritarian and that military factors retained primacy in the officer's thinking. He stated that the profession was narrowly defined and more intensely and exclusively pursued, which contributed to the profession being isolated from other human activities.<sup>46</sup> In short, traditional professionalism is defined as the military having their own area, with a divergence between society's values and military values.

Another factor affecting the military during this period, specifically the Army, was the Eisenhower administration's policy of massive retaliation. The administration wanted to limit the amount of funds budgeted to the military and it had a fixed percentage allocation for each service, which contributed to the schism between the defense secretary and the Army's military leadership.<sup>47</sup> The uniformed leadership did not think that the senior defense officials provided the proper amount of resources for the Army. General Ridgway, in *Soldier: The Memoirs of Matthew B. Ridgway*, explained that modern governments needed to understand that decisions in the political, economic, financial, and military elements were interrelated. However, he wrote:

The responsibility of the professional military man lies in the professional military field. His over-riding responsibility is to give his honest, objective, professional military advice to those civilians who, by our constitution are his commanders. It is not his responsibility to decide whether the military means which he determines are essential to accomplish the military tasks assigned him will cost more than the nation can afford.<sup>48</sup>

He also wrote: "Under no circumstances, regardless of pressure from whatever source or motive, should the professional military man yield or compromise his judgment for other than convincing military reason. To do otherwise would be to destroy his usefulness."<sup>49</sup> Supporting this position was when General Maxwell Taylor in *Uncertain Trumpet* discussed the change of the entire Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) with the arrival of the Eisenhower administration, because this act had the impression that the JCS belonged to the administration. Prior to this change, the JCS was seen as nonpolitical and would give professional military advice to their civilian superiors. Many senior military leaders thought the JCS advice should be strictly or primarily military based, with little to no attention to political or economic issues.<sup>50</sup> These actions demonstrated that the two Army Chiefs of Staff during this period adhered to the concept of traditional professionalism.

The Army's view of its school system was also adjusting to the times. The only major Department of the Army Board was led by Lieutenant General Edward T. Williams. The board concluded, and DA approved, that the Army service school system's primary objective was for selected individual's preparation for their wartime roles with emphasis on the art of command. However, nonwartime roles and conditions short of war that were not directly related to the wartime role were also taught.<sup>51</sup> The board suggested that the curriculum be focused on essentials, and only those subjects that cannot be adequately learned elsewhere and "nice-to-know" subjects should be acquired by individual study on a nonresident basis.<sup>52</sup> The board also recommended that school commandants be given 100 percent flexibility on teaching general subjects, due to the board's opinion that the requirement has become onerous.<sup>53</sup> This recommendation was making a direct and opposite



recommendation to Continental Army Command's (CONARC) desire. It was CONARC's common subject directive that placed specified requirements for instruction, such as public information and troop information, on the Army school system. If the school commandants received authority to ignore the directive, the Army senior leaders gave up its means of ensuring that certain topics were taught in a progressive nature. Simultaneously with the board's investigation, CONARC responded to the DA Deputy Chief of Staff for Military Operations inquiry on the Army Command and General Staff College's and the Army War College's public information instruction. CONARC stated that they recommended moving away from strictly public information and use a more broad title of information, which would "cover all aspects of this command activity, to include public information, troop information, civil liaison and community relations." It was CONARC's belief that emphasis should be placed on command responsibility and how information can benefit the command. It concluded that the use of guest speakers as a means of supplementing the other instruction remained the best approach.<sup>54</sup> The above shows that the Army leadership was adapting the Army school system's curriculum, and specifically how best to deliver public and troop information instruction.

The Army War College's concentration on military subjects was not universally praised. John W. Masland and Laurence I. Radway, in *Soldiers and Scholars: Military Education and National Policy*, questioned the curriculum at the Army War College and the other war colleges. They questioned the emphasis on dealing with the Soviet Union, and the authors wondered if sufficient time was allocated to the study of American society. The authors stated that the colleges failed to provide the same level of attention to the "basic nature and characteristics of American democracy" as they do to studying the Soviets.<sup>55</sup> The authors praised the colleges for their hard work discussing the relationship of public opinion and its influence on foreign and military policy. The college used guest speakers to lecture on public opinion, but Masland and Radway, after watching some seminars discuss public opinion, expressed a concern about its effectiveness. They concluded that the students felt that special interest and pressure groups were inhibiting the Government from choosing the correct path, and the general public was apathetic. To them this highlighted the student's frustration with public policy, and they recommended that more time be allocated to discussing the democratic ideals and practices in the context of contemporary issues.<sup>56</sup> This demonstrated the tension between the instruction of military and nonmilitary subjects, especially since the Army felt the need to concentrate on its first priority—victory in battle.

The mission of the Army War College was to train senior officers primarily for their wartime duties. For many of these academic years, there was a requirement to study current Army tactical and logistical doctrine and develop future Army doctrine, strategy, and organization. Added toward the end of the period was the introduction, in a more explicit way, of the element of national power: geographic, political, economic, psychosociological, and military.<sup>57</sup> The curriculum retained primary emphasis on guest speakers addressing issues relating to domestic and economic aspects, and how the Government made decisions. It was amidst these topics that much of the discussion on public affairs was covered, such as public opinion's impact on foreign and domestic policy. During this epoch, the average hours discussing public relations decreased to a little over 3½ hours, and topics that



touched on public relations was down to 4½ hours. There was, however, an increase in the amount of emphasis on readiness and wargaming. Therefore, the Army kept its focus on its responsibility to achieve victory in combat, thus adhering to traditional professionalism.

### **Age of Civilianization**

As the American society was changing, the military was trying to adapt. Morris Janowitz in *The Professional Soldier* stated that immediately after World War II military institutions were defending their boundaries against external intrusion in an effort to remain distinctive. This resulted in an increased dependence on an academy trained officer corps.<sup>58</sup> Also, the military's self-conception and ideology acted like a counterforce toward civilianization due to the military benchmark of victory in combat. The military accepted the strategy of deterrence, but felt that the concept was only valid because the Armed Forces was prepared to fight.<sup>59</sup> Janowitz asserted that it was the military that created the boundaries between themselves and society, not the other way around.<sup>60</sup> During this period, the argument was that the military and civilian realms were moving closer together. The military profession mirrored what was transpiring in the civilian world, such as increased specialization, and leadership was becoming more about being a manager than the previous view of heroic leaders. Meanwhile, the overall national security policy moved away from massive retaliation and toward flexible response. This change placed an increased requirement on the military to be able to provide forces in support of the nation's foreign policy in more diverse areas.

Although the military profession modified its perspective of the world and civilians, the civilian perspective of the military had not changed. Janowitz provided two concepts—absolute and pragmatic—regarding how the military would approach political objectives. Absolutists were those officers who would focus on absolute military victory and see victory as an end in itself, whereas the pragmatist believed that war was one aspect of international relations and its conduct must be about political end state. One thing that both concepts agreed on was the need for managers.<sup>61</sup> The absolute concept agreed with traditional professionalism. Janowitz addressed Huntington's essential elements of a profession, as previously described, and suggested that responsibility must be reassessed based on the concept of mass destruction. The issue was that with mass destruction weapons, the conflict cannot be limited to solely military objectives. He also described a military profession's elite, which included only the highest-ranking officers. These professionals used their skills to achieve social and political ends.<sup>62</sup> Thus, these officers must take a pragmatic view. Janowitz argued that increased skill specialization furthered any professionalization, which affected the society and political perspectives.<sup>63</sup> In summary, Janowitz believed that the military was moving parallel to the civilian world on the aspects of professionalism, and you cannot separate military from civilian areas.

The Army continued to conduct assessments of itself and its school system. One of the most critical was the Haines Board, led by Lieutenant General Ralph E. Haines, that examined the period from 1966 to 1976.<sup>64</sup> The board concluded that the environmental conditions were expected to change in the next decade and called it the "Era of Information Explosion," and that there was increased probability of American military forces being

used in stability and limited war operations.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, in agreement with the Williams Board, the Haines Board recognized that time for education would become increasingly precious; therefore, the curriculum must be focused.<sup>66</sup> The board found that the current curriculum was focused on the lowest common denominator, and some students were not being intellectually challenged. This contributed to the board's recommendation for the introduction of electives into the Army school system. These courses would be taught by individual institutions, common to all schools or progressive in nature.<sup>67</sup> It was expected that these electives would stimulate those who were not challenged by the core curriculum. Another finding was that all schools needed to have effective public and military information programs, such as their own periodical and ability to publish doctrine.<sup>68</sup> This further indicated that Army senior leaders understood the need for positive relations with the public. The overall direction of the school systems became an issue during this period. Prior to June 1960, the CONARC was in charge of the entire system, but the Chief of Staff, General Lemnitzer, changed this when he directed that the Army War College would be supervised by the DA staff.<sup>69</sup> This led to confusion as to what organization was in charge of the entire Army school system and professional military education.

There was some interesting discussion about the military profession and public affairs in numerous journals. In the military journals, *Military Review*, *Army*, and *Army Information Digest*, there was a return to some of the topics that were seen during the Age of Justification. These articles highlighted the need for military officers to talk with the public, to see public and troop information as two parts of a program rather than separate issues, and the assistance of the installation staffs that directly addressed their local community.<sup>70</sup> As General Ridgway stated earlier, officers should willingly accept the chance to talk with the public about the Army.<sup>71</sup> The Army's key concept when addressing the public was that it was about deeds, reinforced by words, not the other way around.<sup>72</sup> There was also some discussion in other magazines. Colonel Robert N. Ginsburg, in "The Challenge to Military Professionalism," professed that the military was losing its professionalism, as officers were more concerned about items such as pay, rather than being willing to make sacrifices, which was a reflection of civilian society. He also asserted that the concept of fusion, when civilians and military were equally able to discuss military and nonmilitary terms, was not a positive trend. This theory had been emphasized in the War College's curriculum. In the end, Ginsburg concluded that the military should refute this theory, and reestablish a sense of corporateness that would "recreate the prestige and attractiveness of a military career—without, however, trying to return the military to its prewar state of isolation."<sup>73</sup> Adding to this position was Edward L. Katzenbach's article, "The Demotion of Professionalism at the War Colleges." He argued that the war colleges should focus on military problems before national problems.<sup>74</sup> These articles indicated the issues of professionalism and public relations remained a hot topic.

The Army conducted many studies in the early 1970s in anticipation of a difficult future. One of the first was the report by Major General Frank W. Norris that outlined the significant challenges the Army would have to address in the 1970s. The report foresaw that the military would be blamed for Vietnam, and that the Army's leadership needed to increase emphasis on educating officers on communications skills, to deal with neutral

to hostile audiences, and the means for these officers to help their soldiers deal with this situation to preserve morale.<sup>75</sup> Another interesting aspect of the report was the suggestion that the Army War College should increase the focus of military subjects over national strategy or foreign policy. However, Norris concluded that the College had the correct balance.<sup>76</sup> Another study, done by the Army War College and titled “Army Tasks of the Seventies,” concluded it was a command responsibility to ensure soldiers had a solid grasp of American society, including a thorough knowledge of the role of the press and other media, and that community relations be aligned with national policy.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, it recommended a return to the previous image of Army professionalism that emphasized it was a way of life, not just a job. By focusing on Army values, the institution’s image and credibility with the public can be corrected.<sup>78</sup> These reports underscored the Army leadership’s reflection and discussion on how to modify the military profession to the current and future environments.

The Army continuously attempted to adapt to changes in the requirement as seen with the policy of flexible response and the commitment to Vietnam. With the start of this period, the Army War College curricular theme was about the development of a national strategy and supporting military program.<sup>79</sup> However, this theme did not preclude multiple changes in the curriculum. For example, the Army War College disagreed with the suggestion by the 1962 civilian advisory group that the domestic environment should be addressed by readings only, because the topic needed more coverage than the readings could provide.<sup>80</sup> The advisory group also recommended that the War College consider the compression of military subjects to provide greater coverage on nonmilitary subjects, such as foreign relations, international politics, economics, propaganda, and public opinion. In general, the College agreed on the need to balance military and nonmilitary topics.<sup>81</sup> This was an indication that the Army War College was responsive and interested in improving the student’s education.

The allocation of hours to public affairs and related subjects was at the lowest level during this period. Less than 3 hours per year on average directly discussed public affairs, and the subjects that were indirectly related were reduced to about 4 hours. The Chief of Information’s lecture was the primary means of directly addressing public relations. This can be interpreted as alignment with the argument that there was an increased convergence of military and civilian spheres. Even with this decrease in hours, it is interesting that there remained a few students each year or so that would choose public affairs topics for their individual research projects. Many of these addressed national will and how to ensure that the population was behind the government, especially in the employment of military forces. Wolfred K. Whites’ monograph, “The Worried Warriors—The Dilemma of the Military Profession,” examined how society’s changes affected the public’s and professional soldier’s attitudes toward national defense. White stated that the military, like the civilian world, was becoming increasingly specialized. Also, the increased use of civilian methods in the military was blurring the delineation between what is specifically military and what is civilian. Moreover, the military was increasing the amount of people going for graduate degrees.<sup>82</sup> Additionally, Howard F. O’Neil’s paper that advocated a more active military participation in civic roles would further the public’s understanding of the Armed

Forces.<sup>83</sup> The perception that the military and civilian worlds were moving closer together is witnessed not only in theory, but also in the school's curriculum. Furthermore, some of the students observed this trend and incorporated the concept in their writings.

This epoch saw a reduction in hours for public affairs instruction, and the debate centering on the fusion of military and civilian spheres was argued in journals. The Army War College curriculum seemed to indicate that it accepted, to a degree, the merging of the two areas. This movement did not have universal support and can be interpreted as a factor that influenced the fluctuation of hours of public affairs instruction. Army senior leaders continued to look at the education system to ensure it was focused, and within those inquiries public affairs remained an important topic.

### **Age of Progressive Professionalism**

The last era witnessed a combination of traditional and civilian aspects of professionalism. This merger was articulated by Charles C. Moskos Jr. in "The Emergent Military: Civil, Traditional, or Plural."<sup>84</sup> This view of professionalism combined the traditional aspects of concentrating on certain military subjects, while including the aspects of fusing other governmental actions. Moskos suggested that "Traditional and divergent features in the military will become most pronounced in combat units, labor-intensive support units, and perhaps at senior command levels."<sup>85</sup> He also asserted, "A predominantly civilianized military could easily lose that élan so necessary for the functioning of a military organization."<sup>86</sup> This kind of plural professionalism, according to Moskos, was already visible in the US Air Force. The difference in the level of civilianization was more easily seen in this service than in others.<sup>87</sup> The concept of pluralism enables taking the best of both previous articulations of professionalism.

The withdrawal from Vietnam and the falling public support of the military also affected the manner in which the Army, specifically, was manned. Starting in 1973, the military became an All Volunteer Force (AVF) and ceased using the draft. The arguments of those for and against are not of importance here. How to achieve increased civil support of the military remained an issue.

There was an increase in articles and books written covering military and professionalism topics during the early 1970s. This inquiry will focus on two books and one article all written by professional officers. First was Colonel Robert G. Gard's article, "The Military and American Society," which concluded that the US Armed Forces were in an identity crisis and was searching for ways to adapt traditional professionalism concepts and practices to the modern period. Conducting a review and overhaul of the education and training programs were insufficient, and a full-scale reevaluation of career patterns was required to ensure that officers developed the necessary skills and those who do not get troop command could still advance. The Army must constantly adjust to society, but required some traditional values to function in combat, such as the need for orders to be obeyed.<sup>88</sup> The next was US Army Lieutenant Colonel William L. Hauser's book, which argued that the military was not isolated from society because both were dealing with the same issues: drug abuse, race relations, etc.<sup>89</sup> He stated that professionalism may have to be separated into two groups: the fighting Army and the sustaining Army.<sup>90</sup> He concluded

by noting that the Army must adapt to society and that it required public support.<sup>91</sup> In short, he agreed with the idea of a plural professionalism. The last is the book by Lieutenant Colonels Zeb B. Bradford Jr. and Frederick J. Brown, *The US Army in Transition*. They argue that the issue was not military isolation, but the opposite. This peril of moving closer to society risks losing unique, and necessary, capabilities of the profession. They agreed with the need for a pluralistic Army, but emphasize the Army's need to retain its unique capability while mirroring society.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, these officers were in general agreement that the Army needed to combine the best from the previous two segments. With military prestige being very low, Army Chief of Staff General William C. Westmoreland tried to reinvigorate the profession.

Westmoreland initiated studies to help define the way ahead. The first, for the Army's internal use, was titled *The Army in Transition*, dated 6 June 1973. The inquiry's purpose was to articulate what the Army had accomplished from the Tet Offensive from 1968 to 1972, but also expressed the Army's concerns, challenges, and perceived problems in the future.<sup>93</sup> It addressed the fallout from Vietnam and how it affected the Army's professionalism. It also examined social problems and their impact on the Army, and how the press coverage of the Army had been less than favorable. Also, that the media's unfavorable coverage caused military members to be less inclined to talk with the press. This resulted in coverage that was more adverse, because the press would use anyone connected to the military without stating the person's authority or bias, to get a story.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, Army leaders recognized the need to improve the Army's ability to communicate. It was not sufficient to issue new policies and regulation, but the Army had to get out and articulate the why and how this new policy affects the soldiers in the Army.<sup>95</sup> Tied to this was the need for the public's acceptance of the Army's legitimacy. Public confidence influences not only actions on the battlefield, but the Army's size, composition, and limits. Thus, a military's viability was not just related to numbers, but also required a favorable public attitude.<sup>96</sup> This was how the Chief of Staff saw the future, but how would he affect education?

The changes in education were articulated in two major Army studies. The first was *A Review of Education and Training of Officers (RETO)* done in 1978, which investigated the period from 1980 to 1984.<sup>97</sup> Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) replaced CONARC in 1973 as the agent responsible for the Army's training and education. This study resulted from TRADOC's initial revision in 1973 of the schools' curriculum to emphasize tactical competence, and the Army's realization in 1977 that it was not getting the type of officer it needed.<sup>98</sup> The study concluded that the Army was moving away from equipping the man and toward manning the equipment, which was a significant change from the past.<sup>99</sup> One of the key aspects of this study was the reinvigoration of the Army's professionalism. The board concluded that the Army needed a systematic program of Professional Military Education (PME); this went beyond the acquisition of skills and looked at broader issues. The skills that broaden the officers' understanding could also contribute to bridging the civilian community trust gap.<sup>100</sup> The last educational study to be discussed is the *Professional Development of Officers Study* that examined the period from 1985 to 2025. It found that the future would require even more knowledge for an officer to remain technically and tactically proficient and that Army schools were placed at the key



transition points.<sup>101</sup> It asserted that the Army retained a disproportionate focus on training and it lacked a true philosophy for officer education.<sup>102</sup> The study provides interesting findings that reiterate the Chief of Staff's concept of "Be, Know, Do": an officer must be a professional, know his job and his Soldiers, and do what is expected.<sup>103</sup> It provides concrete examples of what was expected of officers and some of them related to the profession's connection with civil society. For example, officers of the rank of colonel are expected to demonstrate officer attributes within the service and in public. It further stated that general officers must represent the military with the public, media, Government, and academia.<sup>104</sup> Another interesting Chief of Staff decision was the need to develop information management and public affairs courses for general officers.<sup>105</sup> This reinforced the concept that the Army senior leaders' grasped the need for public affairs instruction, but lacked a comprehensive professional military education structure and concepts. The question was whether Army War College students understood the need for public affairs instruction.

Numerous students were fully cognizant of the need to improve the Army's image and the necessity of public affairs. This paper will examine a few to provide context. First, Donald E. Gelke concluded that one of the contributing factors to the Army's poor public image was that not a lot of people were speaking to the public on the Army's behalf. His public relations formula was very simple: if you are doing your job correctly and imparting information there will be a change in the public's view. Also, public opinion was not changed in the short term and people-to-people contact had the most impact.<sup>106</sup> The Army War College elective, "The Media and the Military in a Free Society," used Lieutenant Colonel Donald S. Mahlberg's paper, "The Military and the Media: A Problem of Perception."<sup>107</sup> He concluded that the innate dislike was due to the military officer not understanding the press's role in a democratic society, and the key to solving this was education.<sup>108</sup> He also found that "One of the most neglected areas in military education is the development in the professional officers of an understanding of the role of mass communications."<sup>109</sup> He stated that military education must include a study of the development of the American press.<sup>110</sup> These papers indicate that some students understood the need to inform the public, but acknowledged that there was a problem with how they communicate. Some of this could be related back to professionalism and whether they can use civilian language versus military vernacular. Finally, the article written by Lieutenant Colonel Clyde A. Hennies, "Public Affairs Training For the Army's Officers Corps: Need or Neglect?" concluded that senior officers lack confidence in dealing with the media, and the military distrusts the media. Furthermore, "There is unanimous opinion that the officer corps should receive training and education in press related subjects, and that it should be started earlier in an officer's career (captain level). It should be mandatory at least at the outset."<sup>111</sup> Hennies conducted a survey of his fellow War College students, and found that 79.8 percent of the officers had no formal education in public relations, journalism, or mass communications. Also, 93 percent agreed with the following statement: "All officers O5 and above should be able to capably and confidently interact with reporters when required." However, 95.3 percent were *not* enrolled in the "Military Officer and the Media" elective.<sup>112</sup> This leads to the question, if the above was true, why were not more of these students choosing this elective? The answer is beyond the scope of this paper, but it could



be that although these students recognized the need, it was not high on their priority. This begs the question of why so few took the elective based on the senior leader's emphasis on the subject.

As for the War College curriculum, starting in AY 1973–74, the core course was reduced from 41 weeks to 31 weeks and these hours given to the research program. Harry Ball argued that the commandant, Major General DeWitt Smith tried to focus the College on where it could fit into the domestic environment.<sup>113</sup> The College's mission also was changed a few times. Primarily it was focused on preparing officers for command and staff positions within the Army, Department of Defense (DOD), and other departments and agencies by a professional military education in national security affairs with emphasis on land warfare.<sup>114</sup> The curriculum during this era directly addressed public affairs a little over 4 hours and indirectly about 6 hours. Furthermore, the allocation of hours increased as it moved closer to 1989. This can be viewed as connected to the DOD's approval of the Sidle Commission's report and their implementation guidance.<sup>115</sup> Also, the changes in the mission and objective or functions indicate that the Army leaders had accepted the need for a pluralist professionalism and had modified the Army War College curriculum to provide the necessary instruction.

## Conclusion

The Army recognized, at least during the majority of the 20th century, that it needed to have a means to inform the public of its activities. As the understanding of the impact of public relations grew, the location of the office that dealt with it within the DA also changed. The amount of hours allocated to public affairs instruction varied during most of the century. Public affairs was and is more than just speaking to the public. By the Army's definition, it includes informing the public, keeping the Army's soldiers informed, and effective community relations. Therefore, the education of Army officers must cover all the aspects or it will not be comprehensive. In addition, public relations was a command function. So what was the Army's plan to educate its future commanders on public affairs?

There were numerous educational boards and studies during this period, and each addressed, at some aspect, the issue of public affairs. This adds proof that the need for public affairs was recognized and acknowledged as important to the Army. The problem comes down to the fact that these boards made recommendations, but for various reasons their recommendations were not accepted or the implementation was not achieved to the fullest extent. The Army Chief of Staff made many statements on the importance of this subject, but these were not necessarily carried over into the Army War College curriculums. Also, initially the Army used the Common Subjects directive to define what topics were to be taught in each school, and this ensured that all officers received a certain level of education. However, it was the acceptance of the recommendation by the Williams Board that the requirement for Common Subjects be removed, which contributed, in the author's opinion, to the decline in hours allocated to public relations instruction. This, combined with the fact that the Army's view of professionalism was in the traditional period, allowed the curriculum to be shifted toward more military topics.

The changing view of professionalism was a crucial factor in what the War College taught. Movement through the ages, as this paper describes, indicates that the Army was trying to address what they understood in theory and what they viewed in the society it served. Adjustments to the process were made during the age of justifying the continuance of the Army, to the return of traditional professionalism, through the age of civilianization, and finally through pluralization. The constantly changing views of professionalism affected the articulation of the kind of officer required for the future. Did the Army want specialists or generalists in their officer corps? At what level should the changes be made, and what was the requirement for Army senior leaders? The answers to these questions affected professional military education. Thus, the Army senior leadership needed to clearly articulate what their view of professionalism for the next 15 years or more was and ensure that they will be able to achieve this via the Professional Military Education system.

Throughout the Cold War, there were many articles and other writings on professionalism and public affairs. The public affairs topics were primarily in the military related journals. The amount of articles varied in a similar quantity to the age that they were in. Discussion about professionalism took place in both civilian and military journals, and this indicates that the debate was broad based and not limited to within the Army.

In conclusion, the Army has recognized the need for public affairs for most of the 20th century. During the Cold War, the amount of public affairs instruction varied in a parallel to the changing view of professionalism. Army leadership needs to look into the future and define what they want their officer corps to be capable of doing at least 15 years in the future. Their conclusions must be described and stated in their view of the progressive nature of the Army's professional military education and officer educational philosophy. As a part of that process, the Army must include instruction on all three parts of public relations, if it expects to be able to gain and maintain public support in the future.

## Notes

1. Although Abraham Lincoln was talking about slavery, this concept still rings true. <http://lincoln.lib.niu.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.2221:2.lincoln,254> (accessed 20 August 2009).
2. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 320.
3. Adam Yarmolinsky, *The Military Establishment: Its Impact on American Society* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1971), 197–179.
4. Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 320.
5. For this paper, the terms public affairs and public relations are synonymous.
6. <http://www.history.army.mil/books/root/index.htm#contents> (accessed 10 August 2009), 159, 173, 185–186; Collins states that General Eisenhower appointed him to the position on 16 December 1945. General J. Lawton Collins, *Lightning Joe* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1994), 340. With the reorganization of 1950, the Office of Legislative Liaison was removed from under the Chief of Information and made their own staff section. <http://www.history.army.mil/books/root/index.htm#contents> (accessed 10 August 2009), 207. Public Affairs officers were trained at the Army Information School.
7. Department of the Army, *Army Regulation No 360-5, Public Information* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1950). Found in microfilm at CGSC. The regulation describes public information and section V covers community relations.
8. Walter Page was the vice president in charge of public relations for American Telephone and Telegraph Company and a consultant to the Secretary of War. Collins, *Lightning Joe*, 340.
9. Collins, *Lightning Joe*, 340.
10. Lieutenant General J. Lawton Collins, “The War Department Spreads the News,” *Military Review* (September 1947): 15. Abridged version of General Collin’s address to CGSC.
11. George S. Pappas, *Prudens Futuri: The U.S. Army War College, 1901–1967* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Alumni Association of the US Army War College, 1968), 141–147; Harry P. Ball, *Of Responsible Command: A History of the U.S. Army War College* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Alumni Association of the US Army War College, 1983), 260–263; War Department, *Report of War Department Military Education Board on Education System for Officers of the Army*, 1946, 10–11. Also known as the Gerow Board.
12. Department of the Army, *Report of the Department of the Army Board on Educational System for Officers* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1949), 8–9. Also known as the Eddy Board. The board recommended calling an Advanced Course, Command and General Staff College, and only later did the title Army War College become accepted. One of the reasons for the reestablishment of the Army War College was based on the lack of coverage in the PME of army group through Department of the Army either at the Command and General Staff College or the National War College. (See pages 3–4 in report.)
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## PANEL 4—THE COLD WAR

### Questions and Answers

(Transcript of Presentation)

**Mr. Paul Gardner**

**Moderated by Mr. John McGrath**

#### **Audience Member**

Donald Wright. Paul, this research is really interesting. I guess my first thought as you started going through this survey is that the Army [*inaudible*] services have provided on [*inaudible*] area training. I would call it that, but, public affairs professionals or public affairs officers and even enlisted now. So is it one solution that we just train a small cadre of public affairs experts and everybody else gets a smattering of this and that and hopefully that will carry us through? And I guess the next part of the question would be, what's being done now since 1989? Where are we now in CGSC and where are we at in the War College with hours dedicated to this subject?

#### **Mr. Gardner**

On the public affairs and training as specialists, I can take you back to [*inaudible*], which it's okay to have that, but it's the commander's responsibility. How do we train commanders? The commanders have to accept this. I found it wasn't until late 1980s early 1990s that we actually had public affairs in our doctrine manual, i.e., in FM 101-5-1, "Here's how to actually do an annex." The issue if we only have a few specialists, then we need to have the right specialists at the right time as Dr. Hammond brought out with General Sidle. He had the expertise. He had the knowledge. He was able to advise the commander. But the commander's not trained to understand that, to make those correlations, to accept the advice or reject it and understand what risks he's running. Then it all actually, my conclusion is it all comes down on the commanders. We can have all the specialists that we want, but unless they're wearing the green tabs of a commander, then I'm not sure we're going to actually get the effect of it. We didn't have public affairs as a recognized specialty until late, but again the question is, how much credibility do we give the public affairs folks that are out there trying to do the right thing. If we don't give them the credence and the acceptability, then they're not going to be accepted by the commander and the commander will not make the decision or even bring them into the staff studies. So, that's some of the issues. Yes, that's a good thing if we have the right people there. We give them the time to be trained, to work this in all their training exercises. For example, I don't think they started doing the public affairs in the Joint Readiness Training Center or any of the CTCs [Combat Training Centers] until the 1990s, although the NTC [National Training Center] came in the '70s. So, the whole thing that I've concluded from this is that until we get the commander's buy-in, nothing else is going to go from there. I really can't

address what's going on with the Army War College curriculum at the current time because I did not go through that.

**Audience Member**

Paul, I was just wondering, perhaps people didn't take the electives fairly simply because you can't get ahead in public affairs in the Army. Thinking of General Sidle. He got his second star only after he had returned to the auxiliary and command at the appropriate level, then he got his second star. He got the star essentially because of his public affairs expertise, but he couldn't get it on that basis.

**Mr. Gardner**

No, sir, I agree with you. And again, it goes back to until the Army embraces public affairs and accepts that as a position. The Army may be moving toward that now, but they weren't back then. It was the specialists who were almost—this is the only analogy. It's almost like an additional duty. It was for a while, because we didn't think we really needed to keep the press informed. Until we start recognizing that it is a critical task, and you can make the argument in a new [FM] 3-0 with information being moved up there. Maybe we're heading in that direction, but back during the Cold War, that really wasn't necessarily there because the Army, you could make the assumption, and that's what I have, my understanding is that the Army expected that if we go back to war again after Vietnam, after the problems, we would actually only go based on the Weinberger Doctrine and the Powell Doctrine that would actually have public support. So I agree with you. I think some of the other Services in the 1970s or '80s started having a dedicated flag officer running their public affairs. Don, this would also kind of indirectly answer your question. They actually had people in that position and that was a means of getting promoted. Until the public, correction, until the public affairs and commanders actually see that, I'm not sure, at least in this time period, the Cold War, that I would argue that's probably maybe the only lessons we can learn from that.

**Audience Member**

Yesterday, Fred told us that you've got to have a neutral press corps and then there was a quote from the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* from Robert Bazell, "There's no such thing as objectivity." I'm not talking about the press now, I'm talking about an officer corps. My experience is that about, well, a large percentage of our officer corps is conservative Republicans. Isn't there a great danger as we encourage officers to engage on losing our long-standing tradition of being apolitical as a force for the nation?

**Mr. Gardner**

Apolitical or a-partisan?

**Audience Member**

You tell me.

**Mr. Gardner**

Well, I would argue George Marshall was a-partisan. You have to deal with the political realm. That's just a fact of that level, especially for senior officers. If you just say, "The Army needs this, here's why, here's the military requirement," and we stay in our lane, we

stay focused on military tasks, we tie it back to that. Personally, I'm not that concerned, focusing in on the Cold War time, that it would actually compromise, if you stick to your lane, stick to military requirements and try to articulate this to the public so they understand why you need certain things. Then the other thing, and you heard it throughout, if you make a mistake, just admit it. The coverups or anything you try to hide, if you throw the classification stamp on it, it would take me back to Senator Fulbright's book, *The Pentagon's Propaganda Machine*. We're talking about how they're going to bring out this new system and they put a FOUO, For Official Use Only, sticker on it. He took significant objections to this and he writes in the book, "It's one thing to inform," and he advocates that the military inform the public. He draws the line when you try to sell something. I would argue that regardless of what political affiliation you are, if you stay a-partisan and just inform, I think you're on solid ground.

### **Audience Member**

I'd like to explore the last question raised. Is there an issue here of the Army, like any good institution, trying to have it both ways—maintaining the military objective and the military mission accomplishments and at the same time intruding into the civilians or with public relations [*inaudible*]? In effect, your military mission accomplishment, which is the primary purpose, is being used as the standard by which you should intrude into what's [*inaudible*] civilian activity? What is the danger of that?

### **Mr. Gardner**

I'm not sure on the intrusion because if you go back to earlier times, we've always, the Army's always tried to get their position out and there are arguments out there that one of the problems was that the Army will not take a hard position and make a partisan call. We need this because if your foreign policy has this as a requirement, then this is the military force we require to accomplish that. The politicians can always make the decision as my research led me to what General Ridgway was arguing, which is some arbitrary allocation of resources done by the Secretary of Defense. He argued, he made his point known, he actually went up to the National Security Council and tried to articulate it. So I don't think it's necessarily intrusion. I think it's trying to inform the public what their Army and what their sons, daughters, and family members are doing. So that's again—I tie it back to if we just inform and don't try to put a spin on it, don't try to sell it and try to do the best you can and being as forthright as you can, then I personally don't see transitioning into the wrong territory, sir.

### **Audience Member**

Just an observation, please comment if you will. Your responses to the last two observations, it's not the military intruding into the press's realm, the press is intruding in the military's realm. The military is fairly happy because they don't. And as far as, yes, the officer corps does skew conservative. I mean, they're not rabidly so. There's diversity, but they do. And whether it's 70 percent or not, I don't know if that's true, but wait a minute. Journalists, proven studies show, in the major media outlets skew up to 90 percent straight Democratic vote. So you can't hold that up and say, "Well, military's got trouble because they're conservative." The military is what it is. The problem I see is that as a society,

we're now a post-racial segregation, but we're self-segregating in careers and very different human beings, very profoundly different people go into journalism and the military.

**Mr. Gardner**

Sir, the only thing I'd add to that is we're all trying to do the best for our public, for our nation, and these are just different ways of keeping the public informed. That would be my only comment to that, sir.

**Audience Member**

I think one of the problems we have, and the word "intrusion" kind of distorts and distracts the situation a little bit, is that the Army is going to get drawn into, and in fact, all Armed Services are going to get drawn into the political realm whether we like it or not. We've seen it recently with General Petraeus and all the other officers who testify before Congress. When the Air Force tried to get this new aircraft that I think they didn't get as many as they wanted, but we're always going to have the situation where the military appears to be "intruding" into the political realm when in fact what they're doing is perhaps lobbying and they are being drawn in by certain Congressmen and Senators who want them to testify. So a certain weapons system, I mean, if the weapons system is being constructed in a particular Congressman's district, they're going to want military support so they can get that weapons system done in their district and get more jobs back and stuff like that. So we have perhaps in many cases the appearance of the military intruding into the civilian sector, when in fact the military is only being a part of the process, and a very necessary part.

**Mr. Gardner**

The one thing I'd say with that is the military always has responsibility back to the legislature. We need to present to them our opinion on certain facts, that is part of the Constitution, thus, we must do that. Again, my whole focus on this is saying when they go up there, that's why they have the Office of Legislative Liaison and they do certain things to make sure that people are up there and providing accurate information. But again, it's trying to tie it back to the curriculum. How do we expect our officers to understand that, understand that tenuous position they're in when they go up and testify in Congress? If we don't help them understand it through the educational means so that when they do become one, two, three, and four star generals, making those public opinions, correction, those public statements in front of Congress and trying to stay again, as I've termed it, a-partisan because at the four-star level, you are going to be in the political realm. That's just basically your nature. It's just, how do you stay a-partisan and provide a military viewpoint understanding the political ramifications and necessities of why you're there?

**Audience Member**

Sir, if you allow me just an observation. The question was asked previously, what are we doing now to build on what may have been perceived as the Army's success in its attempt to build up in parts of public affairs, just speaking in terms of CGSC and the Combined Arms Center, probably many students in this room could explain it better than I. But from day one, I think we take away from ILE specifically that there's a major importance that

we have to understand for public affairs, we have a mandatory strategic communications requirement to complete for graduation throughout the core instruction we offer. We receive all kinds of information about community level [*inaudible*] of information, getting our subsequent messages out through the media and it's not just coming from military instructors. This information that we receive from media panels and I think Mr. Peters was even here for some of the media accounts that we had and other media professionals as well. We're continuing to build. Just as an observation and taking away from this course the absolute importance of understanding how we in the military should approach the media.

**Mr. Gardner**

I agree.

**Audience Member**

I would like to just follow that comment. The topic of discussion is public affairs, but I think it's [*inaudible*] public affairs, it is this formal mechanism [*inaudible*]. Really what we're talking about is media relations. It's the media relations that we're focused on here at this time, because I would contend that what we're asking our leaders to do is to engage the media in many cases well outside the formal public affairs canvas, and that's something completely, some would say, "Well, it's a nuance." But, I think it's a very important nuance in understanding.

**Mr. Gardner**

I understand it, and that's why I tried to lay out public information. How do you get your message across to the public, whether it's via the media or just by going out and talking to someone. So I'm in agreement with you. The key thing is just to get the message out and just to engage with the public so they understand where all their tax dollars are going, especially when it's allocated to the Services.

**Mr. McGrath**

Let me ask the last question then. The Marines and to a lesser extent, the Air Force, have legendarily successful public information, public affairs programs. Have you looked at those other services to see how they vary from the Army and the educational?

**Mr. Gardner**

No, not at this time. I have not looked at that, so I really don't have a base to make any statement on that.

**Mr. McGrath**

I guess that will be it. As is the new tradition here, we'll present Paul with the Fort Leavenworth official coffee table book, *Three Centuries of Service*. Thank you for your presentation.





## PANEL 5—EXPERIENCES BEYOND THE US ARMY

### **Soviet News Media Performance During the Afghan War: STRATCOM Utopia or Dystopia?**

(Submitted Paper)

by

**Robert Baumann, Ph.D.**

Imagine, if you can, a state with a comprehensive strategic communications system designed to harmonize information operations in times of war and peace. Picture a social information infrastructure, from universities to popular entertainment, which takes its cues from a master department of strategic communications that enjoys real control over the release of information. Add to this a press corps, driven not by competition for subscriptions or the allure of sensational prize-winning scoops, but by an officially determined mandate to serve as an arm of the war effort. Finally, conjure up in your mind's eye a cadre of newsroom editors who draw their paychecks from the same regime as the public affairs officers and are guided by an identical mission statement. Would not such a system optimize official strategic communications in wartime?

This paper will examine the actual performance of such a system in a recent historical case: the Soviet war in Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989. The focus is not on relations between Soviet journalists and the Soviet Army, which remained fairly cordial. Of course, this ought to have been the case given their relatively convergent purposes. Rather, this study examines to what extent Soviet strategic communications, in which the Soviet news media played an integral role, aided the war effort by sustaining morale on the home front.

When political philosopher Hannah Arendt framed the concept of the totalitarian state in the *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), it was with good reason that the USSR served as a source of inspiration. Novelists George Orwell and Aldus Huxley were equally impressed. Under Joseph Stalin, the Soviet state managed all available means of shaping public perceptions—schools, the arts, print media, mass meetings, and public spectacles.

Not surprisingly, many in US national security circles believed in 1980 that the Soviet ability to suffocate dissent and employ all media to cheerlead for the war effort would illustrate the power of a comprehensive strategic communications approach. The implied contrast to the American war in Vietnam, during the latter half of which criticism in the news media seemed increasingly pervasive, suggested that the Soviets would fare much better. Facing no requirement to fend off domestic criticism, the Soviets could more effectively sustain their war effort to a victorious conclusion.

There was some basis for this prognosis. Many norms of the Stalin-era Soviet media persisted into the 1980s. Among the most Orwellian for Western observers was the

presentation of official speeches throughout the print media. Addresses by leading political figures, particularly during Party Congresses and other milestone events, appeared in complete text, often beginning on the front page. Especially striking was the parenthetical insertion of applause lines on a graduated scale from “applause,” to “prolonged applause,” to “stormy, prolonged applause.” Thus, if the reader had any doubt as to what was important or whether the address resonated with the audience, this official scale offered a reliable indication. For readers who lacked the resolve to comb through 5,000 word speeches couched in the bureaucratic jargon of the reigning ideology, on holidays and other notable occasions the Party released lists of official slogans. A case in point would be the list of 56 May Day slogans published in *Pravda* (*Truth*—the Communist Party daily), *Izvestiia* (*News*—the official government daily), *Krasnaia zvezda* (*Red Star*—the military daily), and a host of other papers on 17 April 1983. These constituted the Soviet version of political bumper stickers and would be amply in evidence during the official parades across the country. In addition to the usual calls praising Marxism-Leninism or rallying the international working class, a number focused on foreign policy concerns. These included standard denunciations of imperialism, an evil that by definition in the Soviet lexicon could only be perpetrated by nonsocialist states. More topical were rejections of Israeli aggression and American intentions to deploy missiles in Europe. One specifically urged the countries of Asia to resist imperialism, “hegemonism,” and neocolonialism.<sup>1</sup> This slogan, the only one making oblique reference to Afghanistan, still appeared verbatim in the even more robust list of 63 slogans published as part of the buildup to the 67th anniversary of the October Revolution in autumn 1984.<sup>2</sup>

Because, as noted above, the Soviet news media constituted only one facet of a broad strategic communications effort, it is important to consider their role in that light. In other words, this paper cannot overlook the resonant effects of complementary efforts to shape perceptions of the war. The actual gathering of hard news was discretionary, but welcome, as long as the news was good or served a politically approved purpose. Indeed, so great was the emphasis on positive images of Soviet life and policies that even airplane crashes routinely went unreported if Soviet aircraft were involved. Meanwhile, the merest hint that official policy or dogma might be incorrect was explicitly beyond the pale of consideration, except in cases when Soviet leaders critiqued the incorrect policies of repudiated predecessors. For instance, following the ouster of Nikita Khrushchev in 1964, his policies came under public criticism by Leonid Brezhnev and Aleksei Kosygin who replaced him. As for the deposed leader himself, Khrushchev within days slipped into the utter obscurity of an ordinary pensioner, never quoted, photographed, or remarked on.

The Khrushchev case raises a related point. Denial of information was as important to Soviet propaganda as dissemination. To shield their domestic audience from contrary opinion, the Soviet authorities had to combat the pernicious influence of foreign broadcasts from sources such as the British Broadcasting Corporation, Voice of America, and especially Radio Liberty, whose content focused on events and conditions inside the USSR. Soviet efforts to contain information contamination assumed two main forms. The first was jamming, which operated variably according to the broadcast source and the political environment. During the United States–Soviet détente of the 1970s, BBC and Voice of

American transmissions reached Soviet audiences without obstruction. Jamming resumed, however, in 1981. In contrast, the Soviets jammed Radio Liberty continuously from March 1953 until November 1988.<sup>3</sup> The second method of containment was the threat of criminal prosecution of listeners. Although listening was not itself a crime, the circulation of “anti-Soviet propaganda” by informing others of the content of dissonant foreign broadcasts constituted a prosecutable offense. Moreover, listening was occasionally cited as an aggravating factor in the prosecution of individuals charged with anti-Soviet activities.<sup>4</sup> Ultimately, neither method fully prevented Soviet citizens from listening to proscribed foreign broadcasts. Western polling data suggested that from 1980 to 1988 listenership remained fairly constant at from 5 to 10 percent for BBC and Radio Liberty and at about 15 percent for Voice of America.<sup>5</sup>

Looking at the overall Soviet media campaign with respect to Afghanistan, the Soviets did a good job of creating a unified narrative among information sources. One Soviet journalist who covered the war explained the system this way: “The articles they [journalists] wrote were edited mercilessly. The final touches would be applied in Moscow by Glavlit (central publishing) and the central military censorship office. . . . Not a single article from Kabul could be broadcast or published without passing through these two obstacles.” In the end, he concluded, “Collectively and individually, we did what was demanded of us; that is, we drew an attractive picture of revolutionary Afghanistan, not forgetting to project the image of the Soviet soldier as a peacemaker.” All news outlets presented the official view virtually without a dissenting voice.<sup>6</sup>

There was in fact a single celebrated incident in which a broadcaster for Soviet radio admitted a denunciation of Soviet aggression in Afghanistan. Radio Moscow broadcaster Vladimir Danchev took the liberty of praising resistance against Soviet “invaders” during a news report (aimed primarily at a foreign audience) in May 1983.<sup>7</sup> In this instance, Soviet authorities immediately suspended him from his position. To be sure, such an extemporaneous partisan (not to mention unpatriotic) editorial might well have led to complications even had he been an employee of a Western news service. He would not, however, have been subjected to psychiatric confinement and a security investigation had he worked for the BBC or the Associated Press.<sup>8</sup> Neither would he have been officially muzzled. Rather, he would have found some other forum from which to express his opinions.

Meanwhile Soviet television, in stark contrast to the presentation of the American experience in Vietnam, did not bring combat footage into Soviet living rooms. Coverage of any sort was rare and tended to focus on the repetition of official statements.

In general, the Soviet information system worked as intended. The pervasive human network of Communist Party members carried the official message into workplaces and institutions across the country. For example, within several weeks of the invasion, Party representatives organized a public information assembly at Moscow University to give students the authoritative word that the “limited contingent” of Soviet troops in Afghanistan was responding to a call for help from a friendly people on their southern border (as it was at the time) and would remain only long enough to stabilize the situation, probably no more than a few weeks. The same words and phrases found faithful replication across forums

and media outlets of all types. Before long, as it became clear that the duration of the mission was open ended, official statements forecast a Soviet troop departure as soon as the Afghan people no longer needed military assistance.

In stark contrast to the lavish reporting of actions of civil disobedience or expressions of dissent in the United States during the Vietnam war, Soviet media did not report rare acts of protest against official policy, which in any case were shut down by the police without delay. In one such unreported instance, a small group of students in the provincial capital of Ufa staged the briefest of demonstrations in support of dissident physicist Andrei Sakharov's position against the war. Arrests followed shortly and punishments were meted out to anyone even remotely associated with the event.<sup>9</sup>

Over time, particularly with the start of Gorbachev's new policy of "glasnost" in 1987, the official Soviet narrative of the war evolved to reflect changes in strategy and policy. In the midst of change, it was occasionally possible to discern certain nuances in the reporting that hinted at controversies behind the scenes. For example, in 1987, there was indication that Gorbachev faced some opposition in his efforts to reach an acceptable political settlement in Afghanistan to facilitate Soviet withdrawal. One contemporary CIA media analyst noted emphasis on the necessity for a realistic political solution. By implication, this suggested that some "hardliners" may have been reluctant to accept some concessions then on the negotiating table.<sup>10</sup> Of course, this remained a matter of conjecture because the "hardliners" had minimal opportunity to break ranks publicly and put out a competing message.

Four major strategic communications trends stand out as key and fairly enduring features of the Soviet wartime narrative. Though carefully crafted, the themes could not in the long run withstand the corrosive effects of a reality that refused to adhere to the script. Furthermore, the unraveling of each storyline ultimately helped undermine not just the war effort but the Soviet regime itself.

*Trend One:* The Soviet intervention was at the behest of the legitimate government, essentially defensive, and heavily weighted toward humanitarian support activities. In a published interview in *Pravda* on 13 January 1980, Party General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev provided a succinct mission statement: "The only task of the Soviet contingents is to assist the Afghans in repulsing aggression from the outside." The Soviet leader further asserted that it was not the legally invited Soviet forces, but others, who were violating the United Nations charter by interfering in Afghanistan's internal affairs.<sup>11</sup> Soviet media diverted the focus from conventional military operations conducted by Soviet forces to descriptions of ancillary activities, such as escorting food convoys and scathing accounts of provocations by the Americans or Chinese and their cronies among self-serving elements in the native Muslim clergy.

So steadfastly did the Soviets stay on message that no substantive accounts of combat appeared in the Soviet press until about 1984, 4 years into the war. To be sure, there were vaguely worded accounts of heroism, but these were too few to suggest that actual fighting was anything other than an anomaly in Afghanistan. Major division-size ground offensives and air campaigns went unreported. The flood of refugees fleeing into Pakistan and Iran proceeded invisibly and, needless to add, there were no recorded atrocities. Reports of the

deaths of Soviet soldiers, the first of which occurred 10 months into the war in September 1981, were rare and cryptic.<sup>12</sup> Even when coverage expanded slightly in the middle of the war, the censors had their say. As recounted by a former Soviet war correspondent, censors altered a 1984 description of field combat to convey the impression that Afghan, rather than Soviet, soldiers were central in the action. Moreover, the published version transformed an ineffective action into a great victory.<sup>13</sup> Not infrequently, Soviet soldiers disapproved of the coverage. One told a reporter, “I want to write about Afghanistan myself. Such nonsense in print—sometimes it’s sickening.”<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps most remarkable of all, casualty totals of any sort went unreported until Mikhail Gorbachev authorized their release in 1988 in the midst of his glasnost campaign. By this time, of course, the official story line on Afghanistan had finally changed.

One early challenge to the official interpretation of the war’s causes was the depiction of President Hafizullah Amin of Afghanistan. Amin was an early target of the skillfully executed Soviet takeover in Kabul and died in a shootout during the first hours of combat operations. The logic puzzle for the Soviets was to explain how it came to be that the man who had signed the last several requests asking for Soviet military support, the proclaimed basis for the operation’s assertion of legitimacy, was himself killed resisting removal. In this respect, the Soviet press completely skirted the fact that Amin had been the head of state requesting aid and instead identified him as a ruthless dictator and a tool of the CIA. To substantiate the assertion, Soviet sources pointed out that Amin had studied in the United States at Columbia University. (This much was true, although Amin had closely aligned himself with other student Marxists during his university days and was perceived as a genuine student radical.<sup>15</sup>) Concurrent with Amin’s removal was the installation of Babrak Karmal, a loyal Soviet henchman presented as a true son of the Afghan people, as the new president.

*Trend Two:* The Soviets consistently characterized Afghanistan as one front in a multifaceted anti-Soviet campaign waged by American imperialists to thwart the natural and historically progressive expansion of socialism. President Jimmy Carter, rarely thought of as a “hawk” in the US domestic political context, appeared as just another bellicose American with a knee-jerk anti-Soviet fixation. Thus were explained his tabling of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT II), the imposition of an embargo on grain sales to the USSR, and other American responses to Soviet actions in Afghanistan. In concert with this interpretation, Soviet involvement in Afghanistan resulted from American meddling, especially by CIA operatives bent on subverting the will of the people. (Of course, Carter’s National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski later acknowledged in a published interview that in the year preceding the Soviet invasion the United States had begun to provide clandestine support to elements of the spontaneously emerging resistance to the Soviet client regime in Afghanistan.<sup>16</sup> The point of distinction, of course, is that the Americans were aiding, not instigating, the movement.)

The theme of “struggle against imperialist aggression” manifested itself in a variety of ways. News features remembering the victories against foreign aggression during the revolution, civil war, and the Great Patriotic war appeared with regularity. Freshly minted



histories made the case that foreign subversion in Afghanistan was a linear extension of foreign collaboration with the reactionary Basmachi campaigns in central Asia between 1919 and 1933. Attacks on Western “falsifiers” of history fused with efforts to discount the claims of contemporary critics of Soviet policy. One such work, suggestively titled *The Basmachis: Historical Truth and the Fabrications of Falsifiers*, argued “It is not by chance that Afghan counterrevolutionaries are referred to as dushmany (bandits) or basmachis.”<sup>17</sup>

*Trend Three:* The Soviet press never acknowledged widespread voices of international disapproval of their role in Afghanistan. With a curt dismissal, the official line depicted any and all contrary opinions as the fabricated slander of pathologically hostile elements among foreign imperialist circles and their operatives among various intelligence agencies. All thoughtful, informed international opinion understood and lauded the Soviet position. In fact, published guidance on official thinking for Party regulars contained in the 1980 *Knizhka partiinogo aktivista* (Short Handbook for Party Activists) stressed that the decision of the International Olympic Committee that the USSR would host the 1980 Summer Olympic Games was “convincing evidence of the universal recognition of the historical importance and correctness of the foreign policy of our country, the enormous contribution of the Soviet Union in the struggle for peace, its contribution to the international Olympic movement, the development of physical culture and sport.”<sup>18</sup>

This theme, too, confronted an unfriendly set of facts amidst the storm of international controversy following the invasion. Indeed, in an attempt to discredit the official picture presented to the Soviet audience, Voice of America broadcast the debates from the United Nations in January 1980 live and unedited. This, by the way, was a particularly clever ploy because Voice of America commentators, who were not necessarily perceived as objective observers, did not have to say much of anything. The raw evidence provided by the uninterrupted stream of international criticism by delegates from state after state was sufficient to create considerable cognitive dissonance for listeners accustomed to being told that progressive humanity everywhere admired Soviet foreign policy. Just weeks later, President Carter announced his intention to organize a boycott of the Moscow Olympiad, a gesture that he believed would constitute “a severe blow to the Soviet Union.”<sup>19</sup> Whatever the overall merits of this much debated decision, it forced Soviet propagandists into an awkward spot. The Soviet line maintained that the boycott had nothing whatsoever to do with Afghanistan. Rather, it reflected just another American attempt to sow international discord and undermine Soviet efforts to promote peace. In this observer’s experience, many Soviet citizens were unaware of the linkage between the boycott and the war until a helpful foreigner laid it out for them. That said, the boycott, which was joined by 55 countries, certainly dampened public morale over what was intended to be a gigantic celebratory occasion.

*Trend Four:* Soviet authorities gave no attention to those rare domestic critics who dared to question official policy. They did not acknowledge even the tiniest crack in the popular united front among all Soviet citizenry and institutions on the question of Afghanistan.

One incident that generated significant international furor while producing scarcely a ripple in the Soviet press was the internal exile of world-renowned atomic physicist Andrei Sakharov. The first prominent Soviet citizen to question publicly the rationale for Soviet

military operations in Afghanistan, Sakharov required delicate handling. As a decorated scientist who helped give birth to the Soviet atomic bomb, Sakharov became a source of increasing embarrassment to the Soviet regime. Reluctant to imprison this globally recognized figure as they might an ordinary citizen, the Soviets sought to mute his message by means of more subtle tactics. On 22 January 1981, Soviet police arrested Sakharov and transferred him to the “closed” city of Gorky, a large provincial city off limits to foreigners. There the authorities could isolate him from the outside world. Even then, however, he succeeded in smuggling out public statements, such as one in 1983 that included a scathing comment on Afghanistan: “Three years of appallingly cruel anti-guerrilla war have brought incalculable suffering to the Afghan people, as attested by the more than four million refugees in Pakistan and Iran.” He also characterized the Soviet system as “totalitarian,” contending that the closed decisionmaking process led directly to bad decisions, such as the one to invade Afghanistan.<sup>20</sup>

In the end, as with the case of the American media and the Vietnam war, it is impossible to establish with any precision the impact of Soviet media efforts during their war in Afghanistan. In neither instance is it possible to separate all factors that shaped public opinion so as to isolate an impact specifically traceable to strategic communications. The comparative scarcity of opinion data aggravates the problem. Nevertheless, available indicators do permit some provisional findings.

Broadly speaking, at the beginning of the Soviet war there were virtually no manifestations of dissent, but by the end disillusionment was widespread. A number of individuals of my acquaintance changed their views on the war, in some instances well before the midpoint in 1984. One strong indicator was the evident desire of parents to keep their sons out of the Army, and consequently the war. Indeed, so great was the desire to avoid service in Afghanistan that there were reports of Soviet personnel officers selling choice assignments in East Germany or elsewhere in the Warsaw Pact states.<sup>21</sup> Like their American Vietnam-era counterparts, many Soviet students sought to obtain coveted medical and educational exemptions that would keep them out of combat duty. This contributed to the toxic perception that the sons of senior Party officials managed to avoid Afghan service.<sup>22</sup> The first published signs of collapsing support for the war appeared in youth-oriented periodicals in 1986. Letters to the editor in the weekly *Sobesednik* toward the end of 1986 suggested that the official portrait of young draftees proud to do their international duty was a mirage.<sup>23</sup> One survey suggested that by 1987 only 6 percent of the public viewed military service in Afghanistan as honorable, whereas 46 percent regarded it as a “disgrace.”<sup>24</sup>

Survey research conducted by the Soviet Area Audience Opinion and Research Division, which operated separately but in conjunction with Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, suggested a strong correlation between the information sources of Soviet listeners and their opinions. These surveys, based on interviews with about 5,000 Soviet citizens traveling abroad each year, were obviously problematic to some degree.<sup>25</sup> They reflected opinions current among an atypical sample. The trends are noteworthy, however. Disapproval of the war among the adult urban Soviet populace grew from 25 percent to 45 percent between 1984 and 1987. Curiously, during the same stretch, support for the war held almost steady, diminishing from 25 percent to 24 percent.<sup>26</sup>

Of particular note was a strong correlation between the type of information source relied on and attitudes toward the war. Clearly, those who relied most on the Soviet press were less likely to disapprove of the war. Those who admitted to receiving their information from Western broadcasts disapproved at a rate of 52 percent in 1984 and 71 percent in 1987. Those depending on the social grapevine (word of mouth) showed 46 percent disapproval in 1984 and 64 percent in 1987. (In the author's experience, incidentally, the importance of informal information networks was remarkable.) Meanwhile, those relying most on official domestic sources, whether print, TV, radio, or public meetings, disapproved at rates between 19 percent and 23 percent in 1984, and then between 34 percent and 39 percent in 1987.<sup>27</sup>

Support for the war policy varied significantly by region. In 1986–87, approval slipped to 18 percent in central Asia while disapproval reached 49 percent. Results were more negative among residents of the Baltic republics, with disapproval exceeding approval by 67 percent to 12 percent, and in the Caucasus where disapproval stood at 58 percent.<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps most surprising in the survey data was that whereas only 8 percent of Communist Party members disapproved of the war in Afghanistan in 1984, 37 percent did so in 1987. At the same time, member support dropped from 54 percent to 39 percent.<sup>29</sup> To be sure, Gorbachev's policy of glasnost and his own publically expressed concerns about the war had enormous influence toward the end. In his memoirs, Gorbachev noted that discussions in the Soviet Politbureau (the supreme decisionmaking body) began as early as 1985. Moreover, the Central Committee presented the finding to the 17th Communist Party Congress in 1986 that the war had to be brought to an end.<sup>30</sup> SAAOR data from 1988 and 1989 showed that 90 percent of the general public supported Gorbachev's decision to withdraw Soviet forces from Afghanistan. Only 15 percent believed that the Soviet Union had achieved its strategic objectives.<sup>31</sup>

Overall then, this paper posits three rough conclusions about Soviet media and the Afghan war.

- First, though initially enjoying some success, the Soviet strategic communications system, and the media specifically, was unable to sustain public support for the war over the long run. In all probability, had it not been for the full range of coercive mechanisms available, a cohesive and vibrant antiwar movement would have emerged by 1984. Dissent was private, but nonetheless real.

- Second, the official moratorium on unpleasant news failed utterly to keep bad news out of the public domain. To use a physics analogy, no developed society with an educated population will fail to fill an information vacuum. Since the official information sources would not do it, people took it upon themselves. As early as March 1980, when no Soviet casualties had yet been acknowledged, I heard that coffins were arriving at Sheremetyevo Airport late at night. True or not, and I suspect it was, unofficial news circulated with astonishing speed and in ever growing volume. Rumors abounded and soaring casualty estimates made the rounds. One underground Samizdat (self-published) paper estimated losses at 30 percent.<sup>32</sup>

Because the official media quickly lost credibility, people drew their own conclusions. Once the initial official projection of a brief campaign proved false, gnawing doubts ate away at the official story. I well recall a conversation with a Communist Party member 4 months into the war. He told me, “Your government says we have 110,000 troops in Afghanistan. My government says we have 10,000 troops in Afghanistan. I figure we have about 60,000 troops in Afghanistan.”

- Third, in the end, falsifying the story was far more septic to the Soviet body politic than the truth would have been. By the late stages of the war, Soviet Afghan veterans, “*afgantsy*,” began speaking out. Whether or not they were supportive of the war, they tended to agree that the Soviet public had scant understanding of their sacrifices and that their government had done little to show its appreciation.<sup>33</sup> By withholding the stories of campaigns and battles, the regime left its war veterans feeling somehow orphaned, as though what they had done was not part of the history of the Soviet Army.

After the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, some would blame the war in Afghanistan. While in reality there were numerous causes of collapse—corruption, self-isolation of the leadership, cumbersome bureaucracy, centralized economic planning, ethnic disharmony—the Afghanistan war certainly played a supporting role in triggering systemic failure, as in the end did the centralized management of information.

## Notes

1. "Prizyvy TsK KPSS k 1 Maia 1983 goda," *Pravda*, 17 April 1983.
2. "Prizyvy TsK KPSS k 67-I godovshchine Belikoi Oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii," *Pravda*, 11 October 1984.
3. R. Eugene Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener: An Empirical Assessment of Radio Liberty and Western Broadcasting to the USSR during the Cold War* (Palo Alto, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2007), 8–9.
4. Peter Zvagulis, "Water Shaping the Rock or Cold War Broadcasting Impact in Latvia" (a paper delivered at the Cold War Broadcasting Impact Conference at the Hoover Institution, Stanford, October 2004), <http://zvadulis.com/Cold War.htm> (accessed 22 July 2009).
5. Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener*, 9.
6. Gennady Bocharov, *Russian Roulette: Afghanistan Through Russian Eyes*, trans. Alyona Koljevnikov (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1990), 52, 61–62.
7. John Burns, "Moscow Broadcaster who Altered Scripts is Returned to Work," *New York Times*, 15 December 1983, <http://www.nytimes.com/1983/12/15/world/moscow-broadcaster-who-altered-scripts-is-returned-to-work.html> (accessed 14 July 2009); Nikolai Lanine and Media Lens, "Invasion—A Comparison of Soviet and Western Media Performance," 20 November 2007, [http://medialens.org/alerts/07/071120\\_invasion\\_a\\_comparison.php](http://medialens.org/alerts/07/071120_invasion_a_comparison.php) (accessed 25 September 2008). In comparison, Dr. Noam Chomsky, former activist against the Vietnam war and since then a persistent critic of US and NATO foreign policy, points out that despite extensive searches he never uncovered a single instance in which a mainstream American journalist described the Vietnam war as an invasion or called for the Vietnamese to resist American aggression. See, Noam Chomsky, "Invasion Newspeak: U.S. & USSR," *FAIR*, December 1989, <http://www.chomsky.info/articles/198912.htm> (accessed 14 July 2009). Of course, Chomsky fails to add that numerous critiques of this sort on America's Vietnam policy appeared in openly published left-wing periodicals across the country. Thus, the implication that Americans lacked an opportunity to confront dissenting opinions is quite misleading.
8. Chomsky concurs on this point.
9. The author met one former student who was punished as a result of the event in which he took no direct part in the protest during a research visit to Ufa in 1992. Apparently, he had failed to prevent the participation of a younger student for whom he was a mentor. As a result, he was expelled from his institute.
10. "Current Soviet Strategy on Afghanistan—CIA document," 2 September 1987, faqs.org CIA Released Documents, <http://www.faqs.org/cia/docs/20/0001475990/current-soviet-strategy-of-afghanistan> (accessed 22 July 2009).
11. "From Replies of Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR to a Pravda Correspondent," in *The Truth About Afghanistan: Documents, Facts, Eyewitness Reports* (Moscow: Novosti Press, 1980), 7–14.
12. J. Bruce Amstutz, *Afghanistan: The First Five Years of Occupation* (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 1986), 129.
13. Artem Borovik, "Chto my natvorili?" *Sobesednik*, No. 37 (September 1989), 210, as cited in Anthony Arnold, *The Fateful Pebble: Afghanistan's Role in the Fall of the Soviet Union* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1993), 134.
14. Artyom Borovik, *The Hidden War: A Russian Journalist's Account of the Soviet War in Afghanistan* (New York, NY: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1990), 92.
15. Around 1990 the author had an extended conversation with a former Columbia student who had encountered Amin. He saw no reason to doubt that Amin was an authentic Marxist. Certainly he

would have been in good company at Columbia at the time. Even the Soviets, who sought to cloak Amin's assassination with charges that he worked for the CIA, would later criticize him for being too extreme as president in the pursuit of radical socialist reform in Afghanistan and thereby stirring up resistance.

16. "The CIA's Intervention in Afghanistan," interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, Paris, 15–21 January 1998, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/BRZ110A.html> (accessed 13 July 2009); "Brzezinski: West Must Avoid Russia's Mistakes in Afghanistan," Deutsche Welle, 16 October 2008, <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,3715692,00.html> (accessed 13 July 2009).

17. A.I. Zevelev, Iu. A. Poliakov, L.V. Shishkina, *Basmachestvo: Pravda istorii i vymysel fal'sifikatorov* (Moscow: Mysl', 1986), 7.

18. *Knizhka partiinogo aktivista 1980* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1979), 158.

19. Ronald Smothers, "Olympics; Bitterness Lingering Over Carter's Boycott," 19 July 1996, <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/07/19/sports/Olympics-bitterness-lingering-over-carter-s-byocott> (accessed 19 August 2009).

20. Andrei Sakharov, "Andrei Sakharov From Exile: Texts provided by the International League for Human Rights, New York, October 1983," <http://www.aip.org/history/Sakharov/essay2.htm> (accessed 15 July 2009).

21. Taras Kuzio, "Opposition in the USSR to the Invasion of Afghanistan," *Central Asian Survey* 6, no. 1 (1987): 112–114. Kuzio cites SAAOR data as well as an article by Sergei Khovanksi, "Afghanistan: The Bleeding Wound," *Détente*, no. 6, Spring 1986. In this author's experience, Soviet parents were anxious to keep their sons out of Afghanistan by whatever means necessary.

22. Bill Keller, "Russia's Divisive War: Home From Afghanistan," *New York Times Magazine*, 14 February 1988, 27.

23. Bogdan Nahaylo, "Soviet Newspaper Reveals Antipathy Among Youth Towards War in Afghanistan," *Radio Liberty Research* 3, no. 87, 14 January 1987, 1–3.

24. Elena Lesoto, *Komandirovka na voynu* (Moscow: Kniga, 1990), 15; Nahaylo, "Soviet Newspaper Reveals Antipathy," 1–3.

25. Board for International Broadcasting 1990 Annual Report, Facts about Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 1 January 1990, 53.

26. Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener*, 48.

27. Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener*, 48–49.

28. Mark Galeotti, *Afghanistan, The Soviet Union's Last War* (London: Routledge, 1995), 167. Galeotti also cites SAAOR data in presenting these figures.

29. Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener*, 50.

30. Mikhail Gorbachev, *Gorbachev: My Country and the World* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1999), 198.

31. Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener*, 51.

32. *Ausra*, No. 30 as cited in Kuzio, 101.

33. V. Pogrebniak, letter to the editor, *Krasnaia zvezda*, 22 March 1988; A. Turvandian, "Conscience Calls," *Kommunist* (Erevan), 24 September 1987, as translated in JPRS-UMA-87-045, 23 December 1987, 53; N. Burbyga, "Callousness: Soldier-Internationalists Encounter it Even in a Military Hospital," *Krasnaia zvezda*, 19 January 1988, as translated in JPRS-UMA-88-008, 3 May 1988, 23-26; V. Panov, "Ostavat'sia boitsami," *Znamenosets*, no. 4 (1988), 25-26; I. M. Dnyin, *Posle Afganiстана* (Moscow: Profizdat', 1990); N. Burbyga, "Gorkaia pravda nedavnei voiny," *Izvestiia*, 26 October 1990. These are just a few examples.





## **PANEL 5—EXPERIENCES BEYOND THE US ARMY**

### **Public Communications and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)**

(Submitted Paper)

**by**

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#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of how the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) views public communication, how it decides what it will and will not discuss publicly, and how public communication fits in with the mandate of the ICRC and its operational strategies. Before discussing public communication, it is essential that the mandate and role of the ICRC is clearly understood, as there is often confusion between the ICRC and other components of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, such as the American Red Cross.

The paper will begin with a brief explanation of the ICRC, how it fits into the larger Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, its mission, an overview of its major operations, and certain principles that are at the core of the institution. The paper will then differentiate different forms of communication used by the ICRC, from confidential bilateral discussions through operational communications to public communication involving the media. It will also describe the range of issues dealt with in ICRC public communication as well as different communication approaches used by the ICRC. It will conclude with a discussion of how the ICRC tries to balance the issues of neutrality, transparency, and confidentiality as well as how it views its role in public advocacy.

#### **The ICRC and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement**

The 150th anniversary of the Battle of Solferino, which opposed French and Austro-Prussian forces in Italy, was marked on 24 June 2009. A Swiss businessman by the name of Henri Dunant arrived at Solferino in the aftermath of the battle where 5,000 dead and 35,000 wounded had been for all intents and purposes abandoned. Horrified by what he saw, Dunant mobilized local villagers to help care for the wounded. This care was provided on the basis of need only, regardless of which uniform the soldier was wearing.

On his return later to Geneva, Dunant wrote a book, *Memories of Solferino*, and launched three major initiatives. He organized a group of leading Geneva citizens to form what they called “the International Committee for the Relief of the Wounded on

the Battlefield.” He suggested that every country should have its own national society of trained volunteers to respond in the case of war or natural disasters. Finally, he convinced the Swiss Government to convene the leading European governments to work out a treaty on the care of the wounded on the battlefield.

As part of this first Geneva Convention, an emblem to designate military medical staff on the battlefield was adopted. In deference to Dunant and the Swiss Government, it was decided to use a red cross—the reverse of the Swiss flag. The International Committee became the International Committee of the Red Cross; the national societies became the national Red Cross societies, which eventually included the American Red Cross.

There are now 186 Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies around the world. They have an umbrella organization, “The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.” Along with the ICRC, the national societies and the Federation make up the International Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement; however, each component is an independent organization.

In the case of natural disasters, the national society is the primary responder on behalf of the Movement. If the disaster goes beyond the capacity of the national society, the International Federation assumes the coordinating role. In the case of international armed conflict or internal conflict where the Geneva Conventions apply, the ICRC is the lead agency on behalf of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement.

### **ICRC Mission and Operations**

The ICRC’s mission is to protect and assist the civilian and military victims of armed conflicts and internal disturbances on a strictly neutral and impartial basis and to promote compliance with international humanitarian law. With its headquarters in Geneva, the ICRC now has delegations in over 80 countries around the world. It has over 12,000 employees, of which roughly 1,200 are expatriates while the others are residents of the country where they are employed. As of early 2009, its 10 largest operations by order of importance were Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Israel and the Occupied Territories, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Colombia, Chad, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan.

The ICRC is not a nongovernmental organization (NGO), nor is it an international organization, although in many countries it does have the legal status of an international organization. It is a private Swiss-based organization with international standing as recognized by the Geneva Conventions and the United Nations (UN). Its role and mandate are derived from the Geneva Conventions or the Law of Armed Conflict. As such, it is not a human rights organization, but works to protect and assist the victims of armed conflict, in particular civilians, those who have been injured (combatants and civilians), and those who have been detained in relation to a conflict.

Over 90 percent of the ICRC’s funding comes from governments. Although it does receive funding from private individuals and organizations, it does not conduct public fundraising campaigns. At the core of the ICRC values and of its operations is the concept of neutral independent humanitarian action (NIHA). Neutrality implies that the ICRC through its words and its activities must not suggest support for any particular side in a conflict, nor

can it be perceived as favoring one side over another. This neutrality is key to acceptance by all sides in a conflict, and therefore, fundamental to security for its staff in the field.

The ICRC does not travel in military convoys, nor does it use armed guards for its offices and residences, and (with the exception of Somalia) it does not use armed escorts when traveling in the field. Acceptance by the parties to the conflict and by the local population is, therefore, crucial not only for security, but also for basic access and for the ability to carry out its work. These acceptance/security needs apply to national staff as well as expatriates.

The ICRC must remain and be seen to remain independent. Although it will share information on humanitarian needs and its response with governments, the UN cluster system or other systems such as Provisional Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), it will remain independent of them and decide its activities according to its own criteria. Finally, ICRC activities must respond strictly to humanitarian needs and not be determined by any other objectives, be they political, military, or other.

### **ICRC Communications**

In early 2009, after a strongly worded ICRC news release concerning a particular conflict at that time, one newspaper reporter wrote, "It was an unusual statement from *the normally secretive ICRC*." In fact, the ICRC does communicate frequently, although its communication is often not the type that will generate attention-grabbing headlines. The ICRC sees communication as conditioned by operational need. Operational needs will often determine to what extent we communicate, what we say, and how forcefully we say it.

For the ICRC the priority is always access. This means access to those who require assistance, be they in places of detention or in conflict zones, which can be closed military areas or places where security risks are high. This also means access to those who have the power to improve conditions for people the ICRC wants to assist. This goes beyond physical access and includes a willingness to engage in discussion with the ICRC by those with power, whether they are local commanders, leaders of armed groups, or senior military and political figures.

The ICRC also sees communication as multifaceted. Public communication is one of several communication approaches. The ICRC privileges confidential bilateral discussions with authorities and others it hopes it can persuade to make changes on issues, such as the conduct of hostilities, the protection of the civilian population, or the conditions of detention. Public statements should not hinder such discussions and public denunciation often risks being counterproductive.

These confidential discussions can start with local commanders and prison directors and work their way up to the senior political and military leaders of governments or armed groups. During these discussions, the ICRC shares in great detail its observations, concerns, and recommendations. It often documents these in formal reports and requests investigation by the authorities as well as a formal response.

The ICRC also engages extensively in diplomatic multilateral communication. It maintains a permanent presence at the UN, NATO, the Organization of American States (OAS),

and the African Union among other organizations. Without revealing the contents of confidential bilateral discussions, it will share its concerns in a broad manner with government officials and embassies of countries that may have some influence on the situation. Finally, the ICRC engages both in what it describes as operational communications and in public communication involving the media.

## **Operational Communications**

Operational communications are usually in countries or regions where the ICRC is carrying out protection and assistance activities. It targets one or more of four broad objectives: improving access to victims; increasing acceptance of and security for the ICRC; fostering knowledge and acceptance of International Humanitarian Law, specifically the Geneva Conventions; and prevention. A classic example of prevention would be awareness programs for civilians, particularly children, of mines and other types of unexploded ordinance.

Operational communications can also focus on issues specific to a given context, such as the need to “Respect the Medical Mission.” These can be messages targeting combatants on the need to respect the neutrality of medical facilities and personnel. It can also be messages reminding the local population of the need to ensure that medical facilities are not “militarized,” or of the obligation on medical personnel and facilities to treat all patients in an impartial manner regardless of their affiliation or status.

Operational communications covers a wide diversity of activities ranging from small group discussions and handing out simple brochures at checkpoints to well-developed media campaigns or the development with universities and armed forces of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) curriculums.

The ICRC targets local populations in areas where it is working. In addition to explaining what it is and why it is carrying out certain activities, the ICRC may also be communicating about how to access its services, such as restoring family links or assistance programs.

In drawing up a strategy for operational communications, the ICRC delegations in respective countries start by identifying the issues it wants to address. These could include knowledge and acceptance of the ICRC and thus the security of its operations, recurring violations of the law of armed conflict, even sexual violence, access to medical facilities or other humanitarian services, or the dangers posed by mines and other forms of unexploded ordinance. This is by no means an exhaustive list.

It then identifies the audiences it wants to reach on these issues. These audiences can include those directly involved in the issues such as actual or potential beneficiaries, youth, front-line combatants, or medical staff. They can also include those the ICRC believes could influence the people involved, such as community leaders, local media personnel, religious leaders, teachers, local NGOs, military officers, politicians, or senior people in various armed factions.

Having decided on issues and target audiences, the ICRC must then decide on the appropriate formats and tools to transmit its messages. These range from small group

meetings and discussions to town-hall type meetings, to radio plays, to formal university style lectures. It can also be simply ensuring that all ICRC vehicles and drivers in the field have a supply of appropriate literature, such as pamphlets, brochures, or even comic books to hand out at checkpoints to combatants, beneficiaries, or other members of the local population.

Although all ICRC field delegates are expected to be conversant in the history, principles, and activities of the ICRC as well as the basics of IHL, the ICRC also has departments specialized in communications, IHL and legal issues, religious issues and their relation to IHL, as well as experts in dealing with armed forces and security agencies. Many of these specialists can be brought in from regional offices or from headquarters to help develop or actually deliver the communications program. The type of audience will determine the level of expertise required.

The ICRC possesses a considerable array of communications tools at the disposal of its staff in the field. These include 10- to 15-minute videos on ICRC activities and themes, comic books for younger or less literate audiences, simple pamphlets and brochures explaining the basics of the ICRC and the Geneva Conventions, or how to access ICRC services such as tracing and Red Cross Messages.

More in-depth material covers issues such as women in war, the missing, internal displacement, and the protection of civilians in times of conflict. The ICRC also publishes two reviews—one in English and one in Arabic—featuring articles on issues of concern by academics and other independent experts. In addition to helping organize courses at the secondary school and university level as well as courses for armed forces on IHL, the ICRC also publishes a number of manuals and texts for specialized audiences, such as the military, security forces, and medical personnel. It also has regional communications support centers in places like Nairobi and Cairo, which assist country delegations in developing or adapting tools and publications in local languages for local audiences.

It is important to note that when the ICRC initiates an operational communications campaign, it tries to ensure the buy-in of appropriate local or even national authorities to ensure not only their support and encouragement, but also to avoid any misunderstandings about the content or purpose of the communications activities. This can be of particular importance in contexts where these activities could be misperceived as subversive ideological propaganda or religious proselytizing by a foreign agency.

## **ICRC Public Communications**

Although this paper distinguishes between operational communications and public communications, the distinction is largely arbitrary for the purpose of clarity in this discussion. The two often overlap in terms of dealing with specific geographic contexts, particularly in periods of crisis and in their use of traditional media as well as other forms of electronic communications.

Operational communications focus largely on a particular geographical context and is often undertaken in light of operational concerns, such as acceptance, access, security, or the accessibility of ICRC assistance. Public communications can have a much broader focus



and intent. It generally deals with national or international media or audiences and usually is managed through communications or media relations departments. Although these specialists can be located in areas of high interest such as Goma in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) or in Peshawar during the recent fighting in Pakistan, they are most often managed at country-level delegations, at headquarters in Geneva, or at major regional centers such as Washington, London, Cairo, Moscow, or Nairobi.

Public communications initiatives may deal with institutional priorities or issues. These could include visits by the president of the ICRC to major capitals such as Washington or to conflict zones such as Gaza, or the 60th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions on 12 August of this year. They may highlight humanitarian concerns such as conflict-induced displacement, the treatment of war wounded, or the effect of conflicts on civilians. Public communications may also attempt to promote interest in “forgotten conflicts,” such as the ongoing horror of Somalia, the Philippines, and the continued fighting in Colombia.

When an acute crisis breaks out, usually with high media interest, ICRC public communications will focus on the humanitarian impact of the crisis. Its statements and news releases often begin with “expressions of concern” about specific effects on noncombatants and may include reminders of applicable IHL, which would mitigate those effects if fully respected.

Because it must respect neutrality and it hopes to maintain access to those in need, but also to those responsible on both sides, these statements are usually couched in general diplomatic terms. The expressions of concern can be specific, such as the high rate of civilian casualties or the lack of access to medical facilities. However, the statements usually “call on all sides” or “remind all parties” of the need to respect specific provisions of IHL. With the exception of very rare circumstances, the ICRC will not point fingers at one side or the other.

It should be pointed out that although such statements do not beg blaring headlines, they are read closely by parties to the conflict, interested foreign governments, and those journalists who closely follow such issues. Furthermore, terms such as “the alarming rate of civilian casualties” or the “downward spiral of basic living conditions” do attract considerable media pickup without assigning blame to one side or the other.

Finally, there are instances where the ICRC will publicly point fingers at one side or another or both. Referred to within the institution as denunciation, this is done rarely and only after serious discussion at the highest levels. However, because of the ICRC’s normally conservative approach, it unfailingly attracts widespread attention. This paper will return later to the question of denunciation, and the conditions under which it is used.

Public communications tools used by the ICRC include the usual gamut. Its Web site provides information in seven languages (English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian, Chinese, and Portuguese) on its latest news releases, operations in countries around the world, thematic issues, and the finer points on IHL. News releases and operational updates as well as feature stories are issued at the country and international levels on a regular (almost daily) basis.

In addition to professional quality photographs, the ICRC provides audiovisual material to broadcasters internationally (much of the material is also available on an ICRC section of YouTube). Senior ICRC officials hold news conferences to deal with particularly sensitive conflicts or thematic institutional concerns. These are typically held at the headquarters in Geneva or in major national capitals. The latter applies, in particular, to visits by senior ICRC officers such as in Jerusalem in January 2009 during the Gaza crisis or in Bogota during the summer of 2008 in connection with an incident of misuse of the Red Cross emblem.

The ICRC also has a network of spokespersons in country delegations, regional centers such as Washington, London, Paris, Cairo, Nairobi, and Moscow, as well as at its Headquarters in Geneva to provide radio, television, and print interviews with local, regional, and international media as requested. Whenever possible, the ICRC will organize interviews with its spokespersons in or near the areas of acute conflict and high media attention, particularly in the initial phases, when the international media are not yet able to obtain their own information.

The ICRC communications staff also maintains networks of media contacts at the local, regional, and international levels to share the institution's perspectives on ongoing issues. International journalists visiting a conflict zone will frequently come to ICRC offices for background briefings on the overall situation in the country as well as the evolution of local humanitarian concerns.

### **Media Perception of the ICRC**

The Red Cross or Red Crescent is said to be one of the best known symbols worldwide. The recognition factor is reputed to rank alongside a certain well known soft drink! However, beyond the general recognition, most members of the public do not know or understand the various components of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and there is often confusion over the role and mandate of the ICRC. The exception is perhaps in those countries where the ICRC has been operational because of a conflict.

What is true of the general public is also true of most media representatives. The ICRC is often confused with national societies, at times seen as the international branch of the national Red Cross Society. In other cases, the ICRC is perceived as a human rights organization or an advocacy organization with expectations that it take public stands on issues ranging from press freedom, to immigration, to domestic judicial procedures. This is often due to confusion between International Human Rights Law and IHL or the Law of Armed Conflict. Others view the ICRC as primarily a medical or emergency assistance provider.

This, however, has changed considerably in recent years, particularly in the United States, where it is often seen now as the people who visit Guantanamo. Unfortunately, this picture remains incomplete. It comes as a surprise to many to learn that the ICRC also visits about half a million people detained in relation to conflicts in over 80 countries around the world and carries out a wide range of protection and assistance activities.

There is a growing body of reporters, editors, and producers in North America as well as in other countries who are very familiar with the ICRC. In some cases, these are

journalists who have taken a particular interest in key issues related to the fight against terrorism, but more frequently they are journalists with experience covering conflicts internationally. In most of these cases, their knowledge and interest comes from interacting with the ICRC in the field.

To both groups familiar with the ICRC, the institution is perceived as discreet, even “secretive.” They are well aware of the constraints we face and those we impose on ourselves in terms of public communication, particularly in terms of military or political comment. At the same time, they view us as conservative in our use of numbers and restrained in terms of our assessments. Unlike some organizations, the ICRC tries to avoid “the humanitarian auction” where the group with the greatest number of victims or the direst assessment gets the headlines; therefore, it is often perceived as more reliable. The ICRC tries to provide numbers for which it can vouch. As an example, it prefers to discuss the number of wounded treated in hospitals with whom it works, rather than speculate on the total number of casualties.

These journalists also recognize that the ICRC is generally well informed, but it will also admit when it does not have accurate information. The ICRC is well known for its unique access to many areas, and that it has usually been present long before the present crisis and will remain long afterwards. In many cases, journalists will approach the ICRC to get a “second opinion” on statements made by authorities or other organizations. It is often used as a behind the scenes “reality-check” on the humanitarian situation in a given context.

### **ICRC Media Relations—Reactive and Proactive**

Because of its access and the broad scope of its activities in conflict zones throughout the world, the ICRC is often one of the first places electronic media call for on-the-scene interviews at the outbreak of a crisis. A particular example of this was in Kenya when violence erupted after the announcement of the election results in the final days of 2007. The demands on the ICRC changed as major media outlets were able to place their own teams in the region.

In cases where media access to the conflict zone is severely restricted by governments or other groups such as Gaza, and Sri Lanka in 2009 or Ossetia in 2008, the demand for ICRC interviews can continue over an extended period. Although the ICRC may issue news releases concerning such situations on a proactive basis, most of the communication is of a reactive nature responding to media requests for interviews.

There are also situations where the ICRC’s role as a neutral intermediary places it in a unique position resulting in heavy demands for information and interviews from the media. Two examples are exchanges of prisoners or of mortal remains, such as between Israel and Hezbollah in the summer of 2008, as well as in hostage releases as in Colombia or in Afghanistan.

Finally, the ICRC is often requested by the media to comment on issues related to detention, particularly in the context of the fight against terrorism but also on the conduct of hostilities and effects on the civilian population. This was true in Afghanistan as well as Sri Lanka and Gaza.

In reactive media relations, designated spokespersons handle interviews. These may be senior managers such as heads of delegations or media and communications officers. With two exceptions, ICRC expatriate and national staffs are discouraged from providing information to the media. The first exception is in specialized fields, such as medical staff or water and habitation engineers. However, the parameters of the interview are established clearly beforehand.

The second exception involves expatriates who are solicited by media from their home countries and often in languages that only they speak. In these cases, the pre-established parameters stipulate the interview must focus on the work and responsibilities of that person. Larger questions concerning the broader humanitarian/political/military situation must be referred to the regular spokesperson.

In all reactive media relations, the challenge is to attempt to respond to legitimate media information needs while respecting strict ICRC parameters. These parameters include the necessity to remain totally neutral concerning the various sides involved in the conflict, the necessity to avoid any statement that would jeopardize acceptance locally or by the opposing parties and thus compromise the security of staff and operations, and to respect the expectations of confidentiality of the various parties with whom the ICRC works. The ICRC must also demonstrate respect for the dignity of those it is trying to assist.

To juggle these concerns, the ICRC usually applies a series of simple guidelines. ICRC spokespersons try to focus on the humanitarian situation and on the ICRC's response to the needs described, rather than on political or military considerations. They also are cautious to use only what the ICRC knows firsthand through its expatriate and national staff in the field rather than repeat media reports or assessments by other organizations.

In particularly sensitive situations, such as questions related to detention, spokespersons will focus on what the ICRC does, not what it sees. It would be a breach of confidentiality to discuss conditions of detention or the treatment of detainees, including improvements as well as areas of concern. The ICRC will discuss the fact that it visits detainees in a given context, the frequency of the visits, how many detainees it has visited, and services offered such as Red Cross Messages. Reactive communication is usually based on press lines and sometimes supplemented by news releases that have been shared and discussed by operations in the country in question, headquarters in Geneva, and key regional offices dealing with international media. In addition to responding to media requests for information, the ICRC often approaches media on a proactive basis, using a range of tools from news releases, to news conferences, video packages and b-roll footage, offers of interviews to selected media, and informal media contacts proposing stories.

To mark the 60th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions on 12 August, the ICRC released a quantitative and qualitative study concerning the effects of conflict on civilians in eight contexts (Afghanistan, Haiti, Colombia, Philippines, DRC, Liberia, Lebanon, and Georgia). The study, along with a news release and video material, was released internationally at the same time as a news conference in Geneva. The ICRC regularly approaches media proactively on thematic issues, such as protection of medical facilities and personnel, women in conflict, the missing. As an example, it produced and distributed to

television broadcasters in key countries a 30-second public service announcement on the need to allow medical personnel to carry out their work in the midst of fighting.

The ICRC also tries to interest media and the public in forgotten conflicts or ongoing issues that have faded from the news agenda. Examples include the issue of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the plight of the displaced in Colombia, the toll on civilians of the conflict in Somalia, and the difficulties of reconstruction in Gaza. During the acute phases of crises, the ICRC regularly issues news releases describing the humanitarian consequences and reminding all parties of their obligations under IHL. In highlighting its operations proactively, whether this is in acute crisis or not, the ICRC is also describing the current humanitarian issues and needs in a given context. Finally, in the rare cases where the ICRC decides to criticize a particular party, to blame or to denounce, this is always done on a deliberate proactive basis.

### **Public Denunciation**

In its dealings with governments, military authorities, and leaders of opposition or armed groups, the ICRC is attempting to obtain improvements in access to those who need assistance, in the protection of civilians, in care for the wounded, and in the treatment of those detained in relation to the conflict. Based on its experience, it believes that persuasion is the most effective way to obtain changes and improvements over the longer term. In this context, the ICRC views public denunciation as a last resort. While a denunciation may create headlines when it is made, public attention often fades very quickly and the major long-term residual effect is with those the ICRC is trying to influence. In some contexts, a denunciation creates more than simply tense relations. The ICRC may be obliged to scale down or terminate its activities in the country in question. The ICRC must weigh these factors to decide what best serves the medium and longer term interests of those it wants to assist.

However, there are instances where the ICRC has used public denunciation. In the most classic case in recent years, on 29 June 2007, the ICRC issued a news release titled “Myanmar: ICRC denounces major and repeated violations of international humanitarian law.” More recently during the conflict in Gaza, although not formally denouncing, the ICRC issued a news release on 8 January 2009, after an incident in the Zaytoun neighbourhood of Gaza City. In the release the ICRC stated, “The ICRC believes that in this instance the Israeli military failed to meet its obligation under IHL to care for and evacuate the wounded.” In June 2009, the ICRC reiterated its demand that captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit be allowed regular communication with his family. The news release noted, “The ICRC regrets that in his case, political considerations are judged more important than the simple humanitarian gesture of allowing a captive to be in touch with his family after 3 years of separation.”

Because it rarely speaks out in such a direct manner, the ICRC is well aware of the impact such statements have. That is why it has established clear criteria for such public denunciation. It must be convinced that it has made every reasonable effort using a confidential approach, but that the confidential approach is not working. There must be

very serious humanitarian concerns and the ICRC's information is based on firsthand or extremely reliable information. Finally, it must be convinced that speaking out publicly will be of greater benefit than harm for those it wants to assist in the short, medium, and long term. As mentioned earlier, the highest levels of the institution made such decisions.

## **Confidentiality**

The ICRC has unique access to many sensitive places, such as conflict zones, closed military areas, or places of detention. This access is often permitted because the ICRC is known for its confidentiality. It shares its observations, concerns, and recommendations on a strictly confidential basis as part of ongoing discussions with the authorities in charge. In return, it also expects that the authorities in question respect the confidential nature of their discussions with the ICRC.

Confidentiality does not apply to most assistance operations, such as medical support, emergency relief, or water and sanitation projects. It is usually a key factor in operations dealing with protection of civilians, the conduct of hostilities, or visits to places of detention. Confidentiality is often essential for access in these areas. It is also important for the ICRC's ability to reach those with the authority to make changes and the possibility of influencing their decisions.

The ICRC is at times criticized for not speaking out about situations of which it is aware. It recognizes there are other humanitarian actors, some of which use public advocacy very effectively. In general, they do not have the privileged access of the ICRC to the situations in question. For the ICRC, it is usually preferable to be able to maintain access to provide assistance and argue privately for improvements. Otherwise, its role and capacity would have little difference from existing advocacy organizations. However, confidentiality does not mean complacency, as the ICRC can be very vocal and forceful in its bilateral and at times multilateral discussions.

The special role of the ICRC is well recognized, to the point that the ICRC and its staff enjoy testimonial immunity in many jurisdictions, including the International Criminal Court and the International Tribunals for Rwanda and Yugoslavia. In the United States, the ICRC staff has immunity from legal process for acts performed within their official functions and cannot be subpoenaed to testify.

The ICRC is very protective of its confidential relations. Leaked ICRC reports can cause serious damage to its reputation for confidentiality in the country in question and elsewhere in the world where the ICRC is trying to negotiate access to sensitive areas. There are limits on the ICRC's confidentiality. In cases where ICRC activities are deliberately misrepresented, or where the partial leak of a confidential report may create a false impression, the ICRC reserves the right to clarify the situation even at the cost of confidentiality. In addition, without resorting to formal denunciation, the ICRC may decide to withdraw from a certain area and publicly explain why. This would be the case where there are ongoing serious abuses and there is no progress through normal confidential channels or where the ICRC is prevented from working according to the norms and procedures it feels are essential.



## **Transparency**

Despite its emphasis on a confidential approach, the ICRC also believes in transparency. This may seem contradictory, but transparency applies to what the institution does. The ICRC publicly describes its operations, its procedures, and its budgets. Most of this material is openly available on its Web site and in various publications. In an operational context, this is also important to secure and maintain the confidence of the belligerents as well as the local populations including beneficiaries. The ICRC tries to be not only transparent but also predictable in how it decides on operations, to whom and how it will provide assistance. It shares this with all sides to ensure there are no misunderstandings about its intentions and operations.

The ICRC believes it is accountable to its donors and beneficiaries and must be able to justify its decisions and activities to both. The one caveat is the issue of security. In certain contexts, it may prefer to wait until the completion of a distribution or other activity before announcing it to the media.

Although the ICRC insists on its independence from governments and international organizations, this does not prevent it from sharing information about humanitarian needs and gaps, about the ICRC's capacity to respond to those needs and gaps, and its plans in terms of assistance activities as well as information on security issues in the field. As an example, although the ICRC is not a member of the UN cluster system and is not bound by their decisions, it does participate in cluster meetings at the country delegation level with observer status.

## **Public Advocacy**

As stated earlier, neutrality is fundamental to the ICRC and is key to its acceptance and access to those who require its assistance. The ICRC also recognizes there are other organizations that use public advocacy very successfully. To maintain its independence, as a norm the ICRC does not take part in broader advocacy campaigns under the umbrella of advocacy groups or international organizations. Furthermore, unless it makes a very deliberate decision to the contrary, the ICRC will avoid singling out one party to a conflict for blame or denunciation.

However, there are many thematic or institutional issues where the ICRC does engage in public advocacy. This advocacy is done through the media, publications, videos, seminars, meetings, even formal training, and often a combination of such elements. The most obvious instances are campaigns to promote knowledge of and respect for the Geneva Conventions. Other examples include public advocacy to highlight the issue of sexual violence in conflicts, the plight of families of those still missing, the need to take measures to ensure families learn the fate of their loved ones, the issue of child soldiers, the need to protect medical personnel and facilities, and campaigns to promote bans on cluster munitions and antipersonnel landmines. A key to all of these public advocacy campaigns is that they focus on the plight of those affected, remedial action that should be taken in general terms, but they avoid pointing out or blaming individual groups or governments.

## Conclusion

The priority for the ICRC is access to those requiring its assistance in times of conflict and to those with the power to make improvements in the conditions. This is why the ICRC favors a confidential dialogue with authorities on all sides of the conflict. ICRC public communication is dictated by operational needs, and public communication is part of its larger communication strategies, which include bilateral and multilateral communication.

In all of its public communications, the ICRC maintains the principle of neutrality and in sensitive areas such as detention, protection of civilians, and conduct of hostilities it must respect the confidentiality that ensures its unique access to those in need. In very rare occasions, and after discussion at the senior levels of organization, it can decide to drop its confidentiality restrictions or go as far as to publicly denounce one of the parties to a conflict.

Operational communications are intended to improve access to those needing assistance, to increase the acceptance of the ICRC and thus the security of its staff, and to foster knowledge and acceptance of IHL. The ICRC also engages extensively in broader public communications to mobilize support for institutional issues and themes, to highlight certain forgotten contexts, and to focus on the humanitarian impact of high-profile conflicts. By focusing its communications on humanitarian concerns and needs as well as the ICRC's response, it tries to avoid engaging in political or military controversies that would jeopardize its neutrality and its acceptance.

Despite these concerns, the ICRC tries to be transparent about its operations and procedures. In its public communications, it is willing to discuss what it does, but must observe restrictions in terms of describing what it sees.



## DAY 3—FEATURED SPEAKER

### Today's Combat Correspondent: The "New Media" and Reporting from Iraq and Afghanistan

(Transcript of Presentation)

by

**Mr. Andrew Lubin**  
**Independent Journalist**

#### **Part One: Introduction—Today's Embedded Reporter**

Sometimes I have to laugh at the term "new media," because there's not much media newer than me. In the past few days, General Caldwell arranged for us to listen to two distinguished journalists: Bill Kurtis, who was reporting from Saigon when I was in high school, and Pulitzer Prize winner John Burns from the *New York Times*. Well, today you have me.

The past few years for me have been most unusual. I was teaching college and working as a consultant in 2002–03, and like most Americans, following the buildup to the invasion of Iraq. But unlike most Americans glued to their television sets in March 2003, I was following the marines of Task Force *Tarawa* roll across the border and then punching through the stiff—and unexpected—Iraqi resistance at An-Nasiriyah. While most of America was busy putting yellow stickers on their cars and bragging about how quickly "our boys" were moving up to Baghdad, my son, the marine artilleryman, was fighting his ass off at An-Nas. So when he came back to Camp Lejeune, and we all sobered up, I asked him, "So, my son the Marine combat veteran, tell me all about it." And he did, and I was so impressed I went out and wrote a book about him and his battery.

To my surprise, it did OK. Actually, it did OK enough that I received a grant for another book, and did some TV and radio, and all my marine friends said, "Hey sir, this is awesome, you should embed with us." Well, I knew nothing about embedding, but I'd never written a book before either, so I hustled some writing assignments and I went to Beirut in 2006 with the 24th MEU. That went well, and I got invited to go to Iraq, and I went to Ramadi and Fallujah, and I picked up some more writing work. But now I'm getting a little nervous. In addition to the marines wanting me to return in 2007, I had a National Guard PAO wanting me to embed with his unit. Look, I'm a political science major with a Masters in International Management. My last English course was 1970, in high school, and I've never had a journalism course. I don't know what I don't know, so naturally I went back and spent 5 months semper-gumbying my way around Anbar province with 10th Mountain, the Marines, and the Minnesota Guard, threw in a trip to Afghanistan, and in addition to my Internet articles for On Point, I started writing for some magazines—and now I've got a career as an author and a journalist.

Last year I went off-shore four times, including a trip to Guantanamo, and I'll be going to Afghanistan for the fourth time next month. I get out in the field where it's down and dirty, and I go where the troops go. My only agenda is that I need to do as good a job on my end as you do on yours, and I think my only serious bias is that I'm *very* pro-Marine artillery. I'm not sure if I'm "new media" or "freelance," but for sure I'm this war's combat correspondent.

Lieutenant Morant was more correct in his 1902 observation in how war was about to be conducted than he could ever have known. What he could never have imagined is how those same war correspondents who avoided reporting on his trial and execution would be taking a far different approach today.

Who would have thought that this line, taken from the movie "Breaker Morant" about the Boer War, would be so appropriate for today's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan? Isn't it interesting that despite the changes in technology and killing ability, our situation on the ground isn't a whole lot different than that of a hundred years ago. As military technology evolved from the bolt-action Enfield to the chain gun, media technology has also evolved. From dispatches being cabled back to the head office, we are now able to broadcast "live" from the battlefield, giving our audiences a degree of authenticity that almost lets them think they're up on the front lines. No longer are mom and pop at home watching grainy shots of soldiers and marines waving from a troop ship. I remember Ken Kaltrup from NBC Dallas broadcasting "live" from An-Nasiriyah at 0330 Eastern on 23 March—he was lying in the sand a couple of hundred yards in front of my son's gun line and yelling into his microphone as 155 shells screamed overhead about this incredible Marine artillery barrage shelling the city for hours. Oh yeah, technology brings the war right into your living room.

A new style of war reporter has evolved over the last hundred years. From the florid, fictional styles during the Civil War of those who never saw a battle, but simply made-up their reports, a few determined combat correspondents began reporting on strategy, tactics, and the conduct of the war. The Brits had William Russell, known as the father of the modern combat correspondent, haranguing Lord Lucan about cholera and incompetent logistics in the Crimea, and later they had Winston Churchill serving in the Boer War as both a soldier and a reporter. During World War II, professionals like Ernie Pyle and Bill Mauldin embedded with the troops and sent back their dispatches from the front lines. As technology changed warfare, it also changed journalism. While the big network reporters like David Halberstam and Walter Cronkite reported from Vietnam, you now have me and my more-freelance associates reporting "live" from Iraq and Afghanistan.

The news is far faster today, which makes accuracy in reporting extremely important, although it's virtually impossible to get context in a 30-second video clip. The print people, writing for the morning papers, used to have a few hours in which to get a longer and more thorough story written, although now Web editions have taken much of that extra time away.

Today's technology makes it cheaper and easier to get the word out. Russell paid per word for his dispatches to be telegraphed from Crimea to London, with some of his dispatches running to \$8,000 each, while Joe Rosenthal sent his famous Iwo Jima pictures

back to a hospital ship with wounded marines. If I can talk my way past the Ugandans ferociously guarding the MWR [Morale, Welfare, and Recreation] shop, I can e-mail my article and a couple of pictures back to the States as soon as it's written up. It's not as quick as live TV, but in truth, other than An-Nasiriyah and Fallujah, we've seen almost no live news from the front until the Marine push into southern Helmand 2 weeks ago—assuming we're not counting all those TV spots those incredibly brave visiting network anchors sent back from the safety of the Green Zone.

You'd never know it from the coverage today, but in opening days of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) in 2003, there were 770 reporters, with 550+ embedded with ground forces generating 6,000 stories weekly. The best newspaper coverage was probably the *New York Times* spectacular daily special supplement "A Nation at War," which ran from prior to the invasion until after Baghdad fell. The major TV networks also had huge coverage, with the most popular being NBC's David Bloom, traveling with the Army until his untimely death in the M-88 tank retriever known as the Bloom-mobile.

Has the coverage slowed because the media is antiwar? No, in fact you see more Afghan coverage on CNN.com than FOX.com, and the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* are providing some spectacular frontline coverage. Now, is the American public tired of 6 years of war coverage that's been mostly IED [improvised explosive device] news since 2004? Absolutely, but public interest, both positive and negative, seems to be increasing as the Obama administration talks more about the war and their reasons for sending more troops. (Oh, I'd like to compliment the *New York Times* for their daily front-page coverage of Afghanistan. While it's trendy in military circles to bash the "liberal" *New York Times*, their front-line coverage of Iraq and Afghanistan provided by the likes of Dexter Filkins and C.J. Chivers has been very well done, and you also want to follow their news blog, "At War—Notes from the Front Lines." Or perhaps Afghanistan is simply too difficult a theater in which to embed? That's possible; those mountains in the east are pretty steep, and having spent last June in 135 degree heat with the Marines in Garmsir, I know a journalist who asked to be pulled out due to the weather. But over all, it would be both unfair and inaccurate to say that the media is not reporting on the war.

Yet for reasons known best to them, the ISAF [International Security Assistance Force] and the Department of Defense (DOD) bureaucracy now make it very difficult to embed in Afghanistan. As the war continues into its 9th year, the regulations under which we operate get unnecessarily stricter and more expensive, which makes editors rethink their interest in sending reporters. Next month's trip into the AO [area of operations] will be my 10th, yet this time I've got to waste a week and at least \$1,000 going to Kabul for the sole reason of getting a retinal-scan that will take less than 15 minutes. First, what's the reason for a retinal scan? Second, assuming there is a legitimate reason for it, why can't I get this done someplace here in the United States? I guess they need to match it to the fingerprints they already have on file from my Iraqi embeds. This is on top of the time and effort spent in resubmitting my entire application, to the same people, to embed yet again in the same theater. Surely, it couldn't be too difficult to build a database to keep these sorts of records. This is the kind of bureaucratic nonsense that makes it easy for an editor to say, "I'm sorry, it's too expensive."



That's assuming we're allowed to go in the first place. On Monday it was announced that the Pentagon has hired the Rendon Group, the same public relations group that brought us the Jessica Lynch debacle, to vet reporters as to their political leanings and if their stories are positive or negative. One would think that after the Jessica Lynch and Pat Tillman debacles, the Pentagon would have given up trying to "manage" the news, but apparently not. You know, the American public isn't as dumb as the Pentagon seems to think we are. To keep on feeding us those mind-numbing "good news" stories of grinning kids and soldiers tossing out soccer balls simply raises the question, "If there's nothing but good news stories, then why are they still killing our marines and soldiers?" What too many PAOs and their highers don't understand is that the military has a great message, but for whatever reason, you do your best to destroy your own credibility by pushing out this brainless stuff.

All of this is a shame, because then the marines and soldiers on the ground don't get their stories told, and the American public misses hearing about some spectacular men and women. Then the Pentagon and DOD complain, "Oh, you media don't want to get the story out."

Not getting an accurate story out is a major mistake. Afghanistan is a mess and now it's more important than ever to get the story out and to make it understandable. As military operations have changed from the conventional warfare of An-Nasiriyah and Fallujah to today's counterinsurgency operations, it's important for the American public to understand that counterinsurgency missions are judged more on civilian job programs and literacy rates than yesterday's count of Taliban killed. They need to understand that success will likely be measured in years as opposed to battles. Like "Breaker" Morant said, "It's a new kind of war, for a new century."

## **Part Two: The Medium Versus the Message**

To paraphrase Mark Twain, the death of the mainstream media may have been exaggerated; perhaps it's not the "news" that's changing, but rather the "delivery system." It's no secret that network TV ratings are down as they compete with cable stations and the Internet, although the big networks remain profitable. The newspapers are being pounded in both readership and profitability; with fewer copies being sold as their advertising revenues simultaneously collapse.

It's true that newspapers are doing poorly, but for a variety of reasons that have nothing to do with the quality of their news. The primary reason for their financial problems is that their advertising revenues have dropped, partially because advertisers have switched to the Internet and partially because their historically biggest advertisers, autos and retail stores, slashed their advertising budgets because of the economic slowdown. How did the newspapers react to this drop in revenue? They tried to commit financial suicide by putting their newspapers on the Web for free, which cut into their own paid circulation. Who needs to buy the *New York Times* if you can read it free on-line?

In the midst of this financial lunacy, many papers were bought with cheap money and junk bond financing offered by those same Wall Street weasels that ruined the world's economies. For example, after real estate mogul Sam Zell bought the *Chicago Tribune*

chain that included the *LA Times*, the *Newark Star-Ledger*, and other papers, the real estate market, which served as collateral for his enormous borrowings, collapsed, which caused him to declare bankruptcy. While the fall in advertising revenue was serious, what caused his bankruptcy filing was his immense real estate debt. Free content may be changing, however. Last week Rupert Murdoch announced he would be charging for content in all of his Web-based newspapers, and if this holds true, I wouldn't be surprised to see the other newspapers quickly join him.

Sam Zell didn't buy the *Tribune* because he was interested in the newspaper business—he was interested in the underlying land and real estate values. That's one of the issues with journalism and news today: it's being treated as a commodity, with some of the media houses simply printing or broadcasting whatever makes a buck, whereas others still think of news as a public trust, with accuracy and quality writing still important. Many of the changes in the media world have resulted from this downward slide to news as a commodity, which is what has led us from Walter Cronkite and Huntley-Brinkley to the likes of Glenn Beck and Rachael Maddow.

Network TV news is a perfect example of this change in media viewing. While it remains popular, its demographic is older and declining, losing about 1 million viewers a year since Walter Cronkite retired as anchor in 1981. At the end of last year, according to a Gallup Poll, 31 percent of Americans considered the Internet to be a daily news source, a 50-percent gain since 2006. That's almost 100 million people actively reaching out to get their news rather than flipping on the TV and waiting for it to come to them, and the repercussions are long reaching.

Some of us here today remember that the late Walter Cronkite was commonly called "Uncle Walter," and that his word was more believable than that of President Johnson. It's interesting that even today anchormen in Denmark and Holland are called "kronkiters," because of the reputation he built for accuracy and integrity that dated back to when he was covering the Blitz during the battle for Britain. His was a trusted voice in the '60s and '70s world where people's trust in government was shattered and we were looking for a substitute.

But it's different today. On the Internet there's no place for an uncle to explain the news to us. With the current 24-hour river of information, much of it raw, context-free, and incomplete, we can either find our own context or find someone whose context matches our own opinions. Accuracy is not necessary to be popular, unfortunately.

That's not good. It's impossible to report on the war accurately in short, pithy, sound bites. If that's what passes for news these days on the television, perhaps that's why more Americans pick up their news from the Internet—where you can read an interesting 800-word article on a topic. That's why the military should be welcoming us embeds with open arms instead of shunting us off for a week in Kabul waiting for a retinal scan appointment.

At the same time, the news is different today. Instead of simply reading or watching the news, it's become a two-way street, something in which we participate instead of absorb, which raises the question of what is "news"? Look at Iraq and Afghanistan. In the past few

years, it seems that every marine and soldier in Iraq and Afghanistan goes on patrol with a digital camera, and YouTube and the 'net is filled with IDF, IED, and firefight videos.

They're exciting, obviously, but are they news? No, they're really not, but it's what's beginning to pass for news today. A 10-second video of an IED blast on Ramadi's Route Michigan describes just that—an IED blast, while it ignores the context of the 3-block war going on around it. Worse, the lack of an IED blast, which is important because it means that Ramadi is peaceful, doesn't lend itself to video news of jobs, reconstruction, and economic revival. That's the good and bad about the Internet; we've dumbed-down our audience with IED videos, yet my articles on the success of COIN [counterinsurgency] in Ramadi were widely distributed on the Web.

That brings us back to my earlier question about news and readership today: is news a "commodity" in which we publish or broadcast any old trash because it makes a buck or is news a "public trust" in which accuracy and fairness is of paramount importance? Maybe we can use the Web for some of both. The good news is that the Internet gets the news out quickly, so the reader can get accurate news from those who are trained in getting it out. I can e-mail articles, pictures, and videos back from whatever AO I happen to be, and I can send them to specific newspapers or TV stations relevant to the unit with whom I'm embedding. And we can read Andrea Scott Tyson's stories on her embed with the marines in Helmand directly off the *Washington Post* Web site, which I'm happy to put it on my site—with attribution of course—so my readers can read her work. The bad news is that the Internet also gives a voice to those who really should not be in the news business, those who are poorly-informed, biased, or simply wrong.

I've divided the Internet media world into three groups. The first is the mainstream embeds whose newspapers post their articles on the Web: the *Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Christian Science Monitor*. Their work speaks for itself and will have followers regardless of how it's presented. The second are those freelance or Internet media like me, David Wood, and Michael Yon, along with those very professional groups like the *Long War Journal* or *Military.com* who provide daily articles from a variety of sources. I call what we do "news and informed analysis," and it's as professional as any mainstream newspaper in America.

But there's another group that gives Internet news a bad name. It's those bloggers sitting at home providing opinions based on incomplete, misunderstood, or cherry-picked information. That's not news, that's opinion, yet it's too often mistaken for news if it's on a fancy Web site. Yes, everyone has opinions, but informed analysis is professionally done. Informed analysis is a 5-Ws' discussion of why COIN operations are needed in Helmand, but not in Kunduz. It also takes knowledge to write a good COIN article, as opposed to dashing off a rant that calls for nuking the Taliban back to the Stone Age.

What's the difference, you might ask, between me and a blogger? You both have Web sites, you both publish on the Web, and isn't professionalism sort of subjective? Yes, yes, and yes, but I'd like to suggest that I'm different because I'm paid for what I do and a blogger is not. To explain it with a sports metaphor—they're amateurs, I'm a professional.

The problem with bloggers and journalists is very simple—there are no qualifying standards as you have. Oh, we have standards of excellence, John’s Pulitzer, for example. But our world is far more flexible than yours, and judging from your questions yesterday, and the SAMS class I addressed, you have a frustration level in the lack of professionalism in some of our journalistic brothers. But that’s part of the difference between the Marines and Army versus the civilian world, and that’s not going to change.

Something else worth remembering is that there is news and there is information, and it’s important that you don’t get the two confused. Generically speaking, blogs are effectively Internet “op eds,” which is fine, so long as they’re recognized as such. Today, as the Internet explodes with blogs and pseudo-news, accuracy takes a backseat to readership numbers, and if you can pick up market share by bad-mouthing your competitors, hey, that’s just part of today’s business model. This isn’t good; this is like a journalistic version of Gresham’s Law, where “pseudo-news” drives “real news” out of circulation. The shame is that the mainstream media (MSM), in their drive for profit, dumb-down their news to compete.

### **Social Media: The Fad That’s Here to Stay**

The current concept is that Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter are able to deliver information to a more tightly defined market segment than was done traditionally. What is confusing is that what was traditionally separated as “news” and “advertising” is now lumped together as “information.” But no matter what you call it, it’s still Ford, Pepsi, and the Army trying to sell cars, sodas, and recruiting to an audience that is far more sophisticated, or at least far more choosy, than ever before.

It’s an easy concept to understand. Whether you’re selling Coca-Cola or looking to recruit people into the Army, it’s a question of how to put your message in front of the most-interested eyeballs at the cheapest price. The ancillary concept is that people with similar interests will gather in groups, and if you can tap into these groups, they’ll buy your product as their feedback helps you refine your message and make your product more customer-friendly. What social media does is let me sharpen my target marketing. Instead of spending \$50,000 on a generic advertising campaign in Kansas City, I can spend \$9,000 on Web-based advertising of everyone in my Kansas City-targeted zip codes who earn a selected income. That’s a target-market based advertising campaign, which is more successful for less money.

The military is heavily involved in the world of social media. From the DOD in Washington to Marine Air Station Yuma, the military has launched onto the Internet with a vengeance. The Army recently ordered all US bases to provide access to Facebook. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has 4,000 followers on Twitter. The DOD just unveiled a new home page packed with social media tools. There have been recent articles and rumors saying that a department within DOD is going to ban the military from using these sites, but my information is that this is incorrect. Individuals will remain permitted to access Facebook and the other sites from their own or MWR computers. What will happen is that access will be denied from DOD-networked computers. That’s no big deal, and in

fact, that's nothing new. I can't even access my Earthlink account from the DOD computers at Camp Lejeune, so I wander over to the library. It would be helpful, however, in the DOD's drive to get their message out, that they managed to get this message out accurately.

The idea of using Facebook and the other social network sites for communication is a good one. Having a unit's commanding officer (CO) posting to a Web site or a Facebook page is a wonderful way for keeping in touch with home and disseminating news. But, let's not forget that if you can post a comment on Facebook from J'Bad, you can also e-mail your wife directly, and with SPAWAR at \$2.9/cents per minute you can afford to call home regularly. This isn't 2003 or 2004. You've got to admit that communication is a lot better than it was.

### **What's Considered "News" Today?**

There are two ways in which social networking and new media differ from traditional mainstream media. Part of it is the change in the delivery platform, from print newspapers to the Web, but a major change is what passes for news these days, and that is what should concern us all. Blogs seem to encourage a consensus-reality in that if enough people repeat an untruth, it must be true, and they succeed because no one today has the moral authority to halt it. In the 1960s and 1970s, Huntley-Brinkley and Walter Cronkite were accepted as the everyday incarnation of truth—in fact President Obama called Cronkite “a voice of certainty in an uncertain world” when paying him tribute when he died last month. Now, compare Cronkite and McNeil-Lehrer to Geraldo Rivera and Katie Couric. We need news; we get entertainment.

A good journalist can be either “mainstream” or “freelance,” but we still need to present the facts accurately. Whether we write for hardcopy or for the Web, we're still far different from those many bloggers who pick and choose the facts they need to justify their conclusions. Today's embed may write for the Web, but it is still “news and informed analysis,” and it's far more professional than that of most bloggers.

Cronkite's legendary assessment of Vietnam's quagmire—the one that led Lyndon Johnson to lament, “If I've lost Cronkite, I've lost Middle America”—is often cast as a highpoint of the anchor's power, where one man could influence a country's attitude toward a government policy. But let's remember that Cronkite earned that reputation with 25 years of reporting from the front lines. He wasn't sitting behind a computer terminal in his basement opining on a topic on which he knew nothing. In fact, Cronkite only presented America with this assessment after returning from yet another Vietnam embed. Now compare this to those self-proclaimed “experts,” ranging from Michelle Malkin to Ariana Huffington, both of whom seem to prefer opinions to situational awareness.

With so many news outlets and news anchors these days, the audience and target markets have changed since the days of Uncle Walter. NBC's Brian Williams competes for viewers against Jon Stewart and Univision as much as he competes with Charlie Gibson and MSNBC, and the effect of so many anchors is to dilute their influence in a widening market. “News” is no longer simply “news”; it's a brand and can be marketed and sold. That is what has changed since Cronkite's heyday, and that's what has changed in covering the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. If all this half-accuracy stayed in the blog world, it might

be OK, but unfortunately, the mainstream media follows suit creating expectation and anticipation and too-often misusing it. Their goal is to have viewers and readers return, to boost ratings and readership, so their emphasis is on the half-story “with details to follow.”

But if you want to read the news, instead of trying to become the news, then the Internet is actually a great tool. Read *Military.com*, the *Small Wars Journal*, or the *Long War Journal*. This is professional journalism, except it’s on the Web instead of delivered as a newspaper. These business models are successful, both financially and professionally. *Military.com* boasts 7 million+ monthly readers and is owned by Monster, while *Small Wars Journal* was named one of the “Top-50” blogs by *Rolling Stone* magazine a few months ago. So, it appears that content and intelligence is still important fortunately.

Perhaps one reason for this lack of reading is that society is changing. Fewer and fewer families eat together as school activities run later into the evenings, and families rarely sit down and watch news together as my generation did. Current events were an important part of education, and homework assignments like watching Cronkite or Huntley-Brinkley were common. But today, too many kids these days text rather than write and their grades and comprehension show it. But in an age of birthers, forged birth certificates, death panels, and town hall meetings, we’re in an age of instantaneous and unprecedented twisting of the truth, if not deliberate lying, that’s caused a loss of trust in media as vast as the loss of trust in government. Nightly news, Cronkite style, is a thing of the past. Perhaps in the Internet age, accuracy and honesty have become old-fashioned values to be studied instead of practiced. Maybe that’s just the way it is.

### **Covering the War Today: Who Are Today’s Combat Correspondents?**

During the last 110 years, the media was evolving along with American society. War reporting ranged from William Randolph Hearst’s helping start the Spanish-American War to Halberstam’s articulate criticisms of Vietnam to the *New York Post*’s contributions to journalistic excellence with their front-page coverage of the UN debate in 2002 to the Marines in Fallujah in 2004. In between, Edward R. Murrow and Walter Cronkite were in London reporting the Battle for Britain as the bombs fell around them. As Robert Sherrod stormed ashore with the marines at Tarawa and Iwo Jima, Ernie Pyle and Bill Mauldin embedded with the troops and reported on the war in Europe. Now you’ve got me and my group embedding with the soldiers and marines and sending back stories from Iraq and Afghanistan. There’s no place the military goes where you don’t have an embed wanting to tag along.

I think both the press and the military have done an exceptional job of getting the word out. No American can seriously claim he’s lacking for information on what’s happening overseas. Now, he or she may not understand conventional war versus COIN, or the difference between the Sunnis, Shias, and Kurds, but the faults on him or her for not having the initiative to read the information that’s available.

So is there much of a difference between mainstream media and new media or is it more of a question as to how they operate? We both have deadlines for our work, we both need to be accurate in our reporting, and it helps if our work is interesting. But now our paths diverge. We each have our strengths and weaknesses; perhaps it’s similar to the



difference between officers and senior enlisted. From spending a fair amount of time overseas, I think there are three groups of journalists visiting the war zones today.

The first group is the big newspapers like the *Times*, the *Post*, and the television stations. There's journalists like Tony Perry—*LA Times*, Mike Phillips—*Wall Street Journal*, and NBC's Richard Engel who taught himself Arabic. These people are good; these are first-class reporters who've spent time in the field and lived dirty with the troops for weeks on end. That's great journalism, and they've produced some great work in some very trying conditions. But they did have substantial help—staffs back in the States, editors, financial resources, and after the conventional fighting stopped, houses in Baghdad or Kabul from which they ran their news bureaus. They have corporate backing—both editorial and financial, which they used to put out some great work from both Baghdad and Kabul as well as from out in the field.

The second wave of combat correspondents is freelance new media photojournalists like myself. I'd like to think that we're a tough crowd. We are in the field for 2, 3, or 4 months straight, carrying everything we need on our back as we move from unit to unit. We write, edit, and send out our own print and pictorial work from wherever we're at, and too often front the cost of the trip in the expectation of earning it back through the sale of our work. At the same time, war coverage is different now than during 2003 and 2004. Writing on COIN takes a greater degree of sophistication and expertise than covering kinetic ops like An-Nas or Fallujah. That's a good thing. Subject-matter expertise is what separates the good journalist from the lightweights. Some of us covering 10th Mountain or the Marines were writing about "the 3-block war" long before terms like COIN and counterinsurgency became trendy. Most of us have a nonjournalistic background, which is probably a plus. Anyone can write, but if you don't understand the topic on which you're writing, no editor can save you. And this expertise has been honed from time in the field, which gives us a far clearer understanding of what you're doing than some network heavyweight who flies in for 2 days and then leaves. While we're not going to get access to General McChrystal, we usually do get access to the ground combat commanders (or at least I do), and the ones with whom I was fortunate to embed, both Army and Marines, gave me more access and information than I could ever imagine.

That's what separates us from the last group: those second-time MSM and new-media wannabes who have been flitting over since 2007 for 2 to 3 days to get an "embed" check on their resume or to finesse information on a story for which they already had their conclusion. There were people flying into LZ [Landing Zone] Washington, and then bunking at CPIC [Combined Press Information Center] or the Al-Rashid whose level of expertise didn't include knowing that Anbar was Sunni. I also met folks from "60 Minutes" who came with an agenda and their story already written; they just wanted the "cover" of claiming they'd researched it professionally. Let me tell you that folks like that are an embarrassment to me. They're unprepared both physically and intellectually, and I do my best to stay away from them. But unlike boot camp, or the courses here, there are no uniform journalistic standards, and yes, the media world has its share of clowns.

It's actually ironic, the military scoffs at Katie Couric and CNN, yet you covet their readership. Then there's the freelance embeds like me, writing for three professional

magazines, yet too often we're not taken seriously and you refuse to give me the same high-profile access that you give to those same MSMs you don't like. Through it all, the military complains about the lack of coverage or about our stories as you make us line up for fingerprints and retinal-scans—assuming the Rendon Group has judged us politically and militarily acceptable to be embedded.

It's worth noting that the only journalist removed from the combat zone since the invasion of Iraq was Geraldo Rivera, FOX News. For all your talk of the liberal media aiding and abetting the enemy, it was Geraldo who drew a map and the Marine battle plans in the sand for the TV camera and discussed them in front of the world. Interestingly, a reporter from *Stars & Stripes*, of all organizations, was thrown off an embed in Mosul last month, because he refused to follow the stories the PAO wanted to assign to him. Perhaps the PAO thought that *Stars & Stripes* is an arm of DOD Public Affairs, and she could order him to report on selected "good news" stories she wanted covered. While *Stripes* acceded to the rather unprecedented demand that they pull the reporter, they refused to assign a replacement reporter to that unit. Let me mention that their reporter is getting along fine with another Army unit.

It's hard to understand why the media, either mainstream or new, is treated with such distrust. The military has a great message, but it's you who makes it so difficult to get it out. It's not a question of whether the press is "for or against" a war; all we do is report on what's happening. What we're reporting is considered "good versus bad" by the reader, and their views of the war were determined long ago by their opinions of the administration's reasons for sending troops in the first place.

It's not the media who orders troops deployed, nor is it the military. It's not the media who determines troop levels and neither was it you. And neither of us were happy when you were forced to resort to hillbilly armor and other work-a-rounds, but to impugn my patriotism for writing about parents forced to buy camel backs and body armor for their sons is simply an attempt to deflect attention from an administration that was poorly prepared. You don't realize it, but we're on the same side on all this.

The difference is that we have a flexibility you don't. We're using the 5-Ws. I'm writing an article; you're writing a press release. Since it's a press release, your motives are viewed with suspicion—not because you're military, but because it's a press release. Same as a press release from Exxon on the environment or McDonalds on healthy food, you're pushing your own viewpoint and are, therefore, considered suspect. Incidentally, for those of you who were using hillbilly armor in Iraq in 2004–2005, it was outrage fueled by the pictures and articles coming from the embeds in Iraq that outraged the American public and forced Secretary Rumsfeld to order Rock Island Arsenal to run 24/7 and ship more up-armor kits to you guys. Like I said, we're on your side more than you think.

### **The Embedded Journalist: The Military and Media Relationship**

Now this is the best part of my talk, in addition to the fact that I'm coming to the end. What does the press want from you? And what have I discovered that you want from me? Let's start with what I need from you.

Oh, we want it all. We want kinetics. Artillery is best, but tanks or gunships—with good lighting of course—are pretty awesome. If you can throw in some IDF—but not too close!—that would make it even better. Since I’m media, you automatically think I’m a liberal puss so if can you add some decent weather, I won’t have to break a sweat. And if you could arrange to pick the fight in the morning, then we can have the story written up for the East Coast USA opening and I can be back on line in the chow hall by noon.

Now, what do I really want? I need access. I’ve got articles to write, probably two to three weekly for the Web, as well as some longer, more thoughtful magazine pieces. So, I’m going to want some time with the CO and the operations officer when I pull into your headquarters. While I’m already fairly knowledgeable as to the unit and area with whom I’m embedding, I want to talk with the CO: What are your goals? What’s your mission? Tell me what you’re trying to accomplish, and then let me talk to the operations officer about how you’re trying to do it. You’ve got a message to get out—help me understand what it is. And then push me into the field and don’t be surprised when I ask your company commander or platoon leader the same questions. I’m not checking up on you. You’ve told me about the strategy, now I want to know the tactics. And I’m always off-the-record until we sit down and do a formal debrief. I need you to talk openly, and if you’re afraid I’ll cherry-pick quotes, it’s too difficult for us to talk.

Next, don’t get all panicky if I talk to some specialist. I’m not looking for operational security, I’m just a social guy who’ll be spending a week with strangers and I need to get along with people. Look, I’ve got nothing in common with some 20-year old listening to their incredibly dumb music. If I had a choice, I’d rather hang out with colonels and generals who are my peers in age and education.

On a general note, most embeds aren’t qualified to lead a platoon or assist on a crew-served, so cut us some slack when we ask a question you consider elementary. And if you’re smart, you’ll try to ascertain our level of knowledge of strategy and tactics, which will let you know how much you need to explain to us. And you want to do this, because it’ll help us write a better article on your unit if we know the “what” and “why” of your mission.

And here’s something else—I want to be invited back to your unit. I go out with the Marines a lot because they know me, or know of me, and like my work. Same as 10th Mountain. I’m invited back with them next month because they like my work from last year. Look, going back to a unit who knows me is a lot easier, so I have an incentive to do well the first time out. If you do this for me, I’ll share my work with you before I send it out. I enjoy sitting with the CO or operations officer and talking about my articles. Maybe I’ve missed a point you were trying to make; maybe all you do is correct the spelling of someone’s name. There’s no exposé or breaking news here, we’re just a couple of guys trying to do our best and working together makes it both easier and a lot of fun.

What’s really interesting is what I learned you guys want from me. When I started writing this presentation, I e-mailed some of the colonels and generals with whom I’ve embedded in the last few years and asked them some questions:

1. What did you expect from your embeds re: press or Web coverage?

2. Do you prefer prior military experience? Did it make a difference if they did not have it?
3. What made one embedded reporter better than another?
4. What were the low points of your experience with embeds? the high points?
5. What's your reaction to the entire embed concept?
6. And my usual question: What do you want to tell me?

From Brigadier General Sean MacFarland, with whom I embedded twice in Ramadi:

1. *What do you expect from your embeds re: press or Web coverage?* My expectation was that they would get the facts at least 90 percent correct and that their analysis of the situation would not be significantly at odds with ground truth. If that happened, then the engagement was not a setback. If I could get at least one or two of my themes across via . . . .
2. *Did they have prior military experience? Did it make a difference if they did not?* Some did (like you and Ollie North), most did not. It made a significant difference. Those with prior experience had a much shorter learning curve and tended to ask more astute questions.
3. *What made one embedded reporter better than another?* Objectivity and the ability to put aside preconceived notions.
4. *What were the low points of your experience with embeds? the high points?* I did not really have any significant low points with embeds (1-day visitors were another matter). The high point was my ability to influence the narrative about the awakening movement. A lot of reporters were initially skeptical. Probably the best exchange was when one guy kept questioning Sheikh Sattar's motives for aligning with the Coalition. Sattar finally asked him if he was upset that the tribes were now working with the Coalition against AQI [al-Qaeda in Iraq].
5. *What's your reaction to the entire embed concept?* The more the better—absolutely the best way to go.
6. *And my usual question: What do you want to tell me?* We weren't looking to pull the wool over anybody's eyes, just get the truth out. Embeds let us do that.

From Colonel Scott Fosdal, USMC, with whom I embedded in eastern Afghanistan:

1. Military experience is nice, but oftentimes they can fool themselves into thinking they know more than they do, not realizing how dated their experience is. Physically fit and a sense of adventure along with the ability to live as we do is all I really need.
2. I always appreciated it when I got to check the copy before it was submitted or they summarized my remarks with me afterwards to ensure they have the context correct.

3. I think embedding is great for the military. Only the most biased reporter can come away from being embedded without having gained respect for our American youth serving in uniform. Frankly, I'm surprised that the media accepts the embedded concept because it is hard to report objectively on the people who are in fact defending and feeding you. This doesn't protect the operational commanders though—the reporters can still trumpet the bravery of the man on the ground while taking the leaders to task for poor execution or, more likely, painting a rosy picture in their own press briefings that conflicts with the truth on the ground. The only reason tactical unit commanders should fear embeds is if they're doing something wrong or their troops are ill-disciplined.

4. My opinion of the media is different than most commanders. I welcome them because I understand that they have to report something and if I don't give them access I can hardly complain when their reports are inaccurate. I only fear their reports if what I'm doing is wrong, poorly executed, or immoral. Bottom line, if you're afraid of something being reported you must ask yourself should you be doing it at all. It's also important to state your ground rules up front and if applicable, provide your guidance on what you think should be off limits. I find that honesty begets honesty.

From Colonel Jeff Haynes, USMC, with whom I embedded two times in eastern Afghanistan:

1. *What do you expect from your embeds re: press or Web coverage?* An accurate representation of the facts enhanced by coverage of the human side of the mission. An explanation for the American people of the complexity of the current operating environment. I also expected embeds to be low maintenance, free of bias or agenda, and willing to report the story, not create one. An embed must show up ready to move at a moment's notice with a flexible timeline.
2. *Did they have prior military experience? Did it make a difference if they did not?* Most did not, didn't seem to matter.
3. *What made one embedded reporter better than another?* Ability to listen in order to grasp the essence of the problem. Not looking for a kinetic photo op when one didn't exist. Also, embeds who had done their homework—had a sense of culture, terrain, and history. I had a reporter who had never heard of Jalalabad before. That reporter was sent away to cover the National Guard for hometown newspaper stuff.
4. *What were the low points of your experience with embeds? the high points?* Low points—one had an agenda to portray the ANA [Afghan National Army] as totally incompetent—focused only on the negative. He was unbalanced and lacked perspective. And I do NOT accept embeds

who do not have time to spend at headquarters to gain insight and context before going down to small unit level.

5. *What's your reaction to the entire embed concept?* Great. Particularly in a COIN environment where we are trying to show the host nation democratic values of transparency, etc. Plus, we need to get our good news story out without sugar coating it.

6. *And my usual question: What do you want to tell me?* Military PAs are paranoid and too controlling. I know what the hell I'm doing and have a message, so observe and you may gain some keen insight about what is really going on.

## **Conclusion**

I hope this helps dispel some of the myths and fears regarding having journalists embedding with you. Like the one Marine colonel surmised, we're not really impartial. Do you really think I'm going to write smack about you if you take care of me in a firefight? And let's be real. I'm on your turf and you're keeping me alive, and if I do get hurt you take care of me. Trust me, I don't come with an attitude. Let me tell you again, I think you've got a great message. When I leave and someone comes up and thanks me for getting the word out, I get embarrassed. I should be thanking you for taking me on for a couple of weeks and letting me get involved. Not only are we not your enemy, we're in this together more deeply than you can imagine. You want to get your story out. Trust me, I want to get it out to my readers also.

I'd like to thank you for listening this morning, and I'd like to thank General Caldwell for inviting me to speak. And if you have any questions, I'll do my best to answer them.





## DAY 3—FEATURED SPEAKER

### Questions and Answers

(Transcript of Presentation)

#### **Mr. Andrew Lubin** **Independent Journalist**

#### **Audience Member**

I have a question, sir. My name is John Rainville, I'm with the Battle Lab. I was here for Mr. Burns' presentation yesterday as well. It seems to me that the theme you and Mr. Burns presented was that most journalists, the majority, want to get an accurate story out and should develop a mutual respect between the journalists and the unit with which they are embedded. Having talked to some of my friends who have had closer relations with the media, to include one guy who described a well-known female reporter for CNN who deals with Middle East affairs, who in his estimation was deliberately looking to distort what the facts were. My understanding of journalists is that the things that put fear into journalists is not necessarily that of death or that of imprisonment or that of being expelled from the area, but more of having a reputation of not accurately reporting the news. So, for instance, when CBS News reported that President Bush had false documents, other networks were on CBS like jackals on the wounded beast. So, if we believe that we are in a position where we're falling victim to a journalist who is deliberately distorting the facts, what are your recommendations for how we could address that?

#### **Mr. Lubin**

Well, first of all, I think you see a difference in accuracy between the print media and the TV people. Within reason, you cannot deny her access because she works for CNN. You can answer it your own way—you don't have to answer directly. You can say, "Hey, great question, ma'am, but let me answer it my way." And you kind of go off topic and try to bring the topic back to the way you're trying to lead the conversation. There's always that option. Short of that, sometimes you suck with people. All you can do is then give a bland answer and hope for the best. And I'm sorry. Sometimes people do show up with an attitude. But I kind of look at things from the print side where we're not in for 20 minutes and out again, we're trying to give you a better story. On the other hand, the CNN lady in Washington is a whole lot more professional. Some are good, and some are bad. We've got great soldiers and great marines. We've got some clowns on that side, too. We're people all the way around, unfortunately. I wish I could help you with a better answer. Somebody else had a—yes, sir.

#### **Audience Member**

Stephen Badsey. I'd like, if you would, to elaborate on a point you made earlier, because I think it's a very important one, which is the perils for the Armed Forces of pushing the

good news story, because talking to people around here at this symposium, I've heard this several times. That the position they should take is good people doing good things and that will be adequate. And as we know from historical experiences and present day, there are certain perils for the military to take that view. Would you elaborate on the point you made earlier.

**Mr. Lubin**

Well, to an extent, good people do good things is good news. It's a good thing to write about. The problem I think is that the war has gone on too long and people don't care anymore. And if I can only report school openings and medical operations—there's only so many ways to do the same story over 3 years, 4 years. For me to do my job better, you've got to do your job better. You need the administration to prepare the American public for what they want you to do. I can't write the rationale for invading Iraq. I can talk about what you guys are doing, but I can't accurately talk about how and why you got there because I don't know. That's the problem. The American public doesn't know. So all we're left with at this point is grinning kids and people giving out sourballs, which is a shame. There comes a point where you can only do the same story so many times. On a personal basis, and what I found very frustrating, I was in Ramadi in October 2006 when an IED hit Route Michigan. Scary situation. September 2007 and back in Ramadi and on Route Michigan we ran a 5K race. Marines helped the Iraqis put on a 5K race, 3 miles apiece. We had 200 Iraqis turn up. All the marines would give out water bottles and we ran the water stop and Baghdad TV came out. I came back, talked to the DOD media people. I had some pictures from that. Couldn't get the DOD interested, just a 5K race, what difference does it make? It's a 5K race with your IED people less than a year ago, and this is how much the Sunnis have changed and worked with the Americans. I couldn't get anybody interested in any story like that at all. So you've got a good news piece that's not only good news but shows how the entire area is turned around. My friends at Fox News said, "Well, that's boring. We want like artillery and gunships. So a 5K race in Ramadi, for God's sakes, that's boring. Our readers don't want that." So that's the problem. We can't get anything to sell because the American public's turned off because it's been too long, it's been too many years. There's nothing new out there, and of course you've got Michael Jackson and Brittany or Lindsay that God forbid somebody doesn't put her clothes on. You've got to put that on TV instead of a Ramadi 5K. Sorry. This is just—you get me wound up on these things. Sir?

**Audience Member**

You just made a statement that the war has gone on too long, and that's typical of the media making judgments like that and judgments like that are extremely damaging. It's just like, I read media people, "Oh war is lost. It can't be won." These are things that make the military and policymakers very, very uncomfortable. They're judgments made by people who don't have an understanding of what's going on, don't have a long view, and I think that a lot of people take exception to that kind of statement being made.

**Mr. Lubin**

Then why are we there? Why are we there? I put my son at risk. Why are we there? 2003–2004 I understand. He gets whacked a year ago so that some Iraqi security guard can

take a ten grand bribe and let somebody through having a bombing? Why do I need to put up my son today? Answer me that. Put it in those terms.

**Audience Member**

Well, that's a valid question, okay. And you can ask that, okay? But I'm still standing behind the statement that when you make statements like that, "The war has gone on too long; it's already lost; it can't be won, . . . ."

**Mr. Lubin**

I didn't say it was lost and couldn't be won. I said it has gone on—people are bored with war news is what I said. That's the context. I said people don't want, they just, been there done that. How many more pictures of grinning kids can you show? What other news is there except the Iraqis blowing each other up nowadays?

**Audience Member**

Then it's a long drop, it's going to take a long term. Why isn't the media pushing that particular view?

**Mr. Lubin**

Because that should come from the administration, not from me. I have no primary part in it, but I'm not making policy. I'm reporting policy. That's the difference. Sir.

**Audience Member**

Thank you. Colonel Steve Boyland from the Battle Command Training Program. Two things real quick. One, your last, toward the end you said about everything was off the record until you made sure that they knew it was on the record. I would say, sir, that you are the exception rather than the rule and that's from most journalists in the field. It's everything is on the record unless otherwise stated.

**Mr. Lubin**

I'm a month in the field. I'm not trying to catch anybody. I'm trying to get a story.

**Audience Member**

I understand. I'm just making sure that you understand that you are the exception rather than the rule.

**Mr. Lubin**

You know something? I appreciate—you and I met with General Petraeus 2 years ago.

**Audience Member**

That's correct, sir.

**Mr. Lubin**

Yeah, and in my opinion, that's their loss. I want to get invited back. They're looking to screw somebody tomorrow. I want a long-term business.

### **Audience Member**

I understand completely. Going back to one other point. On your issue of us pushing the kids and soccer balls, schools opening, and everything else. I would submit that we are trying to get the overall context and characterization of the entire picture, not the soda straw look at the latest IED or bombing of the day. We fully realize that the bomb of the day is going to get the headlines. The conflict is going to outweigh everything else. But I would say how then does the media in general—not you specifically, but in general—accurately characterize what is happening across the scope of the AOR [area of responsibility] vice that singular event that takes the precedence?

### **Mr. Lubin**

You can't do it by TV at all number one, you've got to do it by print because you need the time and the space. You need a thousand, two thousand words to do that. Unfortunately to do that, you've got to have interested readers who want to pay for the news to—it works back on the chain is the problem. And that goes back to what I said to the other gentleman, you've got to get the American public to understand why we're there to make them interested. Like Roosevelt's fireside chats. "Hey, folks, we're going to invade the Pacific. Get a map out of the Pacific; we're going to talk next week about what we're going to do in our Pacific theater strategy." And Rand McNally sold out of maps. You know, I agree with what you're saying, but I need help from higher, way higher, to get that done. Otherwise, you're talking COIN and that's not bad, but that's almost a book-size article, book-size thing instead of a thousand words in the *Times*.

### **Audience Member**

Well, to use your same analogy, and then I'll stop. If all the American public saw was the soccer balls and schools opening, that's what they would expect—that everything is going well. However, you can use the reverse analogy as well. If the only thing they see is the bomb of the day going off, they think everything is bad, which is not accurate either.

### **Mr. Lubin**

Yeah, I was going to say, it's some of both is the problem. And I can do that story once. I can do that 6 months later and do that 6 months later again. There comes a point, how many times do I have to—how many times can I rewrite the same—we're kind of in limbo until they stand themselves up type of story. That's the problem. In my opinion.

### **Audience Member**

Yes, sir, my name is Major Lowe. I'm with the College here. I'm a student. It seems to me that the Army or the military in general face a structural challenge regarding our media, which is that media that come from high-freedom environments, like the United States, Western democracies, tend to be obsessed or driven to report on their governments. I mean, particularly most of their reporting is how their tax money is being spent and that sort of thing. Whereas, journalists coming from low-freedom environments, like the theaters in which we're operating, tend to report or never report on the foibles of their own

governments, but on what the other guy is doing. So what you have in essence is more base hits, more runs batted in for the enemy by our own media and on the flip side, our media almost never reports on an enemy picture, on enemy foibles, etc. That really puts us in a bind and opens us up to a lot of risk. I'd be interested in your comment on that.

**Mr. Lubin**

Well, some of that is the way the military has things set up. Let's talk about Iraq. If I'm embedded with the marines, I don't ever see any Iraqis unless we're in a firefight. But when I'm in CPIC, we bring their media in to see us. I don't have the same access unless I decide to get a taxi and go offshore, and I don't want to do that. So I mean, I'm a brave guy when I've got a bunch of marines around me. Being in a taxi in Baghdad, I'd prefer not to. But again, we're bringing them in, we're giving them access. I ought to get the same access to an Iraqi TV station. Another thing, most of them speak English. We don't speak any of their languages. Sometimes we are our own worst enemy.

**Audience Member**

If I might just have a quick followup. I agree with that assessment. I guess the question is whether or not there's some news value that your editors would perceive as understanding sort of where the enemy is, what he's doing, how he's prosecuting his war effort. If that's the case, then it would seem that there would be some due investment in interpreters, in language training, in many of the similar things that we have to take up to get our job done.

**Mr. Lubin**

That's been done, I think. John, you did that when you had the Baghdad bureau, the *Times* did that, the *Wall Street Journal* did that. I don't have the finances for that. Might not have the readership for that either. Wouldn't mind, but I do a "boots on the ground" thing so mom and . . . you know, if we're doing a med op, when I got Lance Corporal Shmuckatel here and Private Jones and Sergeant Smith, I write so they can send that back and mom and dad can pass that through the Internet and everybody knows what's going on overseas. I would love to do your kind of analysis, but I don't have the finances for that. That's more what John's group does, unfortunately for me.

**Audience Member**

Just briefly. I certainly agree with you that it's natural for journalists to have a healthy skepticism toward PAO briefings and PAO press releases. My problem is that Western journalists don't seem to have the same skepticism toward Taliban press releases or al-Qaeda press releases. Case in point, or cases in point, in Afghanistan if there's an airstrike on a target and Village X, whatever the number of casualties may be, the Taliban will certainly claim that they were all children gathering to read Oprah's latest book club pick, and there will be 150 of them. What hits the headlines above the fold over here? It's 150 civilian casualties. If the military rebuts it, if that's run, it's buried down on the page 7, continuation of the story. So, I get my chance to talk this afternoon, but I am not prepared to join the love fest with the media that's been going on for the last 2 days.



**Mr. Lubin**

I tend to look at everybody on a skeptical basis. I mean, I like the PAOs over there because they help me carry my gear, which is kind of nice.

**Audience Member**

That was not a criticism of you, by the way, by any means.

**Mr. Lubin**

If it is, that's fine. I'll get you back when you speak. No, but I knew that, Ralph. But yeah, I tend to look at things on a more skeptical basis. Do I believe people? You kind of look at who it is. If I hear it from Major Everyman, yeah, believe it in a heartbeat. Something from the Taliban, you know, come on guys. Sometimes we're, as American people, we're our own worst enemy at the same time. And to be honest with you, some of the things that come out—I think the major problem with the American military is that when the Taliban comes out and says 150 kids dead or whatever it might be, we come out and we say, "Well maybe it's three," and, "news to follow" in 2 weeks. The accuracy is good, but timeliness is important too, and the concept we have that we've got to be 100 percent accurate. No, let's go 80 percent and then put something out in an hour to kind of combat that. Hey, we think you're wrong and we're going to send troops in tomorrow to straighten it out and come out with this type of thing. We take too long to respond and that's a shame. That's not good.

**Audience Member**

Lieutenant Commander Haggerty, CGSC student. In most human endeavors, competition leads to a greater end product. The opposite seems to be true of journalism. Why is that, and what can we do about it?

**Mr. Lubin**

Well, first of all, I disagree with that. Are you talking about journalism in general or embedded journalist, journalism in war?

**Audience Member**

I'd say journalism in general. The competition is to get it out faster, funnier, more appealing, and we end up with a trashier product as a consumer.

**Mr. Lubin**

We have, in my opinion, we've got a trashier market. I mean, the sign I put up about God texting the Ten Commandments. A lot of people coming to school here need remedial writing. You have people who are majors, which means you're 30, 32, 35 years old, master's degree, and you can't write a coherent paper. That's not a plus either. The kids coming into the Army, coming into the Marine Corps, they can text. They can't write a complete sentence. My son, when he sent me an e-mail from Iraq would say, "Hay, Dad," spelled H-A-Y. Well, mom's horses have hay. My own son is a moron sometimes. I'm writing to a market. If I use big words, they're all, "Well, what are you, some sort of Eastern snob?" Well, yes, maybe I am, but I know how to write a sentence. That's the problem. I'm not

writing for you guys. I'm writing for the kids that are texting, maybe the parents of kids who were texting the Ten Commandments around. That's the market out there, and I can't change that unfortunately. I wish it wasn't so, but that's what I'm involved in.

### **Audience Member**

I think this conversation is very interesting, and I've seen this happen. I've been doing this for about 35 years, talking to groups like you and military groups. There's this kind of feeling that comes through the crowd that Americans, people, the audience believes anything that the media says, believes anything that Saddam Hussein says, believes anything that Osama bin Laden says, and frankly that is a real oversimplification. Rand did a study 2 years ago on civilian casualties and the public concern about news media coverage of civilian casualties in Iraq. What came back was that the public was vastly more interested in two American soldiers who had been kidnapped by al-Qaeda than they were in 18 civilians who had been hit by an erroneous airstrike, and they had multitudes of comparisons again and again and again. We found in Vietnam, the media found in Vietnam, media people like you who would very conscientiously write stories about the civilian hospitals and people who had been burned by napalm and all these things that really do happen in war. Never saw the light of day. Never got printed. So they stopped covering it. Why? The managers in New York and Washington and Los Angeles and Chicago and Kansas City, wherever, who run those papers, run the TV outlets, understand their market. Their market wants to know about American soldiers. Not interested in civilians. Oh, they're sympathetic. But as a Rand study found, they give the soldier the benefit of a doubt. Yeah, that happens in war. Everybody out there knows it. You've got enough people out there who have been in the military, who came through Vietnam, who know all this, who are aware of this. Our guys do the very best they can not to let it happen, but it happens anyway. This is the basic premise from which the public works. You got to screw up pretty badly before they really turn on you. They turned on you in Vietnam because everybody understood we were wasting lives, our own people's lives mainly, and wasting our money and nothing was coming out of it, and we were fighting for a regime that really basically couldn't get itself organized. That's just a thought. I really think that we have to understand the audience and give them some credit.

### **Mr. Lubin**

That's why when I go overseas, my stuff is "boots on the ground." It's what those kids, those with a lot of names, a lot of hometowns, because that's what people want to see. I mean, we're still a pretty [*inaudible*] country, yeah, globalization, etc. But we've got a kid overseas. We want to know what they're doing because the kid overseas who texts instead of writes letters or God forbid he calls home. Mom says, "Geez, haven't heard from him for 3 months. What's going on?" Okay, I'll write an article about what they're doing in Ramadi or Fallujah or whatever it might be. Here's what an embed operation does, whose picture is . . . my readership when I was overseas was 1.2 million a month. I [*inaudible*] newspapers, and this is just Internet stuff. You send it back, and it's passed around and passed around through entire companies, entire battalions. That's great news. Internet's great. But it's got to be used as what it is. It's a tool and not a be all, end all.

### **Audience Member**

Lieutenant Commander Allen. I'm also here at the school. I would say that primarily I think the main point of some of the comments today, especially from the military folks, is that both friendly media, i.e., from the United States, as well as enemy media are all focused on our actions, and what we fail to see is an in-depth analysis and an in-depth comprehensive strategic study of what the enemy is doing and their actions. And I would also comment that over the last 2 days, I've heard this mention of good and bad folks, both in the military and in the media. The biggest problem is that a mistake on our end can be amplified by the media. For instance, a couple of marines do something bad in a little town and next thing you know it's worldwide news. Our strategic policies are being affected by this, where it could just be for instance one reporter gets some bad news and puts it out. I'll give you a perfect example. Abu Ghraib is still being used to recruit fighters.

### **Mr. Lubin**

Well, Abu Ghraib wasn't three marines. Yes, I think you're right and you're wrong. Abu Ghraib is something that they're going to use for a long time. The marines, the one marine who threw the dog off the cliff and his moron buddy who filmed him, one kid got thrown out. The other kid's been reduced in rank, and that made the news for 2 days. The PETA people are upset, but who cares. Beyond that, the story's long gone. Abu Ghraib is a different situation, and the media didn't break that. The kids, some of the soldiers over there who sent the videos back to their parents, and their parents turned it in, it wasn't us. It was themselves who were disgusted with it. Some of that, too. You've got to use the context all the way across.

### **Audience Member**

What I would comment and ask the question on is when we have these blunders that are going to happen, the problem that we see is this broadscale worldwide amplification of the problem. It's instantly picked up by the enemy, instantly used for propaganda purposes, whereas our side can't really counter that message. We can't go in because of a myriad of issues, but we can't go in and prove the Taliban wrong by saying, "You know what." I could tell you. I've personally seen a strike happen and seen bodies drug into a target.

### **Mr. Lubin**

But here's what I think . . .

### **Audience Member**

But the problem is how do we get the media to support our national objective?

### **Mr. Lubin**

First of all, I think people expect more risk because we are the United States. They expect the Taliban to do stupid crap and they expect us not to. We seem to have a halo around us for the past 200 and some years and that is people expect more from us. They don't expect an Abu Ghraib from us. They expect it from the Taliban. You know—we set ourselves I shouldn't say whether we set ourselves up or not—people expect more from us and we don't expect much from them, and so when they don't deliver much, it's expected.

They don't expect us to do this. They expect us to be the knight in shining armor. Well, most the time we are, but sometimes we're not. Our mistakes, unfortunately, when you pull an Abu Ghraib is a big mistake. The two marines throwing dogs off the cliff, yeah, what did that make the news for? A day, 2 days, then it was gone. They don't get as amplified. When you're overseas, you may think it's amplified. Over here, it's really not. Doesn't seem to be in my opinion.

**Audience Member**

I just wanted if I may to elaborate on that remark that you posted on the screen there. What I intended to say, and I can correct the record if I got it wrong then, is that I don't think that we are sent to places of conflict and places of contention to be neutral. I think there is a confusion often among the present generation of journalists about the difference between being neutral and being fair. If you are fair in making judgments as between the United States and some of its enemies and the way the United States Army behaves and some of its enemies behave, then you are likely to come to conclusions that, on the whole, are favorable to the United States and not to its enemies. At least as I have experienced it. There are those who believe that we should remain neutral, and I would say to them that the hottest place in hell belongs to those who remain neutral in times of moral crisis.

**Mr. Lubin**

Thank you.

**Mr. Gott**

Andy, thank you once again for just an outstanding panel. Ladies and gentlemen.

**Mr. Lubin**

Thank you.



## PANEL 6—CURRENT OPERATIONS

### Historical Roots and Explanations for “Embedding” Journalists<sup>1</sup>

(Submitted Paper)

by

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#### Media-Military Relations

In the past, wars were fought with sticks and stones. Then mankind invented swords and progressively more lethal implements of war. Nowadays we fight wars with cruise missiles and bombers. However, the most efficient way to fight a war is using a weapon that has decided wars in the past and will decide wars in the future: public opinion. Today this enormous force lies in the hands of the media. For centuries, the relationship between the media and the military was called military-media relations. To be more precise, it must actually be called media-military relations. The media reports about the military. Therefore, the majority of the power of definition and the sovereignty of interpretation is held by the media. The military is not able to communicate its point of view without the press as a mediator. The wars which have been fought during the past 100 years prove that media-military relations are crucial to the way wars are being reported, reviewed, and remembered. The Vietnam war, the Falkland Islands War, the Persian Gulf War, and Operation IRAQI FREEDOM may serve as examples.

When the Vietnam war ended, quite a number of military officers blamed the media for reporting on the war in a too negative way. They claimed that they had lost the war on the homefront rather than in the rice paddies of Vietnam. For the military, it is more or less a very good excuse for all the mistakes made in Vietnam. For the media, it is a praise of their ability to influence public opinion. Unfortunately, this “stab-in-the-back-legend” has been repeated so often that it soon became the standard explanation for losing the war in Vietnam. This legend also shaped the way the military was to deal with the media in future wars.<sup>2</sup>

The first major war in the Western Hemisphere after Vietnam was the war for the Falkland Islands in 1982. In the Falklands War, the military dealt with the press in a completely different way. The more or less completely free reporting of the Vietnam-era was past and a new era in the relationship between the media and the military began—an era in which the media was under the general suspicion of being unpatriotic and potentially traitorous. But the military still needed the media as transmitters to communicate their policies to the public.



## The Falkland Islands War: A Lesson Learned from the British

The precedent case of media-military relations after the end of the war in Vietnam is the Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands on 2 April 1982 and the British attempts to retake the islands. From the beginning, the press had severe problems of covering the ongoing crisis. First, the long distance between London and the Falklands made it difficult to report. Second, the press policy of the British Government was disastrous. When the government finally decided to send the fleet to the Falklands, the Royal Navy initially refused to allow reporters on their ships. Sir Henry Leach, First Sea-Lord and Chief of Staff of the Royal Navy, asked if his government wanted him to load “*pens or bayonets*” on his ships.<sup>3</sup> When the Ministry of Defense (MOD) intervened, he agreed to create space for six journalists. Later the number of places for journalists on the ships departing to the Falklands was raised to 10. Responsible for public relations (PR) in the MOD was a civilian employee who was never trained to be a PR expert. His name isn’t even mentioned in any released documents. He was normally responsible for a completely different field within the MOD. He had the plan to fly all accredited journalists to the British outpost of Ascension in the Atlantic. There the journalists would board the ships. According to this plan, the media and the military would have 2 more weeks to get to know each other. However, the Royal Navy rejected this plan. They feared a journalist would discover that the airfield of Ascension was not shielded by any anti-aircraft artillery and that there were no additional security measures.

The conditions under which the journalists who were allowed to accompany the fleet had been elected did not strengthen the credibility of the military. On 4 April 1982 the director of the Newspapers Publishers’ Association was having lunch when the telephone rang. He was told every reporter who wanted to travel with the fleet had to arrive in the military harbor of Portsmouth by midnight. The director should provide a list of the five selected journalists to the MOD within the next 4 hours. The other five places had been reserved for a journalist of both ITN (Independent Television News) and BBC, and a shared camera crew. The director spent the next 1½ hours on the phone talking to all major newspapers on “Fleet Street.” Unfortunately, every newspaper insisted that their correspondent was the most important one. In the end, the only thing that could be done was to throw the names of all the journalists who were willing and able to go into one of the director’s hats. Then his wife had to draw the lucky “winners.” Immediately the excluded press started harsh and grim protests to No. Ten Downing Street. Finally, Downing Street had no other choice and raised the contingent up to 29 places. These protests are generally seen as “the most violent media lobbying of No. 10 in recent history.”<sup>4</sup> The forms the reporters had to fill in for their accreditation had been created during the Suez Crisis of 1956.<sup>5</sup>

Getting the journalists on board the fleet sailing toward the Falklands was a minor problem compared to the upcoming issues they were to encounter. On 8 April the MOD issued a directive for dealing with the press. It addressed the captains and the skippers of the fleet and described the issues they were not allowed to talk about. For example, it was forbidden to talk about almost all items “including speculation about operational plans; operational capabilities of individual units and of all types of equipment; particulars of current tactics and techniques; logistics; intelligence about Argentine Forces; communications; defects in

equipment.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, the skippers of the ships were only allowed to talk about the weather and the menu of the staff canteen. Seen from the point of view of operational security, this directive may have had some significance. From the media’s point of view, this restriction was more or less a catastrophe. When even weather reports are classified, there is literally nothing the media can report. Getting the few reports from on board back home was the next problem. Journalists of the print media were allowed to use the military communications systems on board the ships. However, their reports did not reach their editorial offices back home. They reached the central communications room in the MOD. Reports from the journalists working for radio and television stations could only be sent using the commercial Inmarsat-System. Even during times of satellites, communications seemed to remain a problem.<sup>7</sup>

Another problem the media had to face was the hostility of the military. It seems like the Royal Navy had ignored the existence of an institution called “press” for decades. Symptomatic for the idiosyncratic way the Royal Navy dealt with the press was that obviously no one had had the idea to train the senior officers, all of them graduates of the Royal Defense College, in dealing with the press. The commander in chief of the Falklands Battle Group, Rear Admiral Sir John Forster “Sandy” Woodward, noted in his diary on 26 April, “On this day I also ran into trouble from an unforeseen, though probably unwitting enemy, the British Press. I should point out, that I had never dealt with this phenomenon before, thus I was unsure how to handle them or what to tell them.”<sup>8</sup> The result of this was a very unprofessional performance of Admiral Woodward. The *Sunday Telegraph* wrote about one of these interviews: “Seeing him on television, half sitting, half lying back, hiding his mouth behind his knuckles as he reaches hesitantly for the right words, you see what happened on the *Hermes* last week. An Admiral got out of his depth.”<sup>9</sup>

A whole service thought that the press was the real enemy. From today’s point of view, it is not easy to understand why there was so much fear of the media. At this time, Margaret Thatcher had the highest rate of support from the public, better than all of her predecessors who had to face an international crisis—except Winston Churchill. Thus, she was in a very comfortable situation for a politician: the majority of the parliament, the majority of the public, and the majority of the media were backing her politics. So it was not surprising when the American PR expert and US Navy Captain Arthur A. Humphries praised the press policy of the British Government. He emphasized that it was Margaret Thatcher who insisted that six journalists would not be enough. Certainly, it was the right decision to send journalists along with the fleet to allow them to report. In fact, it was the inability to find a method for dealing with journalists that foiled the government’s plans to keep the public informed.<sup>10</sup>

When the battle of the Falklands began, the press, gathered on the British fleet, could finally report something substantial. These reports counterattacked the Argentine propaganda, which had claimed that several British fighters had been shot down by the Argentine Armed Forces. In this case it was fortunate that the only thing the journalists on board both British aircraft carriers could do was to count planes. They just needed to count the departing jets and to recount them when they landed. They reported that all planes had returned safely to the carriers.<sup>11</sup> Using primary school mathematics is not really investigative journalism.

What followed was, however, a “highlight” of bad taste in reporting: the headline of the British yellow-press newspaper, *The Sun*, on 4 May 1982. The front page showed the huge lettered headline “GOTCHA.” This word meant the sinking of the Argentine fighting ship *ARA Belgrano* by a British submarine. Describing an event that caused the death of 1,200 Argentine sailors in this way underlines the sad fact that the press on the British home front had no idea what was going on. The complete ban of all coverage on the operations of the Royal Navy in the South Atlantic had also had an unexpected side effect. Due to the lack of official government information, the British press cited the communiqués of the Argentine Government. Therefore, “Fleet-Street” were blamed for being traitors. This situation was the chance for some “armchair strategists.”<sup>12</sup> These experts, most of them retired senior-officers, were literally pulled into the next TV studio. They should explain to the audience what they would do, where they would conduct landing operations if they had the command down there. The often repeated criticism of these “military experts” was that talking about military operations on TV would provide crucial information to the enemy.<sup>13</sup> These accusations have never been proven. Most of the “advice” of these armchair strategists had a certain similarity to “the children’s blindfold game of pinning a tail on a donkey.”<sup>14</sup>

The journalists who had to stay in Britain criticized the fact that the MOD did not host enough press briefings. They thought this would lead to too many speculations. However, the MOD had made the decision to cancel all press briefings when the fleet departed. The next press briefing was held on 11 May—when it was clear that Britain would definitely not lose the war.

More dangerous than some retired senior officers who explained what they would do if they were allowed to was the reporting of the BBC about the Battle of Goose Green. When the 2d Parachute Battalion had landed and erected a beachhead in the bay of San Carlos, the battalion moved forward to the village of Goose Green. There an unknown number of Argentine soldiers were placed to repel a possible landing. While the 2d Parachute Battalion was approaching, BBC World Service was reporting about their advance on Goose Green. What was reported was not general information. The World Service reported the advance of the 2d Parachute Battalion in a very detailed way, like talking about points on a map. The only thing the Argentine commander had to do was to order his soldiers to dig in facing north. This resulted in a fierce fight with casualties on both sides. How this report of the BBC happened was never fully examined. Obviously, there was an official press release, although it is unclear who issued it. The BBC handled this press release as official information.<sup>15</sup>

The Falkland Islands War was one of the rare wars of the late 20th century with no TV images from the front. Surprisingly enough, no pictures and TV images exist of the Argentine surrender in Port Stanley. According to Humphries, the British press policy can be summarized in the following way: “there was a serious information problems with the MOD. It arose not through any Machiavellian desire to mislead the news media or the public constantly but through sheer incompetence at times and most often through naiveté.”<sup>16</sup> Likewise, the newspaper *News of the World* asked in a letter to the MOD:

Did the Ministry of Defence REALLY want this war covered? That is the question that must be asked. . . . why the MOD did not lay down sensible censorship regulations with the help of media experts conscious of the national interest. As it was, the whole operation was a shambles from the media point of view and the figleaf of “national interest” was used to cover the errors, omission, muddle and lack of information.<sup>17</sup>

After the Argentine surrender to the British military, officers all over the world started to examine the lessons they could learn from this war. An American naval officer and expert for PR also did this. He examined the lessons the US military could learn. In his article, “Two Routes on the Wrong Destination. Public Affairs in the South Atlantic War,” published in the *Naval War College Review*, he examined the disastrous British press policy. His article contains seven points that could be described as the golden rules for media-military relations.

1. If a country wants to gain public support, it is not supposed to be seen as brutal, uncontrolled, and barbarian. In Humphries’ opinion, the best example is “Eddie” Adams’ picture taken during the Tet Offensive, which shows a South Vietnamese police officer shooting a suspected Viet Cong.

2. If relatives have to see TV images of fallen husbands and sons in color, the support for the war will decrease.

3. To prevent images like this, the access of reporters to the battlefield has to be controlled.

4. The implementation of censorship is necessary, if one wants to prevent the media from voluntarily or involuntarily helping the enemy.

5. In a war it is advisable for the government to gain the support of the public by addressing their patriotism. Triumphant headlines like “GOTCHA!” should be avoided.

6. In case of war the government has to inform the citizens about all events first, to ensure that the enemy propaganda will not work.

7. For gaining public support and to irritate defectors in the country, the government should report the truth about the enemy and ignore all of the enemy’s propaganda of atrocity.

Humphries concludes his rules with the determination that war is something a soldier is trained and prepared for while hoping that it never occurs. PR in wartime is something that is often used but never trained. Therefore, media-military relations must be an integral part of every military exercise.

Based on the background of the debacle of the Falkland Islands War, these rules sound well-thought through. The only problem is the implementation of these rules. In a democracy with a free press, it is impossible to guarantee the execution of these rules. An effective implementation of these rules recommends a press system that is not free and completely controlled by the government. Consequently, Humphries’ article outlined the lesson about press policy, which the Americans could learn from the British.

## The Definition of an American Press Policy for War Times

When US troops intervened in the Caribbean state of Grenada in 1983, which was Operation URGENT FURY, the media was completely excluded. The journalists were waiting on the island next to Grenada to go there and report. Unfortunately, press coverage was allowed only from the third day of the invasion—when there was definitely no fighting anymore. After URGENT FURY, there were a lot of complaints about the way the American military and the American Government dealt with the media. Inserting the words “Cleared by Department of Defense Censors” in the rare footage released showed very clearly that there was a violation of the First Amendment. Afterwards, the justification of the United States involvement was researched by committees of Congress.

The Justice Committee finally suggested that the military and representatives of the media should seek guidelines for a press policy in war times that would be satisfying for both sides. These guidelines should be developed by a panel, which had been installed by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS). Head of this panel was retired Major General Winant Sidle. Therefore, this panel is also known as the “Sidle Panel” instead of using the complicated name “The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Media-Military Relations Panel.” Sidle was a journalist before becoming a soldier, so he had some experiences with the needs of the media. Later, as an officer in Vietnam, he was head of the Army Public Affairs Office in Saigon from 1967 to 1969, and from 1974 to 1975 he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs. The Sidle Panel had to answer the basic question: “How can we [the US Government] conduct military operations in a manner that safeguards the lives of our military and protects the security of the operation while keeping the American public informed through the media?”<sup>18</sup> When the panel ended its work, this question was answered in a very substantial way:

The American people must be informed about United States military operations and this information can best be provided through both the news media and the government. Therefore, the panel believes it is essential that the U.S. news media cover U.S. military operations to the maximum degree possible consistent with mission security and the safety of U.S. forces.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, the installation of a pool system seemed to be the only practicable way of providing the media with access to the battlefield as early as possible. In the future, the planning for a military operation should take into account the specific needs of the media. The planning process should be reviewed by the public affairs staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and the Pentagon.

When in the late 1980s American warships escorted the oil tankers of Kuwait through the Persian Gulf, these escorts should have been accompanied by members of the newly established Department of Defense National Media Pool. Unfortunately, the journalists were more or less forced to remain in a hotel in Bahrain. A visible sign of their frustration was that they began to wear T-shirts with “When there’s news in the Gulf, we’re in the pool.”<sup>20</sup> It seems unfair, however, to see the ineffectiveness of this case as a general disadvantage of the pool system. Since American warships had escorted these oil tankers, the



number of incidents had decreased rapidly. There was literally nothing worth reporting—except one Iranian plane that had been shot down by a missile from an American warship.

The first real test of the pool system was the American invasion of Panama, Operation JUST CAUSE, in December 1989. The planning for JUST CAUSE ended when on 20 December 1989 paratroopers of the 82d Airborne Division and soldiers of the 7th Infantry Division landed in Panama City. Following the recommendations of the Sidle Panel, which were at this point the official press policy of the Department of Defense (DOD), the process of planning this operation should have been reviewed by the public affairs department of the Pentagon. Unfortunately, this review process never happened because of the hidden planning of JUST CAUSE with the JCS. Despite all these mistakes, the criticism of the pool system after Panama was very moderate. The environment in which the journalists could work was definitely much better compared to URGENT FURY with its complete ban of media coverage. The pool system provided journalists with the possibility to report. These reports were late, but at least they were possible.<sup>21</sup>

After Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in the early days of August 1990, the US Government decided to send troops to Saudi Arabia to deter Saddam Hussein from attacking the Saudi Arabian oilfields. When the first troops were deployed to the Arabian Peninsula, they were accompanied by journalists from the DOD National Media Pool. From the initial deployments to Operation DESERT SHIELD to the first shots in DESERT STORM, these journalists tried to report the buildup of allied forces. But soon, the limits of the DOD Media Pool became visible. The system nearly collapsed under the sheer number of requests from journalists who also wanted to accompany the troops on their way to the Gulf. When they arrived in Saudi Arabia, they soon shared the fate of their colleagues. There was nothing to report due to the harsh restrictions set up by the Saudi Arabian Government and the public affairs offices of both the Pentagon and Central Command (CENTCOM). After the war, General Norman “Stormin’ Norman” Schwarzkopf was often quoted with his remark “that hardly a journalist has seen the battlefield.”<sup>22</sup> Preventing journalists from reporting their stories on the battlefield paved the way for the military to spread the image of a clean, surgical war with hardly any casualties. The less the journalists in Dharan were allowed to see the war, the more they reported the official point of view. With this in mind, the often-quoted remark by “Stormin’ Norman” shows a certain pride in the way CENTCOM dealt with the media.<sup>23</sup>

Soon after the successful end of the war it became clear that this kind of media-military relations was not the best way for the military to deal with the media. The criticism of the way the media was allowed to report started soon after the victory parade in New York, when the editors in chief of all the major newspapers and TV stations started to think about the reporting of the last war and the role of the media. It became clear to them that they had been more or less willing executioners of the military propaganda. The book *Second Front: Censorship and Propaganda in the 1991 Gulf War*, published in 1992 by the publisher of *Harper's Magazine*, John MacArthur, made many of the problems, frictions, and restrictions the media had to accept during DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM visible to the public. This was the kick-start to a public debate about the way the media reported the war. During this discourse, the editors in chief had to admit that they had been rightfully blamed



for their dereliction of duty. Besides, it became obvious that the military still had problems dealing with the media.<sup>24</sup>

With the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the American decision to intervene, the DOD National Media Pool had been reactivated. The first troops were deployed to the Gulf on 6 August 1990, the first journalists from the DOD Pool on 12 August. This 6-day delay boosted the existing criticism of the pool system. Not only the delayed departure of the journalists caused a lot of critique, but the fact that Saudi Arabia did everything to hinder journalists from reporting also caused a lot of problems. General Colin Powell, at this time Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, noted in his memories: “Early in the buildup the Saudis made a simple announcement. They were not going to allow any reporters into their country. That, we knew, could not stand. You do not send nearly a half million Americans, plus thousands of other nationals, halfway around the world to prepare for a major war and then impose a news blackout.”<sup>25</sup> The fact that it was impossible to impose a news blackout seemed to be clear to General Schwarzkopf, too. Schwarzkopf had to admit that “our own newspaper and TV reports had become Iraq’s best source of military intelligence.”<sup>26</sup> So the Washington bureau chiefs of the media tried to get visas directly from the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia in Washington, Prince Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdul Aziz.<sup>27</sup>

At the same time, a captain of the US Navy laid down a memorandum that should become the blueprint for the press policy of the Gulf War. The basic principle of this so-called “Annex Foxtrot” was that “news media representatives will be escorted at all times. Repeat, at all times.”<sup>28</sup> This solved the so-called “Vietnam problem” military point of view: journalists running around on the battlefield.

The pool system was not the only way of organizing journalists. It was also a very elegant way of allowing reporters to report what the military wanted them to see. Even if a journalist had a place in the pool, this was no guarantee for being able to report anything. When a commander in the field did not want to be accompanied by a reporter of the pool, the decision was irrevocable. Colonel William L. Mulvey, at this time the commanding officer of the US Joint Information Bureau, complained about this arbitrary act: “If Gen. Tilelli of the 1st Cav. did not want a pool reporter, then his word was supreme. He didn’t get a pool reporter. He was a two-star General, and I know how to salute.”<sup>29</sup> This attitude was more or less a lesson learned from the Vietnam war. According to the “stab-in-the-back legend,” the media was responsible for the American defeat in Vietnam by reporting in a too negative way. In other words, the supporters of this point of view thought that the war had been lost on the homefront and not on the front in Vietnam. The basic problem was in fact that there was no political directive for a press policy. The lack of such political guidance led to the creation of a press policy that basically tried to avoid everything that could be blamed for the defeat of the war. To sum it up: the free, hard to control, and even harder to censor press.<sup>30</sup>

Ironically, the best reporting about DESERT STORM was provided by journalists who refused to be in the pools. The members of the pools were sitting in their hotels and were waiting for the beginning of the ground offensive. The journalists who refused to be in the pools, the so-called unilaterals, had the chance to report about events that clearly showed

that the war was not the clean, surgical war the military wanted the world to believe in. By the end of January 1991, 2 weeks after the beginning of the allied operations against Iraq, Iraqi units conducted attack operations from their positions in Kuwait across the border to Saudi Arabia. These raids could be fought back by allied units. But the border town of Khafji remained in Iraqi hands for almost 36 hours.<sup>31</sup> From a strategic point of view, one can second the argument of General Schwarzkopf that this episode was “about as significant as a mosquito on an elephant.”<sup>32</sup> These attacks were irrelevant for the progress of the war. However, these incidents were not irrelevant for the reporting of the war. On the one hand, one can see all the problems related to the Gulf War under a magnifying glass: too small, too late installed pools, contradictory press briefings, and journalists working outside the pool system. On the other hand, the battle of Khafji is the only real achievement of the Iraqi propaganda. On the streets in all Arabian states, people and not governments celebrated Khafji as the victory of genuine Arabian forces.<sup>33</sup>

The operations for the reconquest of Khafji led to confusion of the military and the media. The first report of the Iraqi success in Khafji came from the French news agency Agence France Presse (AFP), citing an Iraqi communiqué. After AFP had issued a news flash, CENTCOM in Riyadh organized a press briefing as quickly as possible. At this press briefing, the CENTCOM spokesperson admitted that there were some incidents on the border between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The contact with the enemy, however, had been lost. He did not mention the fighting around Khafji with any single word. His view of the incidents was soon obsolete, when some reporters reported that there were still enemy contacts in the Khafji area. They said that Saudi Arabian and Qatari units were conducting a counterattack with artillery support by US Marines. These reports had passed the military censors in Dhahran. At the time, the spokesperson in Riyadh talked about the situation, this report dated back several hours. This showed clearly that the situation around Khafji was not under allied control. Furthermore, it showed that even the military PR personnel had problems with Clausewitz’ phenomenon of friction:<sup>34</sup> “The battle of Khafji severely tested the Coalition’s elaborate media management of press pools and military briefings. Under the pressure of fast moving events on the ground, the system proved unequal to the task of providing quick, accurate information. . . .”<sup>35</sup>

### **Embedding Journalists**

After the Gulf War, many journalists began to reflect on their role in the war. It was obvious that the pool system was inefficient. The pool system was a good idea in terms of covering a war, but DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM showed its limits. It could operate well in a military operation limited by time, scale, and area. The pool system began to stumble when a military operation lasted longer than 3 weeks. After these 3 weeks, the members of the pool had to be replaced. Parallel to this, other representatives of the media got more and more interested in reporting the military operations.

When the United States went to war against Iraq again in 2003, the journalists who wanted to cover this war were embedded in the units of the US Armed Forces. This new form of dealing with the media was an immediate reaction to the harsh criticism of the pool system. Based on the recommendations of the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) and

the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff “[to] tell the story—good or bad—before others seed the media with disinformation and distortion as they most certainly will continue to do. Our people in the field need to tell the story,”<sup>36</sup> one tried to impose the lessons learned from the debacle in 1991 into a new system for reporting from the battlefield. The media and the military began to negotiate how future wars could be covered in a way that satisfied both sides. In April 1992, an agreement, named “Statement of Principles—News Coverage of Combat,” was reached. This agreement basically fixed the things that should have been the rules when the pool system was set up. But these rules were finally written down. It was also filled with restrictions the media had to accept and fixed duties the military had. Most of the points made in these principles had been more or less part of the final report of the Sidle Panel. It was the first time that these points were discussed not only in the DOD but also with representatives of the media. In this agreement, the word “embedding” is not mentioned; but in all the military operations that have been executed after this agreement was reached, a kind of predecessor for embedding journalists has been used.<sup>37</sup>

In 1995, when American troops were deployed to Bosnia as part of the Implementation Force (IFOR) Mission, these units were accompanied by journalists. The journalists were attached to the troops when they prepared to deploy in Germany. They should live with the soldiers in Bosnia for several weeks. Their reports were censored. The program aimed at providing the journalists with an opportunity to get a deeper and closer look into the everyday life of the GIs. Through this measure, the Pentagon hoped to achieve a more positive coverage about the soldiers and the deployment to Bosnia. Furthermore, they hoped that the resentments the military had against the media would be overcome.<sup>38</sup>

In May 1997, the Pentagon published a new doctrine for dealing with the media in future military operations. In this doctrine, special attention was paid to the circumstance that information published in an accurate and punctual manner was crucial for the credibility of the military. Through the publication of this “Doctrine for Public Affairs in Joint Operations,” the recommendations of the “Statement of Principles—News Coverage of Combat” was emphasized. Although the concept of embedded journalists was not mentioned in this doctrine, it provided guidelines for supporting the media, the security of operations versus the access to information for the media, and guidelines for discussions with media representatives.<sup>39</sup>

On 28 September, about 2 weeks after 9/11, the spokeswoman of the Pentagon, Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) Victoria Clarke, met the Washington bureau chiefs of all the media who were participating in the DOD National Media Pool. The deputy spokesperson of the Pentagon, Richard McGraw, and the Coordinator of the “DOD National Media Pool,” Colonel Lane Van de Steeg, also attended this meeting. After some general words of welcome, Victoria Clark began her presentation stating that all participants in this meeting now lived in a changed world. The Pentagon now had to try to figure out the rules of this new world order. Related to this general problem was the question how to cooperate with the press in the future while guarding the National Security and the life of women and men wearing the uniform. A lot of things in the relationship between the media and the military would remain in a status quo. But the military also had to look for new ways of cooperation. This said, Mrs. Clarke emphasized the importance of this cooperation for

the Pentagon, “We think providing as much news and information in as timely a fashion as possible is critically important.”<sup>40</sup> One reason for this meeting should be the question how this could be reached in the future. Then she handed over to Colonel Van de Steeg, who said that the pool would be activated as an exercise. Many of the personnel responsible for managing the pool were now serving in different positions. Then the participants discussed several aspects concerning the secrecy of military operations. After discussing that, Victoria Clarke again started to talk to the participants. She stated that the pool system itself was not optimal after all. They had to look for an alternative to make journalists part of a military operation, to embed them into that operation. In the discussion of this point, the representatives of the media emphasized their acceptance of this alternative. They said that they wished to embed their reporters in every service and every branch of the military. The Pentagon should figure out how to maintain and to arrange this. The representatives of the media asked if there should be any censorship of their reporting. The spokespersons of the Pentagon stated that there would be no censorship as long as the reporters would keep certain standards of reporting.<sup>41</sup>

When the United States started Operation ENDURING FREEDOM with the attacks on the Taliban strongholds in Afghanistan, the coverage of the war was more or less impossible. The war in Afghanistan was mostly waged with Special Forces. Due to the clandestine nature of such operations, it was hardly possible to cover this war.<sup>42</sup>

Following the first meeting in the Pentagon, there was a series of other meetings. The topics discussed concerned the proposed new system or generally the access to the battlefield. Before the planning for a new war against Iraq transitioned from ideas to real plans, the press officers of the JCS started with the planning of the assignment of the press. Following Sidle’s recommendations, they also started to modify these plans according to the needs of the media. At the same time, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and his spokeswoman, Victoria Clarke, started to discuss the effects of enemy propaganda and negative reporting on ENDURING FREEDOM with the press officers of the JCS. The result of the discussion was the consensus that unprejudiced reporting would secure sovereignty of interpretation and counter enemy efforts of disinformation.<sup>43</sup>

In the early days of October 2002, a group of PR experts from all commands and services, the Pentagon, and the JCS met in Washington to analyze the work of the media and the rules regulating their reporting in the last wars. Furthermore, they synchronized their conclusions with the war plan against Iraq. They concluded that the activation of the DOD National Media Pool was not the appropriate response for the planned quick operation. A great number of unilateral working journalists on the battlefield also did not seem a good solution. The only practical way of dealing with the media was—in the opinion of this group—the embedding of journalists into the troops. They developed a whole set of measures that could be described as a supporting mission to the media. The journalists should be trained for their deployment with a kind of basic training in surviving on the battlefield. The military should provide chemical protective gear to the journalists. It should also figure out how to grant quick and uncomplicated access to the video footage of target cameras and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). These proposals passed all other steps up to Rumsfeld. When he signed the proposals, they defined three goals: “(1) Dominate the

news coverage of the war. (2) Counter third party disinformation. (3) Assist in garnering US public and international support.”<sup>44</sup>

Rumsfeld outlined these goals in two messages on 14 November 2002 and 21 February 2003 to all commanders. In these messages, he explained how the public perception of the military and all other organizations responsible for the National Security could be improved in future operations. Along with that he underlined the importance of providing access and transportation for both national and international media. Moreover, he recommended giving briefings to the media on a daily basis and to provide intelligence resources to media as soon as they were declassified.<sup>45</sup>

At the same time, the press officers in the Pentagon started with the creation of Public Affairs Guidelines (PAGs), which defined the basic rules for working with each other and the possible restrictions the media had to face. The official policy of the DOD was “that media will have long-term, minimally restrictive access to U.S. air, ground and naval forces through embedding.”<sup>46</sup> Obviously, the authors of these guidelines were conscious of the importance of widespread reporting as objectively as possible. They emphasized the role of objective reporting not only on their own side, but also on the allied side. For the authors, the question of remaining in the “Coalition against Terror” could be decided by this kind of reporting. Besides, the reporting would also have an affect on the countries in which the United States would conduct military operations. It could affect the costs and the duration of an American involvement. For reaching this goal, the Pentagon would now start to embed journalists. For the first time in the discussion on a new press policy for war time, it defined and explained what embedding meant: “These embedded media will live, work and travel as part of the units with which they are embedded to facilitate maximum, in-depth coverage of U.S. Forces in combat and related operations.”<sup>47</sup>

Compared to the predecessors of the PAGs, the most important improvement is the recommendation for nearly unrestricted access of the media to fighting missions and the preparation and debriefing of them whenever possible. The unit the reporter was embedded in had to provide quarter, forage, and access to medical treatment. The journalist should have access to the military transportations system. While embedded, the journalist was not allowed to use his own car. Should his communication equipment fail, he was allowed to use the military’s communications systems to air his story. Point 3, section G was a very interesting aspect of these guidelines: The commanding officer of the unit the journalist was embedded in had to provide a possibility to the journalist for watching the ongoing battle. The personal security of the journalist should be no reason for denying this possibility. But, if this was no reason for restricting the access to the battlefield, the commanding officer was not responsible for the eventual death of the journalist. It was the personal risk of the journalist to view the battle, and he was responsible for himself. The military was not responsible for the safety of the journalist.<sup>48</sup>

The PAGs were a real turning point compared to the press policy in other wars. For the first time, the media faced hardly any restrictions. The guidelines clearly stated: “Media products will not be subject to security review or censorship.”<sup>49</sup> Due to security reasons, however, some things were not allowed. It was, for example, not allowed to report the



precise number of casualties under the level of corps. But this kind of information is normally restricted in any war and could not be reported in the past wars. More interesting is the list of items that could be reported. It was allowed to report enemy targets that were already under fire, the branch of the service, the code name of the operation, and the home city of the units. Even the number of casualties could be reported—with the restriction that no one could have been identified by the recorded and aired images. These restrictions were to guard the dignity of the casualties and their relatives rather than to censor. Contrary to the war in Vietnam, a journalist was not allowed to carry a weapon. This restriction had definitely been an advantage for both sides: The journalist was not in danger to be mistaken as a combatant in the sense of the law of war. For the military, the risk of being wounded by shots from the journalist was reduced.<sup>50</sup>

Moreover, the units designated for the war were asked how many journalists could be embedded with them. The results of the estimates were a contingent of 671 places in the Army and the Marines and 83 in the Air Force. However, these estimates were very problematic because every unit used different methods for assessing their capacities for embedding journalists. Soon it became clear that all these estimates were wrong. When the war started, the Combined Public Information Center (CPIC) in Kuwait had registered 2,870 journalists. Of them, 558 had been embedded into the units. Of these 558 journalists, 539 were embedded into the ground forces and 19 into the Air Force. Embedding was a voluntary process. The embedded journalist could leave his unit at any time. At this point the system resembled a one-way traffic lane—if a journalist decided to leave his unit, he could not return.

Then, on the evening of 23 March 2003, CNN aired shocking images. The audience at home and all over the world saw dead bodies covered with cloths and a number of destroyed vehicles. These were the remains of the 507th Maintenance Company, which ran into an Iraqi ambush in the town of Nasiriyah. Evan Wright, a reporter working for the *Rolling Stone*, who was embedded into the reconnaissance squadron of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, described his impressions about the battle for Nasiriyah:

Just after sunrise our 70-vehicle convoy rolls over the bridge on the Euphrates and enters An Nasiriyah. It's one of those sprawling Third World mud-brick-and-cinder-block cities that probably looks pretty badly rubble even on a good day. This morning, smoke curls from collapsed structures. Most buildings facing the road are pockmarked and cratered. Cobras fly overhead spilling machinegun fire. Dogs roam the ruins. . . . A few vehicles come under machinegun and RPG fire. The (Marines) return fire and redecorate a building with about a dozen grenades fired from Mark-19. In an hour, we clear the outer limits of the city and start to head north. Dead bodies are scattered along the edge of the road. Most are men, enemy fighters, still with weapons in their hands. . . . There are shot-up cars with bodies hanging over the edges. We pass a bus smashed and burned, with charred remains sitting upright in some windows. There's a man with no head in the road and a dead little girl, too, about 3 or 4, lying on her back. She's wearing a dress and has no legs.<sup>51</sup>



This report shows two things very clearly: First, it describes in a very impressive way the impact of war on the houses and the civilian population of Nasiriyah. His description of the fallen also describes the impact of war. Second, this article shows how Wright identified himself with the Marines. Wright's article can be divided in two parts. In the first part, the author describes in a neutral way what he saw. In the second part, the author changes his point of view. He transforms from the neutral journalist into the participant of the battle. This transformation can be interpreted as a kind of stylistic device for boosting the dramatic art of his article. However, this example demonstrates the danger of losing any critical distance for the journalist when he is embedded into a military unit. He becomes a comrade of the soldiers. In fact, this phenomenon of fraternization is one argument against embedding.

When the convoy of the 507th rolled into that ambush and was finally overrun, a young soldier, Private Jessica Lynch, had been wounded and captured by Iraqi forces. Following the basic principle of leaving no man behind, Lynch was rescued and freed on the evening of 1 April 2003 from the hospital in Nasiriyah. The operation to rescue Lynch was conducted by a combined Task Force of Navy SEALs, Army Rangers, and Marines. This operation is one of the most cited operations in the history of the Iraq War of 2003. In the reports, she became a kind of superhero who fought literally to the last bullet and was tortured afterwards. The fact that she had fought like any other soldier was as irrelevant as the fact that she was treated by the Iraqis according to the rules of the Geneva Convention.<sup>52</sup>

The "end" of the Iraqi War was symbolized by two events: First, by the "fall" of the statue of Saddam Hussein in front of the Palestine Hotel. Second, by the speech given by President George W. Bush on the aircraft carrier USS *Abraham Lincoln* on 1 May 2003. Both events were covered by almost all media.

## Conclusion

Is embedding journalists into the fighting troops the ultimate tool to ensure accurate reporting? After the Persian Gulf War, the media was blamed for spreading the allied propaganda without any critical questions. Critics claimed that the media had become confederates in spreading the "great lie." In some cases, this critique is right. With some critical research quite a number of the obvious contradictions in the reporting of the pretended Iraqi atrocities could have been uncovered. The fact that no uncovering happened during DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM showed two things. First that the media was willing enough to believe this perfect PR-show and to ignore the contradictions in it. One reason for this phenomenon is that the media tend to trade their critical journalism in war times to patriotism. Second, the way the media dealt with the pretended Iraqi atrocities clearly showed that most journalists, except some star reporters, had become boilers for prepared opinions, news, and reports.

It is, however, inappropriate to criticize the reporting about DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM. Journalism in general is not responsible for its working conditions when they are given by others. Many journalists who criticized the reporting about the Persian Gulf War forgot intentionally that they had welcomed the installation of the DOD National Media Pool after the PR-debacle of Grenada. Having the choice to be confronted in future wars with random restrictions or facing predictable and binding rules, the editors in chief of the

great newspapers and broadcasting stations had opted for the second possibility. “Military officials said the pool system was intended to provide access while avoiding the nightmare of hundreds of journalists trying to reach the front lines at once. Having reporters running around would overwhelm the battlefield.”<sup>53</sup>

The opponents of the pool system criticize the potential and the effect on the experiences of the Gulf War. Judging the pool system by these extreme experiences is unfair. The pool system was never designed for large-scale and long-lasting operations. But, as a result of the ongoing critique of the pool system, the people responsible for PR in the Pentagon started to think about this problem. The primary goal was to ensure free reporting of the press about American soldiers in deployment while safeguarding the necessary secrecy of operational details. This resulted after several trial and error rounds in the installation of embedding. This new system should solve the dilemma of free, accurate, and timely reporting while safeguarding the necessary operational security. This dilemma had been the core problem in all previous attempts to grant access of the battlefield to the media.

Although the system of embedded journalists proved successful measured by the definitions of the Pentagon, the reporting did not improve remarkably. For the first time since Vietnam, the journalists were very close to the war, and could report more details than about all other wars since Vietnam. But the reporting about the war of 2003 remained superficial and hypocritical. This was caused by two inherent problems of embedding. First, the possibility of accompanying a unit during a war does not necessarily guarantee any serious reporting. Second, it is unlikely that a reporter who is embedded in a platoon or company level is able to report more than what happened in the perimeter of 10 to 15 kilometers. This limited range of vision excluded reporting the big picture of a war. Therefore, the value of embedding could be questioned from a journalistic point of view. Embedding is interesting for journalists because of the following two reasons. It is the only chance to get access to the battlefield and to get actual material from the fighting. Besides, today embedding is in many ways the only possibility to get access to some areas that are too dangerous to report from without any soldiers with heavy equipment in the background.

As a matter of fact, not only the way of reporting wars has changed but also the common way of remembrance. Wars in the past were remembered mostly by the participants and their environment. Today, in times of modern communication, wars are seen from a global point of view. Through television and Internet people all over the world can view, review, and remember wars. They are participants in the ongoing debate in a global arena. As a result, one must reconsider reports in terms of the audience they are aimed at. If public opinion is the ultimate weapon, winning the “media battle” for the hearts and minds of literally everybody is crucial for winning a war. Hopefully a global audience, which determines wars by expressing their ideas of how they want to be informed about and thus remember these wars, can help to limit or even prevent wars in the future.

## Notes

1. This article is the shortened version of a chapter of my dissertation, “The Picture Survives. Zur Geschichte der Kriegsberichterstattung: Korea–Vietnam–Afghanistan–Globaler Krieg gegen den Terror,” [http://kops.ub.uni-konstanz.de/frontdoor.php?source\\_opus=8093&la=de](http://kops.ub.uni-konstanz.de/frontdoor.php?source_opus=8093&la=de) (accessed 11 January 2010).
2. For further details see Lewis Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Years of America’s Last Years in Vietnam* (San Diego, New York, London, 1999); William M. Hammond, “Who Were the Saigon Correspondents, and Does it Matter?” (with an appendix on the embedded reporters of the Iraq War) in Mihail E. Ionescu, [Hrsg.], *War, Military and Media from Gutenberg to Today* (= Acta XIX. International Congress of Military History) (Bucharest, 2004), 80–108; William H. Hammond, *Reporting Vietnam: Media and Military at War* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1998).
3. Robert Harris, *Gotcha! The Media, the Government and the Falklands Crisis* (London, 1983), 17, further cited as Harris, *Gotcha!*
4. Valerie Adams, *Media and the Falklands Campaign* (London, 1986), 6, further cited as Adams, *Media and the Falklands*.
5. See Lawrence Freedman, *Britain and the Falklands War* (Oxford, 1988), 89, further cited as Freedman, *Britain and the Falklands*; Adams, *Media and the Falklands*, 6; Miles Hudson and John Stanier, *War and the Media: A Tandom Searchlight* (Phoenix Mill, 1997), 169, further cited as Hudson and Stanier, *War and the Media*; Harris, *Gotcha!*, 18–20.
6. Adams, *Media and the Falklands*, 6; Peter Young and Peter Jesser, *The Media and the Military: From the Crimea to Desert Strike* (Basingstoke, 1997), 111–112, further cited as Young and Jesser, *Media and the Military*.
7. See Hudson and Stanier, *War and the Media*, 171; Adams, *Media and the Falklands*, 6.
8. Cited after Hudson and Stanier, *War and the Media*, 171.
9. Cited after Hudson and Stanier, *War and the Media*, 172.
10. See Arthur A. Humphries, “Two Routes on the Wrong Destination: Public Affairs in the South Atlantic War,” in *Naval War College Review* 36, no. 3 (1993): 56–71, here 58–60, further cited as Humphries, “Two Routes on the Wrong Destination.”
11. See Hudson and Stanier, *War and the Media*, 172.
12. Hudson and Stanier, *War and the Media*, 174.
13. See Harris, *Gotcha!*, 13; Adams, *Media and the Falklands*, 57–60.
14. Hudson and Stanier, *War and the Media*, 174.
15. See Hudson and Stanier, *War and the Media*, 175–176.
16. Humphries, “Two Routes on the Wrong Destination,” 62.
17. Cited after Young and Jesser, *Media and the Military*, 112–113.
18. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) Media-Military Relations Panel (Sidle Panel), Final Report, 23 August 1983, Introduction.
19. CJCS Media-Military Relations Panel (Sidle Panel), 3.
20. Cited after Mira Beham, *Kriegstromein. Medien, Krieg und Politik* (München, 1995), 97.
21. For further details on JUST CAUSE, see Ronald H. Cole, *Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama, February 1988–January 1990* (Washington, DC, 1995); Hudson and Stanier, *War and the Media*, 203; Young and Jesser, *Media and the Military*, 143–145.
22. See David H. Mould, “Press Pools and Military-Media Relations in the Gulf War. A Case Study of the Battle of Khafji, January 1991,” in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 16, no. 2 (1996): 133–159, here 133, further cited as Mould, “Press Pools.”

23. For further details, see Young and Jesser, *Media and the Military*, 164; John Keegan, *The Iraq War* (New York, NY, 2004), 76–77, further cited as Keegan, *Iraq War*; Frank N. Schubert and Theresa L. Kraus, eds., *The Whirlwind War: The United States Army in Operations “Desert Shield” and “Desert Storm”* (Washington, DC, 1995), 50; Edward J. Marolda and Robert J. Schneller Jr., *Shield and Sword. The United States Navy and the Persian Gulf War* (Washington, DC, 2001), 17–18; AP, “Confrontation in the Gulf: Military Drops Gulf Press Pool,” *New York Times*, 27 August 1990.
24. See John R. MacArthur, *Second Front: Censorship and Propaganda in the 1991 Gulf War* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1992), further cited as MacArthur, *Second Front*.
25. Former CJCS General Colin Powell cited in Young and Jesser, *Media and the Military*, 177.
26. Cited after Young and Jesser, *Media and the Military*, 177.
27. See MacArthur, *Second Front*, 3–6.
28. Cited after Jason Deparle, “After the War: Long Series of Military Decisions Led to Gulf War News Censorship,” 5 May 1991.
29. Cited after Frank Aukofer and William P. Lawrence, *America’s Team; The Odd Couple—A Report on the Relationship between the Media and the Military* (Nashville, TN, 1995), 11. Young and Jesser, *Media and the Military*.
30. See Deparle, “After the War. Long”; Young and Jesser, *Media and the Military*, 173–175.
31. See Mould, *Press Pools*, 138.
32. Cited after Mould, *Press Pools*, 133.
33. Mould, *Press Pools*, 136–141.
34. Mould, *Press Pools*, 139–140.
35. Mould, *Press Pools*, 133.
36. Richard K. Wright and William H. Harkey, “Assessment of the DOD Embedded Media Program; Institute for Defense Analysis IDA Paper P-393,” September 2004, <http://www.militaryreporters.org/pdfs/embed%20-study.pdf> (accessed 15 July 2009), S-3.
37. See Wright and Harkey, “Assessment of the DOD Embedded Media Program,” IV-2–IV-3.
38. See Wright and Harkey, “Assessment of the DOD Embedded Media Program,” I-4.
39. See Joint Pub 3-61, *Doctrine for Public Affairs in Joint Operations*, 14 May 1997.
40. US Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), News Transcript, “ASD PA Meeting with Media Pool Bureau Chiefs, 30 September 2001,” <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=1945> (accessed 15 July 2009).
41. See News Transcript, “ASD PA Meeting with Media Pool Bureau Chiefs, 30 September 2001.”
42. See Wright and Harkey, “Assessment of the DOD Embedded Media Program,” I-4.
43. See Wright and Harkey, “Assessment of the DOD Embedded Media Program,” IV-5–IV-6.
44. See Wright and Harkey, “Assessment of the DOD Embedded Media Program,” IV-7.
45. See Wright and Harkey, “Assessment of the DOD Embedded Media Program,” IV-7.
46. “Public Affairs Guidance (PAG) On Embedding Media During Possible Future Operations/Deployments In The U.S. Central Command’s Area Of Responsibility,” 28 February 2003, <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Feb2003/d20030228pag.pdf> (accessed 15 July 2009), section 2.A.
47. “PAG On Embedding Media During Possible Future Operations,” Sec. 2.A.–2.C.4.
48. “PAG On Embedding Media During Possible Future Operations,” Sec. 2.A.–2.C.4.
49. “PAG On Embedding Media During Possible Future Operations,” Sec. 6.A.
50. “PAG On Embedding Media During Possible Future Operations,” Sec. 4, Ground Rules.
51. Cited after John Keegan, *The Iraq War* (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 2003), 151.
52. Keegan, *Iraq War*, 150–153; Gregory Fontenot, Edmund J. Degen, and David Tohn, *On Point: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom* (Annapolis, MD, 2005), 158–160.
53. Mould, *Press Pools*, 137.



**Beyond Doctrine: A Historical Perspective on the  
Information Operations Debate in Media-Military Relations**

(Submitted Paper)

by

**Stephen Badsey, Ph.D.**

The military-media relationship, particularly during wartime and in respect to operations rather than strategy or policy, is one of the most difficult aspects of present military thought and doctrine for the armed forces of all democratic countries, and particularly so for the United States. Contrary to the views of many soldiers and journalists encountering difficult issues for the first time, this relationship also has a considerable history. Interactions between military leaders and the media of their age may be traced back almost indefinitely, and the modern story starts in the early 19th century, as mass politics and mass society emerged in the British Empire, the United States, and parts of Western Europe, with the accompanying development of mass news media. The presence of reporters on the battlefield and on operations made its first significant impact on the conduct of war only a few years later, in the middle 19th century. An important change in military *awareness* of the news media took place during the Vietnam War (1961–75), and since then it has been a common military perception that new media technologies, new media structures and consumption patterns, combined with new threats and new methods of conducting war, have contributed to an ever-increasing media intrusion into the sphere of military operations. For at least the last two decades, the US Armed Forces and other democracies have encouraged widespread awareness of media issues among their ranks and the generation of doctrine regarding the media. Even more recently, some concerned members of the US Department of Defense (DOD) have advocated a controversial and radically new approach to military-media relations as an aspect of information operations (IO), in the belief that changes in media technology, chiefly computerization and use of the Internet to include user-generated news content, Web-logging (blogging), twittering, and the Web 2.0 phenomenon, pose a significant threat to the effectiveness of US Armed Forces unless countered.

When members of the armed forces are invited to discuss the media issue, very frequently the discussion develops rapidly in one of two directions. Most common is for the soldiers to describe their own function, in laudatory abstract terms, as defenders of their country and its fundamental values, while citing anecdotes regarding specific media distortions, deceptions, or misbehavior. It is broadly true that anyone who has not had bad experience with the media simply has not worked with them for long enough. Less common, but altogether more productive, are discussions in which soldiers also recognize the



function of the news media within society. In these cases particularly, what start as narrow and practical discussions of military-media interaction rapidly become acknowledgments of the wider issue: the respective places of the armed forces and of the news media within society and their importance to the democratic state.

This takes the military-media issue to where it should be, “beyond doctrine” in the sense that military doctrine is determined by the Army for itself, as an aspect of military professionalism and the military sphere of knowledge. In this perception, the military-media relationship, whether on operations or not, is not a problem for the Army to solve, nor an issue on which military doctrine should rule; it is part of the much wider context within which the Army exists. This view of military doctrine is recognized by the US Armed Forces’ official definition, which states that doctrine is “Fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions *in support of national objectives*” rather than the objectives of the armed forces.<sup>1</sup> It is the challenges posed to this view by present IO doctrine or its application that give the debate its great importance.

It has been repeatedly observed in recent military discussions that not all soldiers intuitively grasp that last point. Just as some soldiers do not grasp or “get” maneuver war or counterinsurgency, so there are many who do not “get” the media. A useful exercise with which to encourage soldiers to think in media terms is to invite them to abandon all military terminology and acronyms for a short while, and to express themselves instead in terms of media headlines and civilian perceptions, entering a world in which a Bradley is a tank, air support is bombing, and psychological operations (PSYOP) is just propaganda. It is also very common in military debates and discussions for the example of the media to act as a form of code for larger but unvoiced military criticisms of their own political and strategic leadership. A large part of the problem in grasping the nature of the military-media relationship is the immense complexity involved: just as there is no such thing as *the* military, so there is no such thing as *the* media, both have a multiplicity of types and behaviors. To this extent, planning for the media on modern military operations resembles logistics in that it may vary almost infinitely but cannot be ignored. However, while logistics is an ever-present important factor, in many operations media involvement may be minor or unimportant. This makes it hard for career generalists to develop an affinity with the military-media issue, and is an argument in favor of the traditional position that the Army should retain a small group of experienced specialists in media relations, rather than attempting to develop media doctrine as part of a more inclusive doctrine for operations.

It is a feature of the present US Army that it encourages debate within itself as part of the formulation of doctrine. The proposed revision this year of the Armed Forces Joint Manual JP 3-13, *Information Operations*, of 2006 has not only produced such a debate, but also revealed that contributors do not share even basic assumptions about what is being discussed. Within the last 3 years it has been argued in the military press that IO is the same thing as PSYOP, or that it is not but should be; that public affairs (PA) is part of IO, or that it is not but should be; that it is critical to separate PSYOP and PA; that it is critical to combine PSYOP and PA; that US IO doctrine in Iraq and Afghanistan has been a major success, and that it has been a colossal failure; that the solution is an all-embracing prescriptive doctrine; and that the solution is to preserve at all costs separate media relations

institutions dependent on specialist skills. As one contributor wrote only last year, with some restraint, “there seems to be a lot of confusion in the Army as to the exact nature of information operations.”<sup>2</sup> This confusion also exists among allies fighting alongside the US Armed Forces; concerns have been expressed in Great Britain, Canada and Australia about such a radical and unilateral departure from accepted ideas about PA.<sup>3</sup> A further source of confusion is that there are several other meanings for “information operations” and “information warfare” other than those employed within current US military doctrine, including those used by historians studying its origins.

It is, of course, perfectly proper that such deliberations and debates should take place as part of the process of forming doctrine. There is a strong practical argument that outsiders should not get involved in such debates, and a view held by some military intellectuals that the role of the university-based thinker is, and should be, limited to the very early stages, until the DOD agrees to its terms of reference and a military consensus emerges on the parameters for discussion, after which the doors are effectively closed.<sup>4</sup> A historian may do a little more, by going back to examine the circumstances in which those terms of reference were created, enquiring as to their present viability. It is also a habit of historians to examine what are often called the “unspoken assumptions,” the attitudes that underpin thought and planning but are rarely if ever discussed, and to suggest comparisons with other countries and cultures.

One feature that distinguishes the US Armed Forces today from those of other countries is a strong institutional and often personal antipathy toward the news media. This is generally untrue of other democracies, where despite global media and widely deployed armed forces, military-media relations are traditionally adversarial without being antagonistic. In explaining this, it is usual to look no further back than the Vietnam war, and indeed that war was an important turning point, but the cultural roots of the explanation go much deeper. Although the anxiety expressed by soldiers about changing media technology is an important component in the military-media relationship, these concerns also are often tainted by a degree of hostility. It is a characteristic of the United States (above all other countries) to seek scientific and technological explanations and solutions to what are often political or social issues. In the military sphere this behavior long predates any theory: while the first categorical argument that technological changes determine the nature of warfare was made by the famous Italian airpower theorist Giulio Douhet in the 1920s, the assumption that technology and particularly firepower dictate how wars are fought has been explicit not just in US military ideas but in the national culture at least as far back as the Civil War (1861–65).<sup>5</sup> In contradiction to this, there is a considerable body of historical study on the impact of new military technologies, just as there is on new media and communication technologies, and in both cases the actual results show that effects result from a complicated mixture depending on politics, society, and the passage of time.<sup>6</sup> With each new development in media technology, soldiers who are dedicated to finding out threats and solving problems also repeat the same claims in a manner that (at the risk of being misunderstood) sociologists would call moral panic: perhaps a small element of truth, unnecessarily or unrealistically amplified. The claim that in 2004 at the First Battle of Fallujah the US Marine Corps “weren’t beaten by the terrorists and insurgents, they

were beaten by al-Jazeera,” rather than that they employed inappropriate tactics for the political environment of their mission, is recognizable as yet another variant on the long-discredited claim that the Vietnam war was lost on the television screens of America; and this in turn goes back to the German Army’s “stab in the back” myth at the end of World War I (1914–18).<sup>7</sup> In the 1990s, the term “new media” or “new news” was first used to include news applications of the Internet, together with direct satellite broadcasting of 24/7 global television and radio, in contrast to the traditional “old news” of newspapers and broadcast television and radio. As was predicted, this new technology has placed severe financial pressures on old news institutions and outlets, promoting many changes; but new media has also been absorbed within old media, as major newspapers launch Web sites, and global search-engines depend on traditional news bureaus. The most recent generation of the “news doer” or user generated content, is now following the same pattern.<sup>8</sup>

Far from being a unique situation, the present military-media relationship lies somewhere in the middle of a third repeating wave or pattern since the early 19th century. In each case, there has been an initial explosion of new media, followed by the rise of that media to dominance over several decades. In each case, the main trigger for change, once the technology was available, has been largely economic including very small start-up costs and a multiplicity of outlets. In each case, the initial period of media change accompanied, and has been part of, a social and political upheaval in which an increasing (and increasingly rapid) dissemination of news has played a part. The first of these cycles began in the 1830s with newspapers and print journalism, and was based on growing mass industrialization and mass literacy; it reached its level of domination in the 1890s, by which time daily newspaper buying had become a habitual practice, and its earlier phase coincided with the emergence of mass industrialized warfare as part of the same phenomenon. Its success has been marked by the fact that it has not passed into extinction yet. Its dominance was challenged from shortly before World War I by new media, which did not depend on literacy or even always a common language, starting with newsreel film, moving into broadcast radio, and finally achieving its own dominance over newspapers in the 1960s as broadcast television. This was also the era of the emergence of mass domestic politics, with its accompanying political and social instability, and in its earlier phase of global industrialized warfare of great violence and destruction: World War I and World War II (1939–45). The new challenge to this existing structure began again in the 1970s with direct satellite broadcasting, as the start of the impact of computers of both the media and on wider society. This has also accompanied social and political changes including war and violence, but so far in a relatively minor fashion, and has been accompanied by the so-called “revolution in military affairs” debate. While in each phase repressive governments have sought to legislate or otherwise control each outbreak of information dissemination, governments of liberal or democratic countries have used legislation sparingly to control the news media industry and its products, otherwise allowing social and economic factors to run their course. The most likely outcome for this wave, also, is that from a multitude of small businesses at the start the media will coalesce into a few large and stable outlets.

Naturally, each of these three phases has also had its own distinctive features. The first phase, based on the double communications revolution of steam power and the telegraph,

saw the pragmatic recognition of a new power relationship between the military on operations and the media. In the 1830s, new steam rotary presses drove down the cost of newspaper production, and throughout the United States and its frontier territories local newspapers flourished as symbols of civic pride and self-advertisement, characterized for most of the century by political partisanship and by remarkably low standards of factual accuracy. The strong tradition, which already existed, of generals providing the media with their memoirs and of officers or civilians doubling as reporters (remarkably like the modern blogger or “news doer”) was eclipsed in this period by the professional war reporter in the modern sense. Perhaps the first war reported in this way was the Mexican War (1846–48), but much more important for the future of military-media relations was the British experience in the Crimean War (1854–56). On a battlefield or in a war zone, a reporter had virtually no authority and was dependent on military goodwill, but the same reporter was supported at home by a politically powerful newspaper, meaning that the military could neither remove him nor ignore him. This left the reporter to pursue his function as a separate witness to events on behalf of the home public, but only through negotiation.<sup>9</sup> The absence of a true aristocracy in the US Army officer corps meant that, even more than their French or British equivalents, the careers of US Army officers were vulnerable to poor or hostile reporting; William T. Sherman is one example among many of an officer whose family and early career were damaged in this way.<sup>10</sup> This tradition of personal animosity from US officers toward the media remains in a phrase that has been heard several times in recent wars: “I suppose the press has its place; but you can’t do me any good, and you sure can do me harm.” But while both publically and personally retaining an officer-like disdain for the press, the successful commanders of the 19th century frontier wars had little choice but to strike informal bargains with reporters. About the last case of this highly individual form of military-media relationship existing independently of wider military institutional oversight was John J. Pershing in the Mexican Expedition of 1916, with George S. Patton Jr. gaining his first combat experience as one of Pershing’s press and censorship officers.<sup>11</sup>

This highly informal period of war reporting, habitually characterized by the reporters themselves as their “Golden Age,” came to an end starting in the last decade of the 19th century through the development of professionalism as the term was then understood: a “profession” was a self-regulating body of men holding high status on merit, who were also custodians of an accepted body of knowledge. In the case of the military, this took the form of the establishment of general staffs and staff colleges, and an agreed corpus of doctrine. For the US Army as for many others, it meant emulating the most successful military institution of the later 19th century, the Prussian and later German Army. The military’s claim to a sphere of their own was so fundamental to professionalism, and German influence so great, that in the 1930s the US Army argued that strategy must be seen as a military function independent of politics and civilian interference, as “radically and fundamentally things apart.”<sup>12</sup>

In the case of the media it was the most experienced war reporters who led the way toward professionalism, men like Richard Harding Davis who accumulated decades of experience of war, and in developing relationships with high-ranking officers.<sup>13</sup> A code of professionalism among US newspaper reporters in general did not emerge until the 1920s,

in response to financial and institutional pressures. But little attention has been paid to the way in which, by laying claim to a professional military sphere, by definition the military accepted a *civilian* sphere of war, in which activities such as diplomacy, war finance, and weapons manufacture might be conducted. As an extension of diplomacy and domestic politics, wartime relations with the media became part of this civilian sphere of war, with generals being content to follow the civilian lead as regards policy; military professionalism in this respect consisted chiefly of the introduction of censorship and regulation of reporters in a war zone. From a base of some decades of informal experience and understanding, this was the system begun and very largely improvised first by the British on the outbreak of World War I, including the first institutionalized wartime propaganda organizations.<sup>14</sup>

Two conflicting traditions emerged from World War I over the civilian direction of media and propaganda policy. One, which became widely accepted in all democratic countries and has remained so up to today, is that although deception and propaganda were recognized weapons of war, and any policies involving the media needed to be coordinated as part of a wider political grand strategy, those institutions dealing with the media must be kept separate from those dealing with deception and propaganda, whose activities were of a different nature. This conception saw media relations, and even propaganda and deception, as branches of domestic politics, diplomacy, and grand strategy in its widest sense. The other tradition, which received much greater public attention at the time, made claims in the 1920s for the effectiveness of aggressive and very specifically directed propaganda policies based on deception and manipulation, including unofficial British claims to have subverted the neutrality of the United States before 1917, and to have caused the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian and German home fronts, a claim much supported by the German Army as part of its own “stab in the back” propaganda. Repeated historical investigation has shown these claims to be at best exaggerated, and at worst fraudulent, and in practice they were ignored by professional propagandists and diplomats.<sup>15</sup>

George Creel, who as head of the Creel Committee had led US media and propaganda policy in World War I, called his memoirs *How We Advertised America*, and the word “advertising” like “propaganda” could still be used in this neutral sense at the time. But the civilian version of the wartime dispute between media relations based on mutual understanding and propaganda as an aggressive weapon became in the 1920s a similar split between the newly professionalized reporters with their codes of conduct and the equally new advertising industry with a mission to sell its products, and the relationship between advertising and military PSYOP has remained a close one.<sup>16</sup> One point on which there was no disagreement, and has never been throughout history, was that the German Army’s attempt to run propaganda and the media on the basis of military primacy had failed; this was an aspect of warfare for which the German version of military professionalism was ill-suited.

This accepted policy and doctrine for a democracy in wartime and its dealings with the media can be clearly seen in the entry of the United States into World War II. In 1942, two civilian organizations were established, the Office of War Information to be the public face of the US Government and broadly to handle media issues, and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), initially formed to conduct clandestine propaganda and deception. The US



Army only briefly possessed a Psychological Warfare Branch (under a variety of names) from 1941 to the end of 1942, leaving Army psychological warfare, known as PSYCHWAR and later as PSYWAR, as the responsibility of theater headquarters. However, the creator of the OSS, Colonel William J. Donovan, insisted that the OSS should be effectively militarized as a supporting agency for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and should combine the functions of propaganda and clandestine warfare, which the British kept institutionally both civilian and separate, reportedly because Donovan admired the German Army propaganda of the time. Another important advocate of PSYWAR was General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who first created a Psychological Warfare Branch for his headquarters in the North African campaign, and maintained it to the end of the war in Europe. According to Eisenhower, “The expenditure of men and money in wielding the spoken and written word was an important contributing factor in undermining the enemy’s will to resist.”<sup>17</sup> Although the functions of PSYWAR included the Army’s own media as well as exploiting traditional civilian newspapers and radio services, the United States was quite unique in militarizing PSYWAR in this way, and in combining propaganda with clandestine warfare. US military PSYWAR fell into brief abeyance after World War II, but it was resurrected for the Korean war (1950–53) chiefly through the creation in 1952 of the Psychological Warfare Center at Fort Bragg, by which time it was scarcely distinguishable in doctrinal thinking or practice from covert or special warfare.<sup>18</sup>

What perspective does this brief historical overview give to the present IO debate and to its unspoken assumptions? First, according to their critics, what characterizes present IO doctrine and practice is that for the first time members of the US Armed Forces have sought to exert control over both foreign and domestic media in the name of immediate military expediency. This suggests a military view of the media as at best a tool to be exploited and at worst an enemy, and that a deep military antipathy toward the media is still a factor. Further, if any country might be predicted from its history to suffer from poor military-media relations, it would be the United States, whose media traditions and expectations are those of 18th century liberal England and Scotland, with an admixture of Revolutionary France. The great size of the United States as it expanded, together with high rates of adult literacy and an extended franchise, all helped guarantee for the press a unique role in politics, and in society, that it still enjoys. Rather than being a model for other countries, American media exceptionalism is a recognized historical and cultural phenomenon.<sup>19</sup> But the traditions of the US Army, other than a small admixture of the France of the First and Second Empires, remain overwhelmingly those of Prussia and Germany. It may be questioned whether it is still wise for the US Army to model itself on one of the least successful armies of the 20th century; but in the context of military-media relations, the more important question is Wilhelmine and Nazi Germany’s poor understanding of the media’s place in warfare, and German military prioritization of operations over wider strategy and policy. This German influence is very evident in the current IO doctrine and the place of PA, including the very heavy importance assigned to mission accomplishment. Indeed, and with some regret, recent development in historiography make it necessary to take the United States’ emulation of German methods briefly, and controversially, beyond doctrine. An argument has recently emerged among historians of World War I and World War II that German skills in military operations cannot be separated from brutality and barbarism,



which are now seen as inherent in their doctrine from its creation. Already one respected historian has drawn unflattering parallels between German atrocities and the behavior of US troops in Iraq since 2003. This is shaping to be a significant historical debate for the future.<sup>20</sup> If the US Armed Forces find it difficult to maintain their preferred doctrines and methods in the present media environment, then the question may have to be addressed from both sides.

Beyond this is, once again, a much larger issue. At present the ability to fight a short high-tempo conventional war remains the pinnacle of US military accomplishments, to which all others are subordinated. But it has been increasingly argued that the change in recent times toward smaller military operations fought in a highly politicized context has not only been fundamental to the nature of military operations, but is also permanent. To cite only one example, a leading exponent of the idea that military force will for the future be used in the “public space” rather than in a delineated military sphere, British retired General Sir Rupert Smith has argued for a new military perspective on the media, that “We are conducting operations now as though we were on stage, in an amphitheater or Roman arena,” and that operations may even have to be subordinated toward media issues on occasion.<sup>21</sup> Every military institution must choose to put its point of main effort somewhere. If US Army policy continues to prioritize conventional maneuver war, then it must accept that its soldiers will be deficient in the skills needed for fighting in the public space, including media skills. This is not an argument for abandoning maneuver war for the sake of better media relations, but rather a further illustration of how the military-media relationship is now a thread that, once pulled, leads to the centers of military thinking.

As presently defined by the DOD, IO are “the integrated employment of electronic warfare (EW), computer network operations (CNO), PSYOP, military deception (MILDEP), and operations security (OPSEC), in concert with specified supporting and related capabilities, to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp adversarial human and automated decision making while protecting our own.”<sup>22</sup> The core of the present debate is whether those “supporting and relating capabilities” include, or should include, the traditional military organizations responsible for dealing with the news media: PA, together with the related civil-military operations (CMO), and the wider defense support to public diplomacy, doctrinally identified as “related capabilities” to IO. Put more simply, the debate is over the relationship between PSYOP and MILDEP on the one hand, and PA on the other; whether they should be coordinated in broad policy terms, or whether PA should be subordinate to IO for the purposes of operational mission accomplishment.

The first use of the term “information warfare” (which was removed from official US military doctrine by the 2006 manual but remains in common usage throughout the world) is usually credited to Thomas P. Rona in 1976, although the same ideas are explicit in a policy speech made by General William C. Westmoreland as Army Chief of Staff in 1969. At first it meant simply the application of computers to electronic warfare, and then by extension their application to data handling as the military aspect of information technology. This was still the perspective of John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt’s influential article “Cyberwar in Coming!” of 1992, and is the way that most armed forces and academics around the world continue to understand the concept.<sup>23</sup> The major change in US military

doctrine was announced in August 1996, when the National Defense University published its booklet, *Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance*, and the US Army issued its first doctrinal manual, FM 100-16, *Information Operations*, followed 2 years later by the Joint Armed Forces, JP 3-13, *Information Operations*. This was followed in 2003 by a DOD *Information Operations Roadmap* and in 2006 by the present joint doctrinal manual.<sup>24</sup>

Whether it was again military wisdom to seek to combine electronic warfare with deception and psychological warfare in this way is a separate issue to that of the military-media relationship, albeit a highly relevant one. But in the same period, partly through increasing military experience in humanitarian operations, the doctrinal definition of PSYOP was extended from its traditional, and widely understood, meaning of deception aimed at influencing enemies and coupled with clandestine warfare, to a much wider definition incorporating peacetime activities. As acknowledged by the DOD in 2003, “The customary position was that ‘public affairs informs, while PSYOP and public diplomacy influence.’ PSYOP also has been perceived as the most aggressive of the three information activities, using diverse means, including psychological manipulation and personal threats.”<sup>25</sup> This is scarcely recognizable in the present DOD definition of PSYOP, which is:

Planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals. The purpose of PSYOP is to induce or reinforce foreign attitudes and behavior favorable to the originator’s objectives.<sup>26</sup>

This definition does not mention deception, or that the target should be an enemy. It is a very wide definition indeed for such a controversial subject, and one which is not accepted by most people outside the US military, who continue to understand PSYOP to mean propaganda in the sense of biased or misleading information, with implications of violence or subversion. The problems created by such a radical change in doctrine were already apparent in the Kosovo War (1999), with friction evident between traditional, and often civilian, practitioners of media relations within NATO and the new US Armed Forces doctrinal approach. Although this definition of PSYOP also stresses that all targets should be foreign, it does not exclude friendly or even allied powers, or their populations. *Military Affairs* this year included an article advising that the US Army had recently approved an updated doctrinal definition of IO, to include the use of its capabilities “to influence the perceptions of foreign friendly and neutral audiences.”<sup>27</sup> This in itself makes it most unlikely that any further doctrinal pronouncements from within the US Armed Forces will be able to impose clarity and uniformity on the matter, or will be accepted by other countries.

The exclusion of any attempt to influence the United States’ domestic public or their media from IO doctrine is in large part based on considerations of the law. The basic First Amendment right of the press is modified only slightly by a handful of legal precedents, most importantly the “clear and present danger” doctrine enunciated in 1919 by the Supreme Court in *Schenck v. United States*. Originally for the US Information Agency (and by extension any US Government institution) to seek to use the domestic media for propaganda purposes is specifically forbidden by the 1948 Information and Educational Exchange Act (Smith-Mundt Act), strengthened by the 1972 Foreign Relations Authorization Act. The

intention of the Smith-Mundt Act was to set the bar as high as possible, by legalizing the dissemination of propaganda by US Government agencies abroad, while preserving the older tradition of truthfulness in public diplomacy, since it barred the State Department from conducting covert propaganda. Even beyond the law are the wider implications of any military interference with the press, something to which the most politically sensitive US Army general of the 20th century drew attention. In his farewell televised speech of January 1961, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, after famously warning against influence sought or unsought by the military-industrial complex, went on to say:

We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.<sup>28</sup>

In this conception, one of the core duties of the armed forces is to protect the media, precisely because of their investigative role on behalf of the people.

The objection raised even in 1948 was that in practice it was extremely difficult to prevent cross-contamination of domestic and foreign media; with the present day globalized media, it has become almost impossible to prevent this, or to identify which media institutions and outlets might be described as domestic to the United States. But the law still stands, and for this reason proponents of the inclusion of PA within IO still insist on a “firewall” (as it is often termed) between them: to do otherwise would be to advocate that the US Army should break the law. Even after the shock of the 9/11 attacks, the attempt by the DOD to establish an Office of Strategic Influence in October 2001 was discontinued because of ambiguous statements as to whether it would target US domestic audiences through deception operations. Nevertheless, the 2003 DOD *Information Operations Roadmap* stated that the effects achieved by PA “may be similar to some aspects of IO, particularly PSYOP.”<sup>29</sup> Both in doctrinal discussions and in the practice of recent IO, the US Armed Forces have set the bar increasingly low. In 2003 the DOD *Roadmap* recognized that “information intended for foreign audiences, including public diplomacy and PSYOP, increasingly is consumed by our domestic audience and vice versa,” and acknowledged that “future operations require that PSYOP focus on aggressive behavior modification at the operational and tactical level of war, but its proposals for public diplomacy in this situation went no further than that “clear boundaries for PSYOP should be complemented by a more proactive public affairs effort” and that training regimes should develop closer coordination between PSYOP and PA.<sup>30</sup> In 2006, Lieutenant General Thomas F. Metz, one of the architects of the Second Battle of Falluja in 2004 and its accompanying IO, argued that “In order to mass effects in the information domain and effectively integrate IO into the battle plan, the warfighter must find a way to bridge the doctrinal firewall separating IO and PA without violating the rules governing both” and that during the fighting in Fallujah “We were able to effectively bridge the firewall between IO and PA to achieve our desired end-state without violating the rules of either discipline. This integration has broader implications. We must consider how tactical actions will influence the operational and strategic levels.”<sup>31</sup> This position, that IO and PA should be effectively combined for reasons of

operational and even tactical mission accomplishment, may be set against the traditional position, very clearly articulated in 2007 by then Brigadier General Mari K. Elder, Deputy Chief of Public Affairs, “The formulation of definitions that describe and differentiate types of communication, some of which could potentially be unethical, goes to the heart of the morals and ethics that underpin our constitution and democratic values.”<sup>32</sup>

As a final thought on a complex issue: the first wave of media development accompanied, and contributed to, the expansion of the franchise and the establishment of governments based on public opinion. The second wave contributed to the development of mass politics, and the intrusion of mass opinion into domestic political issues such as employment and education. It caused great troubles including the rise of demagoguery and national socialism, but no one would seriously suggest its reversal even if this were possible. What we are now witnessing is the extension of the same mass opinion into areas of foreign policy and the use of military force, as one aspect of “public diplomacy.” Again, it is causing great problems, but in the near future it may well come to be seen as a positive force, part of the phenomenon of “citizen diplomacy,” which holds that all people have an obligation to promote better understanding through their own personal actions. These are not problems for military doctrine to solve, but issues for much wider debate and concern.

## Notes

1. Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 12 April 2001 as amended through 17 March 2009, entry under “Doctrine” (emphasis added).
2. Lieutenant Colonel Frederick W. Rohm Jr, “Merging Information Operations and Psychological Operations,” *Military Review* (January–February 2008): 108.
3. Stephen Badsey, “The Military and the Media: Past and Future,” in Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey, *The Military, The Media & Information Warfare: The Chief of Army’s Military History Conference 2008* (Canberra: Australian Military History Publications, 2009), 6–21; Commander J.D. Scanlon, “Truth: In Defense of Military Public Affairs Doctrine,” *Military Review* (May–June 2007): 92–96.
4. This point is made particularly by Colin S. Grey, *The American Revolution in Military Affairs: An Interim Assessment* (Camberley: Strategic and Combat Studies Institute, 1997).
5. This point is too obvious to require much elaboration, but *see*, for example, Bruce Norman, *The Inventing of America* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1976), 85–104; *see also*, Giulio Douhet, *Command of the Air* (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983 [1921]).
6. Asa Briggs and Peter Burke, *A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002); Brian Winston, *Media Technology and Society—A History: From the Telegraph to the Internet* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1998); and for an influential if controversial view of military technology, Paddy Griffith, *Forward into Battle: Fighting Tactics from Waterloo to Vietnam* (Chichester: Anthony Bird, 1981).
7. Quoted in Kenneth Payne, “The Media as an Instrument of War,” *Parameters* (Spring 2005): 82.
8. For some of the problems posed for institutions by the “news doer,” see Nik Gowing, *‘Skyful of Lies’ and Black Swans: the New Tyranny of Shifting Information Power in Crises* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2009).
9. Andrew Lambert and Stephen Badsey, *The Crimean War: The War Reporters* (Thrupp: Alan Sutton, 1994), 1–14; Michael S. Sweeney, *The Military and the Press: An Uneasy Truce* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2006), 14–28; James K. Hogue, “Presidents, Generals and the Legacy of Freedom of the Press in 19th Century American Wars,” in Mihail E. Ionescu, ed., *Acta of the XXIXth International Congress of Military History: War Military and Media from Gutenberg to Today* (Bucharest: Military Publishing House, 2004), 219–227.
10. John F. Marsalek, *Sherman’s Other War: The General and the Civil War Press* (Memphis, TN: Memphis State University Press, 1981), 23–40; Harry J. Maihafer, *War of Words: Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War Press* (Washington, DC: Brassey’s, 2001).
11. Stephen Badsey, “The Media and the Art of War in the Western World 1792–1975,” in Mihail E. Ionescu, ed., *Acta of the XXIXth International Congress of Military History: War Military and Media from Gutenberg to Today* (Bucharest: Military Publishing House, 2004), 48–65; Frank E. Vandiver, *Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing: Volume II* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1977), 607–618; Carlo D’Este, *A Genius for War: A Life of General George S. Patton* (London: HarperCollins, 1996), 156–177.
12. *The Principles of Strategy for an Independent Corps or Army in a Theater of Operations*, US Army Command and General Staff School, 1936, quoted in Robert M. Cassidy, *Counterinsurgency and the Global War on Terror: Military Culture and Irregular War* (New York, NY: Praeger, 2006), 180, footnote 40.
13. Greg McLaughlin, *The War Correspondent* (London: Pluto, 2002), 54–58.



14. M.L. Sanders and Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda During the First World War* (London: Macmillan, 1982); Gary S. Messinger, *British Propaganda and the State in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992); Stephen Badsey, *The British Army in Battle and Its Image 1914–18* (London: Continuum, 2009). For US Army relations with the press in World War I, see *The United States Army in the World War 1917–19: Reports of Commander in Chief A.E.F. Staff Sections and Services Part II* (Washington DC: US Army Military History Institute, 1948), 81–142.

15. The historical literature on this is considerable; for an overview and references, see Stephen Badsey, *The British Army in Battle and Its Image* (London: Continuum, 2009), chapters 7 and 8, 163–210.

16. Michael S. Sweeney, *The Military and the Press: An Uneasy Truce* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2006), 45–50; Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (Newbury Park: SAGE, 1992), 117–125.

17. Quoted in Alfred H. Paddock Jr., *US Army Special Warfare: Its Origins* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1982), 20; see also, Philip M. Taylor and N.C.F. Weeks, “Breaking the German Will to Resist, 1944–45: Allied Efforts to End World War Two by Non-Military Means,” in *The Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 18, no. 1 (1998): 5–48.

18. Alfred H. Paddock Jr., *US Army Special Warfare: Its Origins* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1982), 143–159; Gregory F. Treverton, *Covert Action: The Limits of Intervention in the Postwar World* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1987), 31–43; Michael McLintock, *Instruments of Statecraft: US Guerrilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency, Counter-terrorism 1940–1990* (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1992).

19. Michael Schudson, *Why Democracies Need an Unlovable Press* (Malden: Polity, 2007), 27–39.

20. Richard Overy in George Kassimiris, ed., *The Barbarisation of Warfare* (London: Hurst, 2006), 2; see also, Jeff Lipkes, *The German Atrocities in Belgium, August 1914* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002); John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities of 1914: A History of Denial* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2001); Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

21. General Sir Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (London: Allen Lane, 2005), 284.

22. Joint Publication 3-13, *Information Operations*, 13 February 2006, ix.

23. Thomas P. Rona, “Weapons Systems and Information War,” Boeing Aerospace Company, Seattle, Washington, 1976; Paul Dickson, *The Electronic Battlefield* (London: Morian Boyers, 1976), 221–222; John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, “Cyberwar is Coming!” *Comparative Strategy* 12, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 141–165; Jonathan Reed Winkler, “Information Warfare in World War I,” *The Journal of Military History* 73, no. 3 (July 2009): 845–867.

24. Harlan Ullman et al., *Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance* (Washington, DC: National Defense University, 1996); FM 100-6, *Information Operations*, US Department of the Army 1996; Joint Publication 3-13, *Information Operations*, 9 October 1998; *Information Operations Roadmap*, US Department of Defense, 30 October 2003; Joint Publication 3-13, *Information Operations*, 13 February 2006.

25. *Information Operations Roadmap*, 26.

26. Joint Publication 1-02, entry under “Psychological Operations.”

27. Quoted (without specific reference) by Major Walter E. Richter, “The Future of Information Operations,” *Military Review* (January–February 2009): 103–113.



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28. President Dwight D. Eisenhower's Farewell Address to the Nation, 17 January 1961.
29. *Information Operations Roadmap*, 10.
30. *Information Operations Roadmap*, 26–27.
31. Lieutenant General Thomas F. Metz et al, "Massing Effects in the Information Domain: A Case Study in Aggressive Information Operations," *Military Review* (May–June 2006): 9 and 12.
32. Brigadier General Mari K. Elder, "Towards Strategic Communication," *Military Review* (July–August 2007): 70.

## PANEL 6—CURRENT OPERATIONS

### Questions and Answers

(Transcript of Presentation)

**Phillip Fraund, Ph.D.**  
**Stephen Badsey, Ph.D.**

**Moderated by Mr. Steve Vogel**

#### **Mr. Vogel**

Dr. Badsey, thank you for your presentation. Since we're running just a little bit short on time, I want to go directly to the question and answer session. And I'd like to begin that myself with a question for Dr. Fraund. Two days ago, we met for the first time and we talked a little bit about your paper and how your own army has progressed in its relationship with the military and the access that we've granted the media. I was wondering if you could share your thoughts with the group on where your country and your military and its media stand from that relationship?

#### **Dr. Fraund**

I think the basic problem is that the German Army has an understanding of media techniques that is the same as the United States or other nations had back in the 1970s, blocking almost all information for the media. The way the German media dealt with Afghanistan is more or less close to the way the German Government wanted to see the German involvement in Afghanistan as, let's say, a very substantial way of peacekeeping mission. The German Government wanted to keep the image of German officers or soldiers going out showing teddy bears, spreading chocolate and chewing gum, all these, let's say, humanitarian action works and not really a fighting mission, which it already is. And so the German Army reacted to journalists who were too critical by excluding them from their flights to Afghanistan or in restricting the way they were able to depart.

#### **Audience Member**

This is for Dr. Badsey. Sitting here for 3 days thinking about this. You talked about the relationship of the military to the media and we're talking about basically macro level. One of the problems I think, or irritation with the media, is you have people who are involved in a very intense combat situation where people are killed, people are maimed, people for which officers and NCOs are responsible, friends, comrades. They do the best they can to accomplish their mission and then they read about, hear about, or see this particular action on television, on the net, and in print, in which they are really criticized and if not criticized, the action was not worth it, was not supposed to happen, was bad, and this creates in the average person I think a sense of betrayal and a sense of real anger, especially when

you get back from combat and you get that emotional come down. The Army's a very small place, a very confined society, if you will, and I think this is one of the things that leads to irritation with the media. I don't see how anything can be done about it because the media person, as embedded as they are, are not part of that unit and they get up and leave and they still leave the unit there. They've been offered the hospitality, protection, whatever, of the unit, and those people, regardless of whether commissioned or not, are going to feel a little bit betrayed.

### **Dr. Badsey**

That's a question I've thought about quite a lot. I should say, if it isn't perhaps obvious, that it's not easy as a civilian for me even to discuss this, because I'm about to talk rather glibly about casualties and that means you and not me. And if you don't think I haven't thought of the implications of this many times, you're wrong. But just take this as red. Members of the US Armed Forces, by their nature, by their training, are taught and led to do some extraordinary things, to make sacrifices. One of the problems I think you now have is the idea of making a further sacrifice of taking along with you a reporter who may not report exactly what you want, and from the other side of that, of course, what would actually satisfy somebody who had been in a bad firefight and seen their buddies die? My experience is nothing and would, no matter how it was written, somebody would find an objection. And if it was written so that it was absolutely perfect for the US Army, you can be sure the French Army wouldn't be happy with it. In other words, that is a desire for something that is not achievable. But even beyond that, if I can put it in terms of a rhetorical question, is it seriously being argued that you have to have this person with you, look after them, protect them, feed them, and they are there to be critical of you. The answer is yes, because that is inherent in the Constitution of a democracy and I don't think that US military thinking has yet embraced that. To go further and put it in terms of advantages to you, we may be getting into circumstances in which you may have to think in terms, and this perhaps goes back to what Chuck de Caro was saying yesterday. You may have to think in terms of being willing to take casualties to get a good story. You have to see it that way. That it actually might be worth a soldier's life to get the media coverage you want. I can hear the silence. You haven't thought of it that way yet, have you? This is the way your thinking perhaps needs to be going at the moment. As I said, no one's going to put me in this situation. I've been talking about this for a very long time. I'm aware of how that can sound. But this, if you can teach your soldiers to risk death for other reasons, you may have to consider teaching them to risk death or wounding for the sake of an effective—I'll use the term information operation. I wish you wouldn't in some ways. I think it's a bad term, because it does blur these two, in my view, entirely distinct areas of psychological operations and public affairs.

### **Audience Member**

The military has been asked to step outside the military thought process to understand the media. Many military members would argue that the super majority of the journalists here this week refuse to provide the same courtesy to the military. Why should we think that's acceptable?

**Dr. Badsey**

Why should you think that's your decision, your call to make?

**Audience Member**

Why is it yours?

**Dr. Badsey**

I'm not, I'm not a US citizen. My point is, are you saying that that is a decision to make? I think constitutionally you're completely wrong.

**Audience Member**

I don't think it's the military's decision to make, but I don't believe that it's the media's decision to make either.

**Dr. Fraud**

I think the media and the military have to rely on each other in this case, and I think that media have to try to keep up their work as they did because most of the reporting we could see from, especially the first stages of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, was more or less a very pro-US, not very about some, let's say, war crimes or atrocities against Iraq. These reports came later. Think of the Marine unit that was going to a mosque with a TV team behind them and then shooting some, perhaps, or possibly wounding Iraqis in a mosque which is, that's like you can do that, but not in front of TV, not with a TV team behind you, which [*inaudible*] at the next time possible.

**Dr. Badsey**

I should add, historically, this works best, the relationship, when it is done at the lowest possible level and informally. Attempts to make broad generalizations might decide very difficult. If I can add something, this may be slightly at a tangent, but I don't believe so. About 10 years ago, I published a paper in one of the academic journals on how Hollywood films depicted war reporters. One of the basic assumptions behind I think real life US Armed Forces thinking and certainly behind the Hollywood reflection is that if you embed a reporter, if you take a reporter into your organization, they will be converted, so they will share your values. That is not always the case, and the sense of rejection can often cause trouble. The idea that you could, like I said, take somebody into a life-threatening situation, look after them, protect them, and they will not share your point of view partly because it is their job not to share your point of view completely. Reporters with combat experience will know how difficult this is to work, a line it is to work. I see Don looking at me rather critically here. But you've spent years doing it, I just write about it.

**Audience Member**

Having spent two tours in Vietnam, I know you talked about the—there's a big distinction on the media that was embedded in Vietnam and those in the United States that had no idea what was going on in Vietnam. And I would say probably the journalist reporting from all of the embedded was in the game park that 90 percent of us that were fighting for the United States and for the South Vietnamese. We didn't have a lot of respect for the South

Vietnamese Government through its extensive corruption. The [inaudible] Vietnam and the North Vietnamese were very dedicated hard-fighting people. So I mean, I agree, we would have pulled out more by the media that was going with John Kerry and his baby killers than those people that were actually embedded. There were numerous reporters embedded in there and, yeah, we tried to do coverups and they would weed them out. But basically, they did not misrepresent us that much.

**Dr. Badsey**

Thank you for the contribution. So I know Bill Hammond's trying to get in, but can I just add, there's an element of buck passing on the media side and it's not unreasonable. I mean that critically. The field reporters will often say that they're doing their job and the problem occurs with the editor back home. I think in research terms, we should pay more attention to the editors back home and get their version of it because at the moment, the moment being from memory back to the 1880s, they're the people who tend to get blamed by the reporters when the story goes wrong. As I said, thank you for the contribution.

**Dr. Fraund**

If I may add, the German TV reporter who was covering the Iraq War from Baghdad suddenly stopped working for CBS German television because of the fact that his editors at home wanted him to report about an action in Afghanistan to build up or to portray an Afghan police unit in a very glorious way, which in fact wasn't that glorious. So, he said, "Okay, I can't get with your personal agenda, so I quit working for CBS German television." And this was one of the few, very few, situations when the influence of the military officers back home were so open to the public because it was discussed in nearly all the media sites and all the major newspapers in Germany.

**Dr. Badsey**

On the issue of embedding for a major military operation, say 2003 Iraq, a big organization, and I happen to know exactly how this was done by the BBC because I watched and talked to the guys involved, will take their most acceptable people to the US military, the British military, respectively, and put them forward as embeds and then they will run unilaterals. As a matter of fact, the senior BBC foreign affairs, that is John Simpson who once in a tongue slip claimed that the BBC had liberated Kabul. I don't know if you picked that up at the time. Pray it didn't get reported here. He has refused consistently editor work with any British or Western or NATO military unit. He always goes unilateralist, and he's one of the best we've got because he feels he needs that separation. But the media will do it both ways. They will put the people in as embeds who they think are acceptable to you and at the same time they will run other reporters for other purposes to get exactly this second story, this second eyewitness function I've been talking about. Now that's just something you have to be aware of.

**Mr. Vogel**

Sorry to cut things off here, especially as we're really starting to get rolling, but it is time for us to take our lunch break. But in closing here, I would like to express our appreciation on behalf of the Combat Studies Institute for both Dr. Fraund and Dr. Badsey for speaking with us today.

## DAY 3—FEATURED SPEAKER

### **Mr. Ralph Peters Independent Journalist**

(Transcript of Presentation)

The most important thing I will say today is this: To my brothers and sisters who have served, who are serving, and who support those served, I thank you for your service and our country thanks you. Now for the last 2 days, we've—those of you who have been here for the whole thing—have seen a very productive conference in my view. A wide range of journalists, critical commentaries, and yet I felt it slipped a bit out of balance, because the military, of course, doesn't want to hurt anybody's feelings and certainly not journalists, and the media can be self-congratulatory. So today, I'm going to be more critical of the media than I would otherwise be simply because I'm trying to put things into a bit of balance.

Let me make it clear. As many of you know, when I think the military gets it wrong, I am perfectly glad to criticize our military when I think it is genuinely deserved. Certainly we cannot blame the media for the lack of strategic vision and appropriate strategy in Vietnam or in Afghanistan. But that's not what I'm here to talk about today. After 22 years in the military, 11 years in the media, but not of it, for I will always be a soldier first, I think I have a reasonably balanced perspective, and I would like to offer my critical views on the media.

I want to talk a bit about the history of how we got here—where today's media really comes from. Take you back beyond the 19th century. First, let's do a little bit of traveling. How many of you have been to Washington, DC? All those good Pentagon assignments and die. But when you go back, if you can find time in your schedule on a pleasant autumn day perhaps, go down and stroll the Mall. It really is impressive. Walk up the Mall, Constitution Avenue. Then you're going behind all these, between the museums and federal buildings, some of which were designed in the, frankly, the fascist era of architecture. Albert Schaber would love it. Nonetheless, it's a very, very impressive capitol. As you go down to where Constitution meets Pennsylvania, literally, at dawn in the shadow of the Capitol, if you look left, you'll see on Pennsylvania Avenue a dramatically bad piece of recent architecture. Hundreds of millions of dollars in it. It's called a museum. It's of the journalists, by the journalists, and for the journalists. It's a monument to our media, a celebration of our media. Admission is \$20. There are various discounts, none for veterans or serving military members. The media are entitled to have their museum. Of course, there's none for the doctors throughout history or the engineers who built America. But walk the Mall again and see if you can find a single museum on or near our National Mall to any branch of the US military. There are some monuments, some of them more attractive than others, but there is no museum to those who fought and died for our country. Yet, we have an incredibly expensive museum that charges \$20 a head to celebrate the heroes of the journalistic profession.



Now, you often hear reference to the CIA and NSA, which the movies always get wrong, of course. Who minds the minders? Who watches the watchers? Well my question when it comes to the media is who critiques the critics? Because brothers and sisters, the media does not do it to itself. Now, there are things for which you'll be castigated. Plagiarism usually gets you kicked out of the bunch for awhile. Lying, it depends on the lie. Depends entirely on the lie. But the media have set themselves up, moved from being reporters back to really their earliest, their origins, of judging the quick and the dead. And I want to know why a degree from the Columbia School of Journalism gives you the right to judge the actions of a weary young marine at a roadblock or a weary soldier on patrol, especially if you have not done your homework, of which more later.

Now, journalists come in many, many flavors. There are some whom I admire enormously, and certainly John Burns to me is the lion of this generation. You heard him speak. A wonderfully impressive man as well as a journalist. I'm very proud of my wife—a journalist for *Government Executive* magazine who will never get a Pulitzer Prize. Never, because she is scrupulously fair, even to the Air Force. She agonizes over is she being just, is she being fair? Brothers and sisters, that is not fashionable. But I want to talk about some of the other journalists. And you heard, you know, defense of several journalists that have . . . all right. Peter Arnett. Now, I've never met Mr. Arnett. I have no wish to do so. But I've seen his commentaries for decades and he strikes me as having a chip on one shoulder against America and a huge chip on the other against the American military. Now perhaps I am being unfair. That is simply my impression. Simply my personal impression.

Some, you know, John Burns actually praised Seymour Hersh, Sy Hersh of the *New Yorker* yesterday, who I regard as the greatest living American fiction writer. Let me tell you my personal experience with Sy Hersh who obviously was not meant to be an intelligence officer, because he had his intel wrong on this one. I retired 11 months after pinning on lieutenant colonel in 1998, because I wanted to write certain things that a serving officer honorably can't. It was the Clinton years, etc. Well, a couple of years after I'd retired, Seymour Hersh embarked on this campaign for whatever reason to bring down General Barry McCaffrey, a legitimate American hero in multiple senses of the word. And by the way, a personal friend of mine and we go back a long way, went through some tough stuff together. But Hersh called me up and I answered the phone. "This is Sy Hersh." Yeah, of course, everybody knows Sy Hersh. After he established that I was the right Ralph Peters, he said, quote, "Listen, I want you to help me get Barry McCaffrey." Sound like balanced journalism to you? His article eventually appeared almost a year later in the *New Yorker*. When he talked to me, he wanted to write it about how bad McCaffrey was at SOUTHCOM in the drug wars and his drug czar and about his command in DESERT STORM and how monstrous and atrocious he was. We spent about an hour on the phone. I hope Hersh someday publishes the transcripts, because he brought up all the things he thought he had uncovered and I explained exactly what they were, what they meant in military terms, and why they would have happened, and some things I said, you know, "That can't have happened, it doesn't work like that." Of course nothing I said ever made it in the article. When the article was eventually published in the *New Yorker*, he never had been able to track down anything on SOUTHCOM or the drug czar years, but McCaffrey in the desert commanded

a reinforced division of about 28,000 men and women. Hersh found about a half dozen who didn't like McCaffrey. His primary witness was an E5 who had not been at the site of the atrocity he claimed happened. Six out of 28,000. I think you'll find six disgruntled soldiers in the best infantry company we've got, probably in a regiment of rangers for that matter. But Hersh just launched and went ahead and wrote that story that was grotesquely dishonest and grotesquely unfair. That to me is the epitome of truly bad journalism, but Hersh had some hits early on. It's kind of like Bill Haley. Bill Haley might be before your time, but he had a hit in the '50s called *Rock Around the Clock*, and he spent the rest of his life trying to have another hit. That's basically what Hersh is.

I want to be fair though because obviously there are great journalists who get it right, who are scrupulous, fair. They're not military groupies, but like John Burns they are absolutely scrupulous. I think of Martha Raddatz for ABC who absolutely empathizes—she's not a groupie, but she empathizes with soldiers and with their families and genuinely cares about them as human beings. Sean Naylor who can irritate people in the military, but nonetheless, he cares and he tries to get it right. And he is a Special Forces groupie. But I want you to really step back and think about the career of journalism. It's critical. I absolutely believe in the First Amendment. Of course, we need a strong media, not just a press anymore, but strong media. I just want one that does its homework and has an elementary sense of fairness.

So journalists, those among us who are journalists, think about what your profession really is. You live and prosper off the deeds, the sacrifices, the crimes, or the blood of others. Without the deeds of other men and women, you have no story. You have nothing. And I don't mean this in a pejorative sense, but in a dictionary sense, you are parasites living off of others, off of the systems of others. So get a grip when next you go to the museum to worship yourself, the "Newseum."

Now, also I really believe this. The key to understanding journalists for those of you in the military is that they are herd animals who think they are rugged individualists. Now there are some true individualists and pioneers among journalists, but I will tell you—I've seen it again and again how once the pilot fish, such as BBC or the *New York Times*, sometimes CNN or National, establish the story line—this is the narrative of this event—all the journalists flock to that. I'll give you one example.

In 2006, during the dustup between the Israelis and Hezbollah, it was fascinating. I went to the Israeli side. Just rented a car, drove up, an Israeli friend got me a room. [*inaudible*] is three clicks from the border. It's where they had their commando engineer company and their PAO center. So I just check in. It's funny—no security. It was amazing. But you stand up there and you set up an observation post that sits on a hill and you watch the battle unfold. It's an incredible—must have been like the spectators at Bull Run. We could watch the artillery, count the flash, the bang, and hear the small arms. And, you know, small arms there—I think it's in that field, oh, that's at that particular village because that's where the rounds are hitting now. We're in direct fire and it was great because I was the only journalist there. I did see an AP pool reporter for about 3 hours during my stay. That was it. But you were getting reports from Israel. And the Israeli PAOs were joking about it.

Now, the cable news and network reporters were at Haifa—well out of range. They were in helmets and battle flak jackets on the hotel terrace doing their stand-ups in the dark. You can't see what's out there. While inside the hotel, people were eating, drinking, dancing, etc. Where were the key reporters, the lead reporters? They were on the Lebanese side because immediately, when the war kicked off, the herd decided the narrative was Lebanese suffering. Now, I'm with the Israelis. The Lebanese did suffer, and the Israelis did some stupid things. But tens of thousands, over a hundred thousand Israelis were driven from their homes by [*inaudible*] fire. Tens of thousands of Israelis were driven into living in basements for a month. Hezbollah was able to claim they were the first people to make refugees of Jews since 1948. There was plenty of suffering to go around. But all you heard about was the massacre, rather the wedding at Cana, where if you really looked at the film, they're trotting out the same dead baby over and over again, and it doesn't get questioned. But once the story line was established, nobody challenged it. And you saw it back in Vietnam and elsewhere.

So what I want to do—oh, and by the way, another point. When a journalist is wounded or, God forbid, killed or goes missing, boy, it's a story. Why is a journalist's life more important than that of any soldier, marine or navy corpsman, or Air Force forward air controller? History. Where do we really come from? We in the military, who have dedicated at least part of our lives to the military, who are our antecedents in mythic days? Well, they're the warriors, Gil Gavish, Achilles, Hector. If you're really good, Ulysses or the [*inaudible*] from Slavic myth.

Who is the antecedent, the ancestor of the journalist? It's a neighborhood gossip, because people want to know what's happening—it's human nature. You know, we exist to defend our homes, our families, and our people. On the other hand, you have the people who just want to know. We don't know a lot about what Bardell called the structures of everyday life in Greece and Rome. We do know that in Athens at the [*inaudible*], current events were discussed, so you had at least a verbal newspaper. We don't know if anything was nailed up or whatever. I'm sure by the time of the Romans there were things that we don't pick up on now to transmit news because people want to know. But where the process really becomes formal is with the invention of movable type plates for the printing press, Gutenberg mid-15 century.

The first thing that approaches being war correspondents comes in the wars of religion in the 1520s. Here's an interesting thing. For the first almost century and a half, about a century and a half, it's not reporting. You know, reporters take pride of place over opinion writers, but the fathers and mothers—really, the fathers in those days of today's journalism—were opinion writers. That's what you got first. The first proto newspapers are really usually one sheet print-offs with a gory illustration of those bad Catholics or those bad Lutherans or those bad Anabaptists with a little bit of tax and it would get passed around and sold for a very, very small amount. It's not a newspaper, but it's drawing the road. Then you move forward, by the Elizabethan era, there are pamphleteers—Richard Green and others in London—but no real newspapers. Where newspapers, and war is the father of many things, where the first real newspapers, gazettes that I can find, are in the English Civil War of the 1640s. The parliamentarians and the royalists have their gazettes

and there's some news in them, but it's always in opinion pieces. It's invective. It's, you know, Charlie Rose to the max. Pick the most vociferous. It's really more Rush Limbaugh on both sides. That's what you get. But there are real newspapers now. They're published on a semiregular basis when people aren't being chased by armies. And you move forward.

Now what we called style section or *Geist* continues through the first golden age of journalism in the Marlborough era. You've got Addison and Steele, etc. But newspapers are starting to get a grip in the English speaking world far ahead of elsewhere. By the Seven Years War, the French and Indian War, Robert Rogers, Rogers Rangers—any rangers in here? Give me one rule—Roberts Rule of Rangers number one. Good. Well, Robert Rogers, a truly capable heroic man, leads what is a regiment of rangers and he becomes a darling of the press because the British aren't getting any victories and Robert kinds of delivers just small ones. Although his most celebrated exploit, the battle on snow shoes, is actually a defeat, but he gets his guys out. He's made into a hero by the media of the day and shortly thereafter they unmake him because the newspapers are bribed by people to whom he owes money. He owes the money because he borrowed to pay his men because the Crown would not honor its obligations to them.

We move forward. The first great and I think in my experience still the finest war journalist, war correspondent ever was indeed William Russell. Now, Russell's an interesting guy. You should read his stuff. It is good. He actually could write. Classical educations count for something. But Russell, he was a Confederate sympathizer, as most Brits were, except for the working class up in Manchester, etc. But his account of Bull Run was hated by the Union. He was basically kicked out of the Union over it because it was so accurate. Even though he was a Confederate sympathizer, he depicted the battle and the route absolutely accurately. It's still the best account we have of First Manassas, or the Battle of Bull Run. It is a classic and to my mind it still may be the best single piece of war reporting. But he keeps on reporting. Russell eventually goes down. He loses his popularity by the Franco-Prussian War because he doesn't get on the Internet of the day. He's committed to handwritten dispatches, and he doesn't believe in the telegraph and so all his competitors are telegraphing back from the Franco-Prussian War battlefields and he is just trying to do the handwritten dispatches. At the same time in our Civil War, Shiloh is instructive. Because if William Russell, the scrupulous reporter is again the example, the John Burns of his day if you reverse the equation, you also had . . . and I'm sorry, I just forgot his name. I guess I'm getting old. I knew an Alzheimer's joke, but I forgot it. At Shiloh, there was a lot of pressure even then to file before the others. Your paper wants to lead. There was a journalist on one of the river boats. He never set foot at Pittsburgh Landing, never set foot on shore. But he comes down in the morning and he sees—there's always confusion in the back of battles, or used to be before we had the discipline and professional forces we have now—and he doesn't see the battle. He just sees all these Union guys who ran away and were clamoring to get on the river boats, etc. So he gets on the first boat back north, bribes a Union telegrapher to file his dispatch, and the dispatch from the first morning of Shiloh is "Union Disaster, Army Destroyed," etc. Well, of course, by the second day Shiloh turns into the first decisive battle of the war. The Southern Confederate saying is, "The South never smiled after Shiloh." But you know what? It started the tradition of just

destroying generals' reputations. The press went after Grant: he's a drunk, etc. And you know who's a master of press relations? George B. McClellan. He was slick, well dressed, well connected, married to John C. Vermont's daughter, Jesse Vermont. And he mastered it. McClellan hangs on and hangs on through all these defeats and the only thing that saves Grant is Lincoln who sees better than anyone else. Lincoln's statement, of course, is when he's told, "Fire Grant, everybody hates him, the press wants him gone," Lincoln says, "I cannot spare this man. He fights."

By the time of the Spanish-American War, the press is going great guns. It's a heyday of the yellow press. You've already heard the story of how the Western artist and graphic artist, Frederick Remington, is sent to Cuba by the Hearst papers. He gets there and there's been unrest, but there's really nothing, and he's an illustrator. So—and this story is apocryphal. It's not really proven, but the story in circulation is that he cables back to William Randolph Hearst and says, you know, the Rupert Murdoch of his day, and says, you know, "No action. Coming home." And he gets an emergency response supposedly that says, "You furnish the pictures, I'll furnish the war." But Hearst didn't furnish the war. Hearst was a brilliant reader of the *Geist*, the public opinion of the time. And this will come into play again later. America in the golden age, and it's really the end of the golden age. We were looking around the world. The last flowering of European imperialism was grabbing everything that was left and Americans, not all Americans, but those that looked outward wanted something. We needed our part too. The war was inevitable. Hearst may have accelerated it a little bit, probably not even that. But he read the public mind. That's what the great tycoons of the media do.

So you go through World War I, you've heard about the censorship. The British are masters of propaganda. Brilliant. You know, "The Huns raping Belgium nuns," etc. Then you get to World War II, the true golden age of American journalism. I'm going to come back to this. But since we have limited time, I just want to give you one example of the difference between then and now. In the buildup to D-Day, there was a horrific allied disaster at Slapton Sands. Everybody heard of that? At Slapton Sands we were training to land troops, land tanks, and it was off the coast of England. Well, wartime training exercise, but not under fire, and we had troop transports and landing crafts. Part of a German wolf pack got in among them. Nobody was protecting them. The sea literally ran red with American soldiers' blood. All the journalists in the pool agreed to keep it quiet. Why did they keep it quiet? Why did they agree to that? Americans. Now, I think several hundred American soldiers die, thousands are wounded—how can you keep that quiet? Because they wanted America to win. They weren't out for a Pulitzer Prize. They wanted us to win and they saw that while this is news, this would lead—if it bleeds, it leads—there was nothing the American public would gain from this and it could hurt morale considerably. But the important thing, the American public wasn't going to gain. And I grow tired of this idea, the public has a right to know. Yes, but it does not have a right to know if it undermines the war effort or if it kills American service members. That's an extreme example, but I think an important one.

I'm going to come back to World War II and personalities in a moment. Let's move on to Vietnam. Terribly misunderstood, the media's effect on Vietnam. The media did not



defeat the United States in Vietnam. The draft did. If you really go back and look at the timeline, start reading how journalism changes and when it's changing and look at events in the United States, the protests, etc. Except for left-wing magazines and *Ramparts* being a leader, there's really not much critical coverage in '65 or '66. It gets a little bit more so, but society is ahead of the journalists. The journalists follow. They have, whether consciously—I suspect subconsciously because we're all affected by society—the journalists catch the contagion that the war's a losing proposition and it's a losing proposition for many reasons but primarily because middle class and upper middle class kids are going to war and they don't want to. Now I'm not defending Vietnam, and you can make cases for it either way. But again, you can't blame the media because we didn't have a rational analysis and a sensible strategy, although they did make things worse. I think by the time you get to the '70s, you can blame the media for the cutoff of arms supplies to South Vietnam, etc. They may have accelerated things, intensified things, but the media followed the public much as William Randolph Hearst had six decades earlier.

Now, let's move up to the present day. Again, just stay with one example. Guantanamo. Prisoners in the general population at Guantanamo were treated better than prisoners in any prison in the Leavenworth area. They had more privileges, better medical care, special diets, and yet the global media—and that's the thing, it's global now—the global media made Guantanamo into a chamber of horrors, which it was not. Now, many factors come into play, but the one strategic factor we never talk about is jealousy. There is among some Americans, but among many foreign journalists, a hard left anti-American streak. It's just there. What troubles me isn't that there was bad reporting about Guantanamo and lies told, what bothers me is once again the narrative line was set, the herd moved that way, and where were the journalists who went there and saw the real conditions and said, "Look, yes, they did some dumb things, but on the whole this is a pretty good deal. It's a tropical beach." We should have responded by immediately closing them and sending them to the Yukon. But we did not. Our defense of it was utterly inept. Because once again, as I made a comment earlier this morning, the military isn't trusted, but by God, if Al Jazeera or the Taliban is saying something, it must be credible.

Now, what happened between World War II and Vietnam and the present day? Several things. But let's go back to World War II and just a few of the great names who are revered and not just by conservatives or not just by average Americans. Ernie Pyle, the soldier's journalist. Edward R. Morrow, darling of the left, right? Except that Edward R. Morrow wanted America to win. Edward R. Morrow kept Slapton Sand secret. Edward R. Morrow knew which side he was on. He was on the same side of the men and women in uniform in this room, the side of the US Constitution. Bill Malden, the cartoonist, great cartoonist and journalist. I still love his stuff. Richard Tregaskis who wrote *Guadalcanal Diary*. Let me tell you why those men were such brilliant reporters on the GI. It's because they grew up with the GI. They played football with the GI. They got bloody noses together. They got into trouble with their fellow GI.

Ernie Pyle was a sharecropper's son with a few scraps of education. Edward R. Morrow was born in a log cabin in North Carolina and his family, not wealthy, move out to homestead in Washington State and he goes to a state school. Bill Malden, son of a civilian



scout for the US Army in the Apache wars. Richard Tregaskis, the only one of those four who had a good education, grew up in Elizabeth, New Jersey, which is not exactly Darien, Connecticut. Tough town. They understood the people they were covering. They were the kids next door.

Then you move on—Vietnam. Now journalism has always attracted a strange bunch of people. Some that didn't know anything else to do, some were rogues, some were adventurers, some would just fall into it. I mean, people become journalists for a lot of different reasons as people join the military for a lot of different reasons. But it changes. Journalism was never a blue-collar profession. Back in the 1590s, some of the pamphleteers had Oxford or Cambridge educations and couldn't do much else with their lives, but that's what they did. But something happens. Journalism is really what I would call a light blue collar, or a dirty white collar profession. It's in between over the centuries, over the years. There are exceptions like William Russell. But something happens. It starts becoming a hip profession during Vietnam. And then, of course, at the tail end of Vietnam, the tragedy for American journalism, Woodward, Bernstein, and Watergate. The great exposé. You get to be played in a film by Dustin Hoffman or Robert Redford. I'd rather be played by Redford actually. But take that as it may, suddenly the journalist isn't telling the story. The journalist is the story. The journalist is the hero.

If you wanted to rescue American journalism, my one suggestion would be close journalism schools. Of those four men I mentioned, Pyle, Edward R. Morrow, Bill Malden, Richard Tregaskis, only Tregaskis would have had a shot at getting hired by a major establishment media outlet today because he went to Harvard. He worked his way into Harvard. I won't name media organization names, but there is one which I have a lot of inside knowledge that will not hire a young journalist who did not go to an Ivy League school. And I can tell you that they hire them and they have to fire them, that the owner has a Harvard thing, etc. Now, as journalism became a hip profession—you go to journalism school, Columbia School of Journalism, gold standard—what happens? Where do most of the people that go to journalism school at Stanford or Columbia or Harvard or Yale come from? They don't come from blue collar, working class neighborhoods. They come from the suburbs. The upper middle class suburbs, or even the upper crust. They're playing at life. They don't do their homework. You know, I think a journalist—getting a degree in journalism is nutty. Now take Journalism 101 to learn how to write your lead paragraph, etc. Study history, international relations; know what you're talking about. That's something that bothers me terribly. Journalists are lazy and don't do their homework. Now there are many exceptions, many. I'm concentrating on the bad apples here. There are many who try, but I'm just appalled at the willful ignorance of so many.

Now, we move from the era of the Bill Malden's and Edward R. Morrow's into the era of what I would call the prize chasers. Journalists are wringing their hands, well, why on earth, why is the population of the United States growing, but circulation of the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*, it's going down. What's happening? Is America dumbing down? Why don't you know? The print journalists and those major outlets have forgotten that they have a national audience. Increasingly, the journalists at the top of the game more and more write for other journalists. They write for prizes and other journalists decide by and

large who gets the prizes. If you're not willing to write for what's dismissed as the "flyover crowd," if you're not willing to write for the busy person, the person who doesn't have time in the faculty lounge to read Frank Rich for the third time, you know, you're going to lose audiences. Times change. The demotic voice changes. Attention spans change. But when I read columns in the establishment press, I get why they're going down. They're writing for other journalists, they're writing for prizes and they're not reaching out. You can read, you can smell the condescension between the ink and the paper.

I'm a name names guy. I want to raise a couple of specific cases that truly bothered me. One person who's won a couple of Pulitzer Prizes, and I'm going to talk about—by accident, it's just all journalists in the *Washington Post*. Let me make it clear. I think the *Washington Post* is the finest establishment paper in the United States today. The *New York Times*, except for its brilliant war correspondents—I mean, figure this out—you've got Burns, Chivers, Dexter Filkins—I mean, it's incredible, and the *Post* doesn't. But in every respect, the editorial page of the *Post* is balanced. It makes both sides angry. Their coverage is good. Neither paper has good copy editors anymore. It's appalling to read it. But the prize chasers, to me the most egregious recent offender is Dana Priest, and the specific example I would pick is her exposé of Walter Reed. Remember that a few years back? Where soldiers are living in awful conditions and they were. I don't want any wounded soldier ever to live in bad conditions. But Priest is a very good writer, not brilliant, but she's very good and she knows how, she knows what to leave out. So if you read the long columns exposing, if you get well down, you realize, well, it's one building and part of another, a small number of soldiers—no soldier should ever have to, wounded soldier, and these are primarily outpatients, but they shouldn't have to endure mold in the bathrooms or bedrooms. Of course not. We got it. Go back and read the stories and what is missing from the exposé of Walter Reed. And she knew of course. Where's the mention, description, and discussion of BRAC? Walter Reed was on the BRAC list at that point, the Base Realignment and Closure. What happens when an installation goes on the BRAC list? Stop spending money. But Dana Priest didn't explain that to the American people, and she got the scalps of a couple generals out of it. Maybe the generals deserved to go, but it was accurate yet patently dishonest journalism.

Anthony Shadid. Priest is a good writer. Anthony Shadid is a brilliant writer. He's maybe the most talented American journalist of this generation when it comes to sheer story-telling quality. I also believe, in my personal opinion, he is the finest propagandist. I wish he was working for our side. If you read his dispatches from early on in the war, they just ooze dislike of the US military and our policies. Now, let me make it clear, let me remind everybody, that these are my views. They have nothing to do with CSI or the US Army or anything else. These are my views and mine alone. It's a shame because Anthony—I always want to say Shahid—Shadid, but at any rate, Anthony Shadid is a brilliantly talented writer and in my personal read I believe he is dishonest because he leaves things out that matter.

Last one, I'm not going to mention this guy's name. You can figure it out because he was long a personal friend. But a journalist who's never served in the military because he went to a good school. And if you go to a good school, why on earth would you serve in the

military for God's sakes? John Kerry could set you straight on that. I mean, and the people like me, well, I'm too stupid to do anything else. You know, John Kerry explained—I never knew but now I know. But at any rate, he never served in the military, but he got a military groupie, wrote some fine reporting on the military over the years. But by the time he gets to Iraq, this guy who's never tied on a combat boot knows better than the military. He knows better than the generals, and he tears into Ray Odierno, even writes a book in which Odierno is the villain. Well, you know, journalists tend to take a very short-term view. This guy is a great reporter; he's not a good analyst. In my personal view, only because of the tough, he always criticized the tough policies of Ray Odierno and the marines next door early in the war. Only that the realization that its US soldiers and marines are not to be messed with gave the Sunnis the courage and the confidence to flip. Because, let's face it, I love the British Army, but if it had been up in Anbar, or Diyala at that time, I do not think the Sunnis would have flipped. How many Shia tribes flipped out in Baghdad. They had to know that we were bad hombres. It took time to pay off. Wars don't automatically fit your filing deadlines. They don't fit your book contract deadlines. And they don't fit American electoral cycles. You've got to stand back a little bit and elementary fairness. Fortunately, the US Army was smarter than the journalists and kept promoting Ray Odierno, who continues to do magnificent service for our country and for civilization I might add.

Now, let's stress again, absolutely, the First Amendment. There's a reason why it's the First Amendment. Without it, nothing else works. Without a free press, democracy doesn't work. Here is the breakdown point, and you see it with Iraqis as well and with the Soviets at the end, the collapse of the Soviet Union. With freedom comes responsibility. Journalists are not gods to judge the quick and the dead. If you are a reporter, report and tell the truth even if it doesn't square with your education. You know where Dana Priest went to get her undergraduate degree? University of California, Santa Cruz. If you don't know it, it makes Overland College look like Pat Robertson University. It's probably the most liberal school in the country. Now, again, Ms. Priest is a very good reporter when she's on the issue, when she's willing to report the issue fairly. I just feel, in my personal view, she reported unfairly because she knew she was out for a prize. You don't get prizes for creating heroes or reporting heroes.

Let's do a test. If there's one name from our Afghan conflict that the American public knows, whose name is it? Pat Tillman. All the awards for valor, all the heroism. If there's a second soldier below the rank of general that the American public might know his name, who would it be? I'd say Bowe Bergdahl. I mean, the responsibility, you know, when Bergdahl, he's PFC Bergdahl, he walked off his post back in June. Just walked away from his post, abandoned his post in the combat zone, turns up later in a Taliban propaganda video. The media went orgasmic because this was their guy. They finally had a deserter. I mean, it's like Vietnam, when they're making heroes of deserters and draft dodgers, etc. They didn't do their homework. They had already reported, the *New York Times* and others, had reported that Bergdahl had abandoned his post in wartime and had disappeared into the night. But boy, when he shows up in a Taliban videotape, nobody scrubs it. Scripted videotape by the Taliban—violation of the code of conduct, but boy no worry about that

guy. But what troubles me, and it's fine to report all that stuff, you obviously want to report Pat Tillman, but the Pat Tillman case was great for the media because the Army screwed it up. Friendly fire. Well, there's a story. And then the Army did screw it up.

But there's a lot that the Army's done right, and the Marines and others have done right in Iraq and Afghanistan. There have been—you know, a medal of honor was just given to a young marine who threw himself on a grenade to save his buddies. There have been no end of distinguished crosses. There have been navy crosses, plenty of silver stars, although we're pretty stingy with awards today, they've been earned. Why don't the American people know any of their names? If Ernie Pyle had been writing, or Richard Tregaskis or Edward R. Morrow, the Americans would have known at least a few of their names. But we only know the mistakes and the errors. So I'm not arguing for a coverup. You don't have to do a Slapton Sands over Pat Tillman. But what about the heroes? And I make no secret of this. I will write facts. I'm an opinion writer. I've done some reporting, but I'm an opinion writer. My opinion is that the greatest immorality isn't an action at a roadblock. It's not even the disgusting situation at Abu Ghraib. The greatest immorality is always for the United States to lose.

Now, I would just say this. I've been very hard on the profession today, but obviously I'm in it, if not of it. It helps pay my bills. I do my part and that should be a testament to the fact that I think it's important. Just by the way, I don't enjoy it. When I left the military, I thought I'd write a few articles and then just write my novels. That's what I love to do. Write fiction. It's much more intellectually challenging, believe me, but in times like this, I felt I had to do this. By the way, I've never sought out a job. As soon as I retired, the phone started ringing for a very simple reason. There are plenty of people who can write well that don't know the military. There are plenty of people who know the military, but can't necessarily communicate. I'd been writing while I was on Active Duty. So the phone starts ringing and I don't enjoy it. I like writing the fiction, but I feel like, and this is egotistical of me, I know, but I want to be the voice for the people who do fight. I make no pretense of objectivity in that sense. Facts, yes, but I am on the side of those soldiers and marines and navy corpsmen and seabees. I am on their side. To me, reporting honestly, sticking to the facts, but knowing which side you are on is the duty of an American journalist. You are not citizens of the world. If you are, go get a passport from the UN. If you're a citizen of the United States, you do not have to agree with our military policy, you do not have to agree with our Government policy, but you should not sabotage it either. Integrity is an oft-used word and rarely encountered anywhere in today's society except in my experience in the US military. God bless you and thank you.



## DAY 3—FEATURED SPEAKER

### Questions and Answers

(Transcript of Presentation)

#### Mr. Ralph Peters Independent Journalist

##### Audience Member

Interesting presentation that I enjoyed listening to. If I started my presentation with the recitation of some kids in the Army, some soldiers who didn't have a good day, would that have been fair? If I had introduced the topic of military and media and talked about those four soldiers who got forced to commit suicide, would that be fair?

##### Mr. Peters

Well, the answer is yes.

##### Audience Member

Do you think you are fair and balanced?

##### Mr. Peters

No, I try to be fair, but I don't pretend to be balanced. I'm on America's side. Why do I bring out the negative? Because for 2 days we have had a love fest and I'm not in the mood for love. I have never pretended that I was objective. Look, today's reporters at their worst, were they to transport back to World War II, they would be calling the German Information Ministry and saying "Dr. Gertels, we need your side of the story." Sorry. We don't need the Nazi side of the story. So look, these are just my views. They may be wrong, but the difference between me and many of the star journalists is I'm willing to admit that I might be wrong. Sir.

##### Audience Member

I want to make a comment if I might. You mentioned that there are no military museums, and they're all over the place. The Navy has a nice one. The Marine Corps has a beautiful museum.

##### Mr. Peters

At Quantico.

##### Audience Member

The only Service that doesn't have a museum is the Army and we have a wonderful collection, it goes around the country. We have relics from Gettysburg, and appraisers figure out how much they're worth. And we have nowhere to show them, but we're trying to build that sucker and it's going to be about a \$55 million piece of work out at Fort McNair. Okay. And I want to say a word for Russell. He wasn't a Southern sympathizer. He had to



get out of the South because, while he sympathized with Southern society because they were so much like Britain, (I mean, even their accent, the British accent, he loved it.) but he could not stand their peculiar institution and he made the point in his writing that that institution was the only reason that society existed and he had to get out and he had to get out fast. And he had to get out of the North because of his portrayal of the Battle of Bull Run. But he only left when a soldier threatened his life on the battlefield, and he knew he was done and he got out.

**Mr. Peters**

You're absolutely right. I mean, I was giving a very abbreviated portion. Well, not absolutely right. His heart was with the South. But to William Russell's credit, by 1864, he recognized that the South couldn't win and he published that and that alienated the South, the Confederacy, and alienated much of the British upper crust society. But as far as museums, I was making the point there is no military museum on the Mall or near the Mall. We do have them. There's a wonderful museum on this post.

**Audience Member**

But I just went through the National Museum of American History.

**Mr. Peters**

Has a couple of rooms.

**Audience Member**

It's beautiful. It has George Washington's sword. It has Cornwallis' sword. Did you know that? And it has a beautiful rendition of the history of the US Army, right in front, right through. Much of that stuff comes from the Army museum that doesn't exist.

**Mr. Peters**

Yes, and the Army, and the US Army and the Museum of American History are competing with Julia Child's Kitchen.

**Audience Member**

Don Wright from CSI. Ralph, do you think the Army should maintain a black, white, gray file on media to determine who gets access and other considerations?

**Mr. Peters**

No. I don't think there should be a formal file. I think it's a duty of the PAO to just pay attention. Because there is—in fact, I'd like to hear from Steve Boylan on this, the great PAO of the centuries. But if you ask my view, my view is, look, there is no reason why you have to give Peter Arnett a Black Hawk. If somebody is reporting dishonestly, we are not obligated to facilitate the reporting. Now, by the way, let me go over this. In a speculative article about the power of the media, I don't know, a year or 2 or 3 ago, I wrote that—and I'm talking about the even more radical than Al Jazeera outlets that are on the Web, and I made the point that in future warfare, we may have to treat some media elements as enemy combatants and the response, of course, from the media and from the blogosphere was,

“Peters wants to kill Katie Couric.” Now, personally, I wouldn’t miss Katie, but I do not wish her ill. So for all of you out there, please if anybody ever says, “Peters wants to cut the throat of Katie Couric like a sheep and bury her in an unmarked grave, it is not true.” Steve, please.

**Audience Member**

In your view, what would it take to transform the media into what I take is a professional organization or professional career field? Would it take a governing board? Would it take an approved standards/ethics? Since there is nobody like the AMA, what does it take to transform the media?

**Mr. Peters**

Humility. Next question.

**Audience Member**

If you were to recommend a national oath for a profession to profess, you know, doctors profess to do no harm, we profess to support and defend, how would you write an oath for the profession of journalism?

**Mr. Peters**

Obviously, to give you a fair answer, I have to think about it. My off the cuff response is five words: I will tell the truth. But it’s more complicated than that, and the journalists in this room know it. So I can’t fairly give you an answer without being flip, and I don’t want to be flip about that.

**Audience Member**

You detailed the trends in culture from the Edward R. Morrow’s to the current batch of journalists. Edward R. Morrow, Bill Malden, to them, the American GI was sacrosanct. I mean, they could take shots at the brass, the officers, but their concern was the American GI. What was this change in culture that occurred when the journalists had nothing but contempt and hatred for the GI that they did for them to get home?

**Mr. Peters**

Yeah, I don’t think the journalists had contempt and hatred for the GI. I think certainly not hatred. Now some did. There were extreme cases. There really were. I think the journalists were as confused as the rest of America in ’66, ’67, ’68, and ’69. They had a wide range of political views, but there was a sea change where they followed the [*inaudible*] guys and the reporting got a lot worse. Now, I want to be fair to the journalists. I’ve also written elsewhere that it’s a good thing we had journalists because otherwise, we’d still be in Vietnam.

**Audience Member**

Okay. But what I’m saying is that especially in the late ’60s, early ’70s, when you start in television especially, and the situation shows, the villain is always a dope crazed, homicidal maniac with an M16 who was a Vietnam vet.

**Mr. Peters**

I don't remember those shows, but I was probably too stoned.

**Audience Member**

I need to stick up for the dope crazed thing you talked about. But it's not true. Don Bellisario produced a wonderful series called Magnum in 1980 that strode out in front of everybody and says, no, we're not dope crazed, we're not anything, and we're loyal to our country and military.

**Mr. Peters**

Let me actually try to give you a little bit more of an answer. I think that the media reflected the [*inaudible*] in there. It was a very, very difficult time for everybody to make sense of. The tragedy though is that's really where journalism starts becoming a hip profession. Now, when I was growing up as a kid in the 1950s, early '60s, the cool thing in my pathetic little mind in Schuylkill Haven, Pennsylvania, where my family motto is "no lifeguard in the gene pool." The dream was to be a novelist. You know, Hemingway. We didn't realize yet what a fraud the guy was. But it was to be a novelist. Really, by the late '60s, '70s, it's now the verite journalism, and journalism is the cool thing. Woodward and Bernstein, and suddenly the journalists are the heroes. Now it's interesting to me—you know, soldier first and novelist second and journalism somewhere a distant third—to watch the journalists getting theirs as the blogosphere takes over. Because the blogosphere is not journalism. Journalism still has standards. I may not always agree with them or think they're fully enforced or honored, but it is standard. The blogosphere is the domain of hatred and spite. And one of the things I'm proud of that I wrote back in '94 or '95, very early on in '95 it probably was, was that the Internet was the greatest tool for spreading hatred since the invention of the moveable type plate for the printing press. I mean, just read the stuff. And the rule, by the way, the rule for the blogosphere is very simple. If you don't have the courage to sign your name to something, you don't count. You just don't. And as an officer, there were things I wanted to write critical of the administration. Plenty of people would have published them had I signed them anonymous or Aristotle or God knows what. It would have been dishonorable. So my choice was to take off the uniform so I could do it honorably. Except in the rarest of cases, anonymity is cowardice. A man or woman should be willing to stand behind what he or she writes or says and if you are not, don't say it or write it.

**Audience Member**

You've touched on a very real issue, the issue of patriotism, which goes back very deeply into the whole discussion. And you say that journalism has changed. You mentioned Peter Arnett. I believe he was from New Zealand. In the international global journalistic climate, how would you respond to the suggestion, which I'm just putting forth to debate here, that the views you've expressed are like many right-wing military views simply out of date.

### Mr. Peters

They may be, but they are my views. All I can give—all I can go here. I'm not here to pander. I'm not looking for a job. I'm not trying to sell anybody anything. I was asked to speak here and when I'm asked to speak, I give my honest views. By the way, I did enjoy your presentation very much this morning. I am not willing to sacrifice a single American soldier or marine for a headline; however, I would gladly sacrifice no end of journalists to keep a single soldier or marine alive.

### Audience Member

Why do you think so few of the military do what you've done as a second vocation in terms of they've experienced command, they've experienced being in the Army, they've experienced DESERT STORM, and why are so few—what do you think the Army could or should do to nudge them forward to do that?

### Mr. Peters

The obvious answer is that they're more talented and capable than I am. But no, I think it's tough. You know, I've been critical of journalism today. Again, as many of you know, I'm critical of the military too. I had a great session with the SAMS group last night. Just wonderful, wonderful, impressive officers. Far better than those of my day. But we talked about reading, the importance of reading. Not just rereading *What's an Eagle* for the 12th time. But reading serious history, and not just reading another book about Vietnam or World War II. But what do you know about the Aztec way of war? What about the Ottoman Empire? Had we studied its behavior or the behavior of Arab armies we would have saved a lot of ambushes in Iraq. What about medieval times? I mean, you've got to read intensely and broadly and deeply and not just read the easy stuff. What I will say, don't waste your time reading theory. Anything in print on theory is out of date. It's 20th century. The academy is really what won't catch up for a long time. Soldiers catch up. You're way ahead of me because you've been out fighting the wars. I occasionally swoop by and do my best to figure out what's going on or write about it. But you are the real repositories of knowledge. You are the real repositories of knowledge, but you must deepen it. As an officer, you are obligated to study not only your profession directly, but everything that's corollary to it. And to me, history, and by the way, to me the most tragic thing that happened to American society in the last 50 years is actually that we took history, serious history, out of our schools—K through 12 and college. A country—I don't want jingoism. Maybe it's clear in journalism—I don't want jingoism. I want a deep sense of heartfelt patriotism that reflects itself in knowing when not to report the story that's just going to torment a soldier's family and not going to help America's vision center.

But at any rate, I don't want jingoism. Don't want to study theory. I do want you to read history. I want you to study and talk about it among yourselves. You've just got to know more. You're busy. I know you're swamped with work. You're going to be busy here. Hopefully, you'll have time with your families. You're going to go back to war. But you've got to keep learning. If there's any danger I see in the US military is that we learn

reading, good reading habits. We learn them too late. If you're not thinking about strategy as a captain, you will not be a strategist as a four star general. In fact, one of the points we talked about in the session last night, it was a great session, I should have shut up and learned more, but was the fact that, you know, the National War College was established to create strategists. SAMS is really to create operational capability but strategists later on. And since the World War II generation of leaders, where is the American three or four star general who's published anything worthwhile on strategy? We've produced brilliant tacticians, fully competent operational commanders, but where are the strategists and where does it get us? I mean, there's a huge story right now in Afghanistan and the fact that there's no strategy. There's techniques being employed. There's no strategy. There's no articulation of where we are, what's doable, what we want to do, what the trade-off is on the investment of blood and treasure. Nothing. Nothing. And by the way, you want to see the press? Remember how vociferous the press was about Iraq? Because that was Bush's war. But this is Obama's war. There's criticism—but it's not that impassioned Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld bad. And by the way, at least Cheney and Rumsfeld were very bad. I'm very proud of very few things in my pseudo journalistic career. One is calling for Donald Rumsfeld to go in the summer of 2001. But look, you know, I was a good intel officer. I can spot a loser a mile away. Except when it came to old girlfriends. But they spotted a loser. But at any rate, seriously, we have to educate ourselves. And I think that's something that applies to the media as well. Look, read some history. Know what you're talking about. Study the military. I skipped some things in my notes because I wanted to leave max time for questions and answers.

But the result of these journalists being from these upper crust families, never serving in the military, never studying history, was simply that every firefight is Little Big Horn. Now, one thing I disagree with your terrific presentation this morning was first Fallujah. Yeah, I was there, I was actually there with the Kurds up north and I would watch TV every night and watch Al Jazeera and everything else. We'd watch CNN International. By the end of the week, it's hard to tell the difference except that CNN International is in English. The media did stop the marines. It wasn't that the marines used the wrong tactics. The marines went back in November and did almost exactly the same stuff. The difference is they did it faster because they cracked the code that in a full out combat operation where serious lead is flying and where people are dying and there are civilians and you can't help it, they're going to get killed, you got to operate inside the media cycle. You've got—and that means if it's an intense operation, you've got to get it done faster than the media can persuade Washington it's a losing endeavor in public relations. The marines were efficient, slow—they took too much care in the first Fallujah. I sat there with the Kurds and we all agreed, we're going to have to go back in and by God we did. But the marines who went back in knew what they were doing and they knew the media was a factor and they pushed balls to the walls and got it done and won a major victory and what? Thanks to the media? Oh thank you so much. What is the image everyone remembers from the second Fallujah? A marine shooting a wounded guy. All the heroism, the valor, the sacrifice that went into that fight, and the celebrated image for the media is a marine shooting a wounded guy. Brothers and sisters, that tells me all I need to know. Thank you very much. God bless you.

## Glossary

ABC	American Broadcasting Company
AEF	American Expeditionary Force
AFP	Agence France Presse
AO	area of operations
AOR	area of responsibility
AQI	al-Qaeda in Iraq
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
AT&T	American Telephone and Telegraph
AUSA	Association of the United States Army
AVF	All Volunteer Force
AY	academic year
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BRAC	Base Realignment and Closure
CBS	Columbia Broadcasting System
CD	compact disk
CENTCOM	Central Command
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CG	Commanding General
CGSC	Command and General Staff College
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CJCS	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
CMH	Center of Military History
CMO	civil-military operations
CND	Council of National Defense
CNN	Cable News Network
CNO	computer network operations
CO	commanding officer
COIN	counterinsurgency
CONARC	Continental Army Command
CPI	Committee on Public Information
CPIC	Combined Press Information Center
CSI	Combat Studies Institute
CTC	Combat Training Center
DA	Department of the Army
DDI	Director of Defense Information
DOD	Department of Defense
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EST	Eastern Standard Time
etc.	and so forth
EW	electronic warfare
FOUO	For Official Use Only
HMMWV	high mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle
HQ	headquarters
i.e.	that is
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ID	identification; Infantry Division



## GLOSSARY

IED	improvised explosive device
IFOR	Implementation Force
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IO	information operations
ILE	Intermediate Level Education
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ITN	Independent Television News
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JIB	Joint Information Bureau
LZ	landing zone
MACOI	MACV Office of Information
MACV	Military Assistance Command Vietnam
MEDEVAC	medical evacuation
MEU	Marine Expeditionary Unit
MGB	machinegun battalion
MILDEP	military deception
MMAS	Master of Military Art and Science
MND	Multi-National Division
MOD	Ministry of Defense
MP	military police
MRE	meal, ready to eat
MSM	mainstream media
MTA	Mass Transit Authority
MWR	Morale, Welfare, and Recreation
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NBC	National Broadcasting Company
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NIHA	neutral independent humanitarian action
NSA	National Security Agency
NTC	National Training Center
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
OAS	Organization of American States
OIF	Operation IRAQI FREEDOM
OPD	Officer Professional Development
OPSEC	operations security
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PA	public affairs
PAO	Public Affairs Office(r)
PBS	Public Broadcasting Service
PETA	People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
PIO	Public Information Officer
PME	Professional Military Education
POW	prisoner of war
PR	public relations
PRT	Provisional Reconstruction Team
PSYOP	psychological operations
PSYWAR	psychological warfare

PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
R&R	rest and recreation
RETO	Review of Education and Training of Officers
ROTC	Reserve Officer Training Corps
SAAOR	Soviet Area Audience and Opinion Research
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SAMS	School of Advanced Military Studies
SECDEF	Secretary of Defense
STRATCOM	strategic communications
TRADOC	Training and Doctrine Command
TV	television
UAV	unmanned aerial vehicle
UN	United Nations
UPI	United Press International
US	United States
USSR	Union of Socialist Republics
VC	View Cong
VE	Victory in Europe
VJ	Victory over Japan
VSR	virtual staff ride



**Appendix A**  
**Conference Program**

Day 1  
Tuesday, 25 August 2009

**0730–0800      Registration**

**0800–0815      Administrative and Opening Remarks**

**0815–0830      Movement of Symposium Personnel to Eisenhower Auditorium**

**Keynote Address**

**0845–1000      Keynote Presentation (Eisenhower Auditorium)**

Mr. Bill Kurtis  
Kurtis Productions

**1000–1015      Break**

**Panel 1**

**1015–1145      Forging a Relationship: The Army and the Media**

*A Horrible Fascination: The Military and the Media*  
Mr. Frederick Chiaventone

*Ethics and Embedded Journalists: Beyond  
Boundaries of Industry Induced Guidelines on  
Objectivity and Balance*  
Mr. Ron Martz

Moderator  
Donald P. Wright, Ph.D.  
US Army Combat Studies Institute

**1145–1300**      **Lunch**

**1200–1240**      *Virtual Staff Ride Demonstration—*  
**(Optional)**      *Operation ANACONDA (Room 2104)*  
Mr. Gary Linhart  
US Army Combat Studies Institute

**Panel 2**

**1300–1430**      **The Philippines and the First World War**

*Its Officers Did Not Forget: The Philippine War,  
the Press, and the Pre-World War I Army*  
Thomas A. Bruscino Jr., Ph.D.  
School of Advanced Military Studies

*Conflicts of Interest: Media Ethics and the  
First World War*  
Mr. Jared Tracey

Moderator  
Major John C. Mountcastle  
US Army Combat Studies Institute

**1430–1445**      **Break**

**Panel 3**

**1445–1615**      **The Vietnam War**

*Generals Westmoreland and Abrams Meet the  
Press: What Went Right and What Went Wrong  
with Media Relations in Vietnam*  
William M. Hammond, Ph.D.

*The Viet Cong Assault on the US Embassy at Tet  
and the Military Media Controversy It Launched*  
Mr. Donald North

Moderator  
LTC Scott Farquhar  
US Army Combat Studies Institute

**1615–1630**      **Administrative Announcements**

**Day 2**  
**Wednesday, 26 August 2009**

**0800–0830      Registration**

**0830–0845      Administrative Announcements**

**0845–1000      Featured Speaker**

Mr. John Burns  
*New York Times*

**1000–1015      Break**

**Panel 4**

**1015–1145      The Cold War**

*Professionalism's Impact on Public Affairs*  
*Education at the Army War College,*  
*1950–1989*

Mr. Paul Gardner

*Media and the US Army in Warfare:*  
*A Roadmap for Success*  
Ms. Rhonda Quillin

Moderator  
Mr. John J. McGrath  
US Army Combat Studies Institute

**1145–1300      Lunch**

**Panel 5**

**1300–1430      Experiences Beyond the US Army**

*The Soviet Media During the War in*  
*Afghanistan, 1979–1989*

Robert Baumann, Ph.D.  
US Army Command and General Staff College



**1300–1430 Panel 5 (Cont.)**

*The ICRC's Approach in Terms of Philosophy,  
Planning, and Execution of a Media Plan*  
Mr. Bernard Barrett

Moderator  
Curtis King, Ph.D.  
US Army Combat Studies Institute

**1430–1445 Break**

**1445–1615 Featured Speaker**

Mr. Chuck de Caro  
CEO of AEROBUREAU Corporation

**1615–1630 Administrative Announcements**

**Day 3**  
**Thursday, 27 August 2009**

**0800–0830      Registration**

**0830–0845      Administrative Announcements**

**0845–1015      Featured Speaker**

Mr. Andrew Lubin  
Independent Journalist

**1015–1030      Break**

**Panel 6**

**1030–1200      Current Operations**

*Historical Roots and Explanations  
for “Embedding” Journalists*  
Phillip Fraund, Ph.D.

*Beyond Doctrine: A Historical Perspective  
on the Information Operations Debate in  
Media-Military Relations*  
Stephen Badsey, Ph.D.

Moderator  
Mr. Steve Vogel

**1200–1300      Lunch**

**1300–1430      Featured Speaker**

Mr. Ralph Peters  
Independent Journalist

**1430–1440      Administrative Announcements**

**1440–1500      Concluding Remarks**

Dr. William G. Robertson  
Director, US Army Combat Studies Institute



## Appendix B

### About the Presenters

**Stephen Badsey** is a Reader in Conflict Studies at the University of Wolverhampton, UK. He received an M.A. in History from the University of Cambridge (1981) and a Ph.D. in History from the University of Cambridge (1982). He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society (FRHistS) in 1995. He has authored or coauthored over 20 books and 60 other publications, including *The British Army in Battle and Its Image 1914–1918* (2009); *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry 1880–1918* (2008); *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years On* (2005) with Rob Havers and Mark Grove; *Britain, NATO, and the Lessons of the Balkan Conflicts 1991–1999* (2004) with Paul Latawski; *The Media and International Security* (2000); *Modern Military Operations and the Media* (1994); *The Crimean War: The War Correspondents* (1994) with Andrew Lambert; and *Gulf War Assessed* (1992) with John Pimlott.

**Bernard Barrett**, a Canadian citizen, is the spokesperson for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and responsible for ICRC relations with American and Canadian media. His previous ICRC assignments as media representative include Rwanda (1997–1998), South Sudan (1998), Timor (1999), Afghanistan (2001), Haiti (2004), Sri Lanka (2005), Jerusalem (2006–2007), and Nairobi (2007–2008). He was also seconded by the Canadian Red Cross to work with the American Red Cross in New York City in September 2001. Barrett has also worked as a private consultant, training media in Vietnam and Laos (1999), Kosovo (2000), Chad (2001), Haiti (2003), as well as Iraqi media in Amman and Beirut (2005–2006). Earlier in his career, he worked for 23 years as a reporter, producer, and executive producer for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. He holds a B.A. in Communications from Concordia University (Loyola) in Montreal and an M.A. in Occupational Sociology from Laval University in Quebec City.

**Robert Baumann** was officially appointed the Director of Graduate Degree Programs for CGSC in April 2004 after having served in that role in an acting capacity since June 2003. Baumann joined CGSC in 1984 and served for 19 years as a member of the Department of Military History. In 1995, Baumann was recognized as TRADOC and CGSC Civilian Instructor of the Year. He received a B.A. in Russian from Dartmouth College (1974), an M.A. in Russian and East European Studies from Yale University in 1976, and a Ph.D. in History from Yale University (1982). From 1979 to 1980, he was a graduate exchange student at Moscow University with grant support from the Fulbright-Hayes Program and the International Research and Exchanges Board. Baumann was subsequently a Research Associate at Leningrad State University during the summers of 1990 and 1991. In addition to over 20 scholarly articles and book chapters, Baumann is the author or coauthor of the following Combat Studies Institute Press publications: *Russian-Soviet Unconventional Wars in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Afghanistan*; *Invasion, Intervention, Intervention: A Concise History of the US Army in Operation Uphold Democracy*; *My Clan Against the World: A History of US and Coalition Forces in Somalia 1992–1994*; and *Armed*

*Peacekeepers in Bosnia*. A 1999 recipient of a research grant from the United States Institute of Peace in Washington, DC, Baumann is also writer-producer of a documentary film on the US and multinational peacekeeping mission in Bosnia. Beyond Russian military history, he has also written extensively on the history of the Bashkirs and taught briefly as a visiting professor of history at the Bashkir State University in Ufa, Russia, in the fall of 1992. With the start of military operations in Afghanistan in 2001, Baumann conducted an OPD for the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum just prior to its deployment. Subsequently, in March 2002, Major General Hagenbeck, CG of the 10th, asked Baumann to come to Bagram to brief the international staff on the Soviet experience in Afghanistan and to help collect the history of Operation ANACONDA. In addition to his continued teaching at CGSC, Baumann has frequently served as an adjunct faculty member at the University of Kansas and Kansas State University.

**Thomas A. Bruscino Jr.** is an assistant professor at the US Army School of Advanced Military Studies. He holds a Ph.D. in Military History from Ohio University and has served as a historian at the US Army Center of Military History in Washington, DC, and the US Army Combat Studies Institute at Fort Leavenworth. He is the author of *Out of Bounds: Transnational Sanctuary in Irregular Warfare* (Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006) and the forthcoming *A Nation Forged in War: How World War II Taught Americans to Get Along*.

**John Burns** is a British journalist and winner of two Pulitzer Prizes. He is the London Bureau Chief for the *New York Times*, where he covers international issues. Burns also frequently appears on PBS. Born in Nottingham, England, his family emigrated to Canada when he was young where he later studied at McGill University. In the early 1970s, Burns wrote for the Canadian (Toronto-based) newspaper *Globe and Mail*, covering both local stories and later serving as a China correspondent. Burns joined the *New York Times* in 1975, reporting, at first, for the paper's metropolitan section, and has written ever since for the newspaper in various capacities. He has been assigned to and headed several of the *Times* foreign bureaus. He along with fellow *Times* journalists John Darnton and Michael T. Kaufman won the 1978 George Polk Award for foreign reporting for coverage of Africa. Burns was also the *Times* Bureau Chief in Moscow from 1981 to 1984. In 1986, while Chief of the *Times* Beijing Bureau, Burns was incarcerated on suspicion of espionage by the Chinese Government. Charges were dropped after an investigation, but Burns was subsequently expelled from the country. Burns received his second Pulitzer in 1997, this time "for his courageous and insightful coverage of the harrowing regime imposed on Afghanistan by the Taliban." Burns was based in Baghdad during the leadup to the Iraq War in 2003 and has written extensively on the war and the subsequent occupation. In July 2007, Burns succeeded Alan Cowell as bureau chief in London. On 30 September 2007, Burns received the Elijah Parish Lovejoy Award as well as an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Colby College. Burns is a frequent contributor to PBS, including a number of appearances on the *Charlie Rose Show* and *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* via satellite from Afghanistan and Iraq.

**Frederick J. Chiaventone** is an award-winning novelist, screenwriter, and commentator. His novel of Red Cloud's *War Moon of Bitter Cold* won the coveted Western Heritage Award while his novel of the Little Bighorn, *A Road We Do Not Know*, won the Ambassador William F. Colby Award and was nominated for a Pulitzer. Chiaventone's articles appear regularly in the *New York Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Armchair General*, *American Heritage*, and *Cowboys & Indians*. A retired Army officer, Chiaventone taught psychological operations, counterterrorism operations, and counterinsurgency operations at the US Army Command and General Staff College and was contributing editor for the *Oxford Companion to American Military History* and for Greenwood Press' *Historical Dictionary of the United States Army*. An advisor to director Ang Lee for his film *Ride With the Devil* (Universal Pictures), he has also appeared on PBS's *The American Experience* and on The History Channel.

**Chuck de Caro** is founder and CEO of the AEROBUREAU Corporation. He is a former CNN special assignments correspondent who specialized in combat reporting from Nicaragua, Grenada, and Surinam; investigative reporting on illegal drug operations, foreign espionage, and criminal gangs; and defense reporting on US and foreign military activities. He has written front page stories for the *New York Daily News*, the *Providence Journal Bulletin*, the *Colorado Springs Gazette-Telegraph*, the *New Orleans Courier*, and *Army Times*. He has also written major stories for the *Atlantic Monthly*, the *Washington Post*, *Defense News*, and *Air Progress*. He has been a technical advisor to TV magazines such as *Hard Copy*, *Sightings*, and *Encounters*, as well as to dramas such as *Magnum*, *Quantum Leap*, and *J.A.G.* Mr. de Caro was educated at the Marion Military Institute, the US Air Force Academy, and the University of Rhode Island.

**Phillip Fraund** received his M.A. in History and Political Science from the University of Konstanz (2004) and his Ph.D. in History from the University of Konstanz (2009). Fraund's most recent publication was his presentation published in the conference proceedings of the 2006 Meeting of German Historians. Fraund has recently completed the 2009 West Point Summer Seminar in Military History.

**Paul Gardner** is an Assistant Professor in the Center for Army Tactics at the US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and is also an adjunct Assistant Professor in International Relations for Webster University. He retired from the US Army in 2007 as a lieutenant colonel and is currently a doctoral candidate in History at Kansas State University.

**William M. Hammond** has been a historian at the Center of Military History since 1972 and Chief of its General Histories Branch since 2001. He is the author of two volumes in the Center's History of the Vietnam War, *Public Affairs: The Military and the Media, 1962–1968* (Washington, DC, 1988), and *Public Affairs: The Military and the Media, 1968–1973* (Washington, DC, 1996). His condensed and updated version of these volumes, *Reporting Vietnam: Media and Military at War* (Lawrence, KS, 1998), won the Organization of American Historians' Richard W. Leopold Prize in 2000. Hammond is also a coauthor of



the Center's *Black Soldier, White Army: The 24th Infantry Regiment in Korea* (Washington, DC, 1996). He held a research fellowship from Harvard University's Joan Shorenstein Center for the Press and Public Policy in 1999. On the side, he serves as a Senior Lecturer in University Honors at the University of Maryland, College Park, where since 1990 he has taught courses on the Vietnam War and the military and the media in American history.

**Bill Kurtis** is a television journalist, producer, well-known former *CBS News* anchor, and current host of A&E crime and news documentary shows, including *Investigative Reports*, *American Justice*, and *Cold Case Files*. Previously, he anchored *CBS Morning News* and was a popular news anchor at WBBM-TV, the CBS owned-and-operated station in Chicago. Kurtis began his television career as a full-time anchor at WIBW-TV in Topeka, Kansas. On the evening of 8 June 1966, a severe thunderstorm 20 miles southwest of town generated a tornado that headed straight toward Topeka. Kurtis warned: "For God's sake, take cover." This warning became synonymous with the 1966 Topeka tornado that left 16 dead and injured hundreds more. Kurtis remained on the air for 24 straight hours to cover the destruction. His performance during this disaster proved to be his big break. He moved to Chicago in 1966 to work at WBBM-TV's Channel 2 News Chicago, first as a reporter and then as an anchorman. In 1982, he moved to New York to anchor the *CBS Morning News* but returned to Chicago 3 years later to produce documentaries for the television show *The New Explorers*. Kurtis also returned to WBBM-TV at that time and worked as an anchorman there until 1996. He started his own production company, Kurtis Productions, in 1990 and joined the A&E cable television network the following year. Kurtis has received numerous awards for his television work, including over 20 Emmys and the Illinois Broadcasters Association 1998 Hall of Fame Award and the Kansas Association of Broadcasters 2003 Hall of Fame Award. He was the narrator in the Will Ferrell comedy film *Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy* and also contributed a spoken-word introduction to the Dandy Warhols' 2005 album *Odditorium or Warlords of Mars*. Other narration work includes his introduction to various news clips on the CD portion of the multimedia book, *We Interrupt This Broadcast*. Most recently, Kurtis was featured in a series of commercials for AT&T Mobility, which pokes fun at his serious investigative journalist persona.

**Andrew Lubin** has appeared on FOX, ABC, and CNN and in 2004 supplied expert commentary and analysis on the war in Iraq for WPVI-6, Philadelphia ABC. His work appears in newspapers nationwide and on *Military.com*. According to his peers, Lubin is rapidly becoming one of the most knowledgeable journalists covering Iraq, Afghanistan, and Central Asia today. He is an internationally recognized writer and college professor and has 30+ years of hands-on experience in logistics, international relations, national security, and international trade. He has been able to successfully combine the academic theories and practices of international relations and international management with the harsh realities of walking night patrols with the Marines in Ramadi. The author of the critically acclaimed *Charlie Battery: A Marine Artillery Unit in Iraq*, his first book received rave reviews from such military and foreign policy experts as Max Boot (Council for Foreign Relations and author of *War Made New*), as well as General Al Gray who served as the 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps. He has done book signings in 11 states and 4 countries, and in 2005

Lubin was a featured author and speaker at the prestigious University of Virginia Festival of Books as well as the Southern Kentucky BookFest and the Baltimore Book Festival. Talking about Iraq, Afghanistan, and our Marines and Soldiers has brought Lubin to ABC, FOX, CNN, and CN 8, as well as radio appearances in New York, Ohio, and Massachusetts. He is a regular feature on *The Joey Reynolds Show* (770 AM, nationwide).

**Ron Martz** writes on defense issues for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. His books include *Solitary Survivor: The First American POW in Southeast Asia* (with Lawrence R. Bailey Jr.) and *White Tigers: My Secret War in North Korea* (with Ben Malcom), and *Heavy Metal: A Tank Company's Battle to Baghdad* (with Jason Conroy).

**Donald North** is an independent journalist and video producer who went to Iraq to help form the Iraqi Media Network. He covered the Vietnam war as a journalist and was involved in training journalists, particularly television and radio journalists, in Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Romania. He recently wrote an article for *Television Week* titled "Iraq Project Frustration: One Newsmen's Take on How Things Went Wrong."

**Ralph Peters** is a writer, strategist, commentator, and retired military officer. He is the author of 24 books and almost 800 columns, articles, essays, and reviews. Uniformed service, personal interests, and research have taken him to 70 countries and 6 continents. He served in the US Army for 22 years, first as an enlisted man, then as an officer, retiring shortly after his promotion to lieutenant colonel to write with greater freedom. He has published six books on strategy and military affairs, *Wars of Blood and Faith*, *Never Quit the Fight*, *Beyond Baghdad*, *Beyond Terror*, and *Fighting for the Future*, each of which collected his previously published essays and articles, and *New Glory: Expanding America's Global Supremacy*, a nonpartisan critique of our national strategy. *Looking for Trouble*, a memoir of his adventures and misadventures in remote trouble spots while in uniform, was published in 2008. Peters' commentaries, essays, and reviews have appeared in the *New York Post*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Newsday*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Newsweek*, *Harpers*, *Weekly Standard*, *National Review*, *Washington Monthly*, *Wired*, *Parameters*, *Armed Forces Journal*, *Joint Force Quarterly*, *Strategic Review*, *Armchair General*, *Military Review*, *Maclean's*, and other domestic and foreign publications. He has appeared on every major American television and cable news network, as well as numerous radio programs and in international media. In March 2009, he became the first strategic analyst for Fox News.

**Rhonda Quillin** joined the Center for Army Tactics in June 2008 as media editor. Prior to this position, she edited federal submission and journal publications for international companies. She also has written communications for the Food and Drug Administration and the National Health Institute and is now working on an article about strategic communication. She served for 3 years in the US Army, stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas. She earned a B.S. from the University of Texas–El Paso and an M.A. in Communications from Abilene Christian University.

**Jared Tracey** served 6 years in the US Army and is now a historian at Fort Bragg's Airborne and Special Operations Museum, Fayetteville. He holds undergraduate and graduate degrees from Virginia Commonwealth University and George Washington University and is nearing completion of a Ph.D. in History from Kansas State University with his doctoral dissertation, "World War I as the Basis of the Modern Public Relations Paradox, 1917–1941." He has published works on leaflet drops, military education, and the "Ethical Challenges in Stability Operations," the latter of which was awarded first place in the US Army's 2008 General William DePuy writing contest. He is currently reviewing a social history of the American Expeditionary Forces in a forthcoming issue of the *Southern History Journal*.











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