

# A Soldier's Guide to Dealing with the Media during Reintegration

Within established guidelines, it is our responsibility to talk to the media (and subsequently, the public). Leaders and soldiers who refuse to talk to the media give the impression that they're withholding information. When dealing with the news media, remember:

▶ “Stay in your lane” – Talk about your job, your responsibilities, and other matters within your expertise and control. Avoid speculating and answering “what if” questions—you can't predict the future.

▶ Do talk about what you plan to do now that you are back from deployment. Do talk about the support from family/friends you received during your deployment. Talk about the things you missed or what you look forward to doing now that you have returned safely.

▶ Talk about how the deployment affected your family/friends. A majority of the stories covered by the media will deal with the family. You've had a rough time—so has your family, give them plenty of credit.

▶ Always remember who the audience will be. **If you have complaints, consult your chain of command first.**

▶ All discussions with reporters are “on the record” – if you do not want to read it in the paper or hear it on TV, don't say it.

▶ Protect classified information and preserve operational security. **Exact numbers and locations of troops and equipment, ongoing or future operations, and rules of engagement are not releasable.**

▶ Be honest, open and forthright. If you do not know the answer to a question, simply

say, “I don't know.” Don't be evasive—If a question is classified, simply tell the reporter so. Think about your response before you answer—you do not have to answer immediately.

▶ This is your opportunity to communicate to a large audience. Make your answer clear and relevant, and use examples that are easily understood (avoid using jargon and acronyms).

▶ Be professional even if the reporter is aggressive or the questions seem silly. If the reporter interrupts you, pause, let the reporter finish, then continue your response.

▶ Don't let the reporter put words in your mouth. Don't repeat their “buzz words.” You don't have to accept his facts or figures as the truth.

▶ If classified or sensitive information is inadvertently released through words or photography, service members **are not** authorized to confiscate film, audio/video tapes or reporters notes. Report the incident by the quickest means possible to the unit commander or public affairs officer.

▶ Don't be afraid to ask a reporter to repeat a question.

▶ Most importantly of all—Relax. You're telling a great story about what the Army does—this is your chance to educate.

*If you feel uncomfortable or have any questions/concerns about dealing with the media, contact V Corps public affairs at DSN 370-5816/585 or 06221-57-5815, USAREUR public affairs at DSN 370-7364 or 06221-57-7364, or your local BSB/ASG public affairs offices at extensions 1400 and 1600 respectively.*