

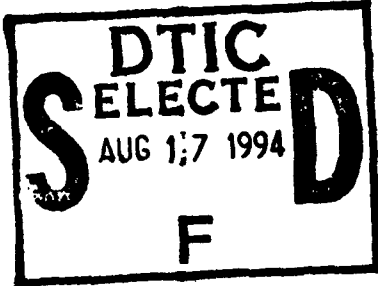
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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
Newport, R.I.



**FIGHTING A TELEVISED WAR:**

**OPERATIONAL COMMAND RELATIONS WITH THE MEDIA  
DURING CONFLICT**

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for public release and sale; its  
distribution is unlimited.

ROY HARKINS

COMMANDER, U.S. NAVY

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in  
partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed  
by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature:

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this paper is to explore the relations between the military operational commander and the media during conflict situations. The issues addressed are: to what extent can and should the warfighting CINCs and/or Joint Task Force commanders consider incorporation of the media into their war plans, and how should these plans be tailored in view of the numerous conflicting and confusing requirements encountered by field commanders during war. It is the thesis of this paper that military commanders must account for the full integration of the media into coverage of military operations and need to rethink operational plans and planning procedures to improve relations with all forms of the media in any future conflict scenario. The U.S. military is currently not properly organized, trained and equipped to deal with a thoroughly intrusive media during combat and several recommendations are provided to improve this condition. ;

## INTRODUCTION

The American public has grown accustomed in recent years to "instant access" into military operations worldwide. The media has proven to be more and more intrusive with regard to coverage of combat operations of the U.S. military, particularly in the area of live reporting from the front lines of the conflict. If one assumes that the public expects to see what the military is doing, how (and how well) they are doing, and to acquire information in order to decide if what the military is doing is right, then the operational commanders must be prepared for an onslaught of journalists and media representatives who (theoretically at least) will serve the public in this regard. This paper seeks to identify the variety of planning factors of concern to the CINCs in their relations with the media during conflict. Media issues affecting warfighting operations from the theater CINC down to unit level tactical commanders will also be explored.

To put military-media relations into perspective, it is important to start from a consideration of broad national security interests. U.S. armed forces serve the public to provide for the common defense, and when directed by the National Command Authority, to fight and win the nation's wars. Information concerning operations in which the military is involved must therefore be made available to the public. RADM Baker reminds us that "information is power. It shapes public opinion, and our potential foes and critics recognize this... Just as we classify information to protect national security, there are times when we should release information. It is in the broader national security interest to do so..."<sup>1</sup>

The military and the media often pursue conflicting purposes. As General

Eisenhower stated in 1944: "The first essential in military operations is that no information of value shall be given to the enemy. The first essential in newspaper work and broadcasting is wide-open publicity. It is your job and mine to try to reconcile those sometimes diverse considerations."<sup>2</sup> During combat, the tensions between the military and media will be increased, but are manageable. As Friedheim suggests: "The press must respect the need for military security because that is right. The military must respect the need of the people to know what their uniformed services are doing--and not doing--because that is right."<sup>3</sup> The key issue for military leaders is to know how to balance these two factors in a combat situation.

All U.S. commanders should expect that the media are going to be present during any conflict situation in which U.S. forces are involved. The reasons for this are obvious and are protected by the First Amendment of the Constitution. Numerous analysts have concluded that:

"... the presence of journalists in war zones is not a luxury, but a necessity. Imperfect as it is, our independent press serves as the vital link between the battlefield and the homefront, reporting on the military's successes, failures and sacrifices. By so doing, the media has helped to foster citizen involvement and support, which presidents, admirals, and generals have recognized as essential to military success."<sup>4</sup>

Thus all operational commanders, from the CINC to the unit level, must accept the fact that news media relations is not only a valid mission but also a vital mission.

How the CINCs can and should include procedures for dealing with the media in the deliberate planning process is the focus of this paper. The resulting paradox to be addressed

throughout this study is one of how to provide the public with the information they demand concerning the activities of U.S. forces in combat (**the right to know**) while accomplishing the mission (**the obligation to fight and win the nation's wars!**)

## **THE MEDIA POOL: BUILDING BLOCK OR STUMBLING BLOCK?**

Following the Grenada operation in 1983, the military revised its public affairs policy and created the DoD National Media Pool. In several military operations since its inception, the pool procedures have been roundly criticized both by the media and the military for a wide variety of perfectly sound reasons. Depending on who you ask, you will get a different opinion about the effectiveness and/or usefulness of the pool. The media hates it because it imposes restrictions on access to combat troops once the operation is underway. The military hates it because it incurs obligations for support of non-combatant journalists. As it turns out, the devil is in the details and both sides are right.

How the DoD Media Pooling procedures work. The theory behind the pool is sound: "When activated, the pool would deploy anywhere in the world on contingency missions with U.S. forces to provide coverage of U.S. military activities during initial stages of an action until other media arrive."<sup>5</sup> The pool is considered part of the operation, and operational security is maintained through strict rules and procedures for both the military and the press. The on-scene commander is responsible for providing special clothing or equipment as required, transportation, messing, berthing, etc. The media pool numbers are intentionally limited to ensure the ability to provide complete support as required. Detailed requirements have been provided by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) to all operational commanders and are summarized in Appendix A.

Limitations of the pool. The DOD National Media Pool (NMP) was created for the purpose of enabling coverage of short notice, remote area, limited access operations which



would otherwise exclude the media from coverage. These procedures will work well during a situation where an operation is to be executed under conditions of operational security, when the U.S. media is not already present in the theater of operations. Media pool operations in general, however, are not the be-all and end-all of military-media relations. The pool will only accomplish so much. Commanders and planners must understand what the pool can and cannot do in order to successfully deal with the myriad of other media requirements in the area of operations. Specifically, as Trainor points out:

"The pool concept suffers three fatal flaws. The first is that the military is always going to want to put on its best face in hopes of influencing the reporters it is hosting. When the military is faced with the choice of taking a reporter to the scene of a confused and uncertain firefight or to the location of a success story-well, take a wild guess which the military will choose, regardless of its relative newsworthiness. Second, because the military brings pool reporters to the scene of action, it also feels responsible for transporting them around, and this may not be logistically convenient at times. Third, the military is protective and feels responsible for the safety of any civilians they are sponsoring."<sup>6</sup>

The pool is designed only for short term usage, or for providing a means of access to combat units in remote areas where open reporting is not possible. Once the operation is underway (ie following the public announcement at home), the pool will become less useful in the face of what will surely be significantly larger numbers of media reps along with increased demands by the public for information. Numerous pool limitations have been uncovered during recent operations including several valid media criticisms from Operation DESERT STORM (ODS). In ODS, hundreds of journalists flooded into the CENTCOM theater, reaching a peak of over 1600 by 16 Jan 91.<sup>7</sup> CINCCENT chose to manage these

huge numbers by assigning media reps in small groups to individual units. Those not assigned to pools were left out of the action to file their stories based on shared information and pooled reports. From the military point of view, this made great sense in order to manage the deluge of journalists. The media were not satisfied with this arrangement and have articulated numerous concerns:

1. Issues of access: "First, because subordinate commanders may refuse permission for a media pool to visit a particular unit, it is feared that the pool arrangement will be manipulated to ensure that only positive stories are reported while negative news is hidden in silence behind barriers of access."<sup>8</sup>

"You set up a system to control the whole crisis, not just the war. You wanted to keep the American people in the dark about the buildup. To this day we don't know what went on in the air war with Iraq."<sup>9</sup>

"The pool was set up to obstruct coverage. Reporters were not allowed to be in key situations at crucial moments. The Pentagon wanted us to go where they wanted us to go."<sup>10</sup>

2. Issues of delays: "During the 100-hour ground war, pool reports from battle scenes were delayed, often for hours and sometimes days."<sup>11</sup>

3. Issues of censorship: Media complaints centered around the security review of outgoing reports. This issue is as old as the free press itself and pits the public's *right to know* versus the military's *need for operational security (OPSEC)*. A deep exploration of this issue is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that this remains a hotly contested issue between the media and the military commander which must be a planning factor in any conflict situation.

One of the key lessons learned from ODS is that the use of the pool to "control" the media by limiting access to combat units is no longer a valid planning assumption for future conflict scenarios. This is largely a reality owing to two key factors: first, DOD guidance has expressly stated that "open and independent reporting will be the principle means of

coverage of U.S. military operations,"<sup>12</sup> and second, that the media will in all likelihood precede the military into the theater of operations thus essentially nullifying the military's ability to control media access to the battlefield: they will already be there!

Media pooling is unquestionably a valid and highly useful concept for remote site operations, short notice contingencies, or where OPSEC concerns prevail. The NMP is designed to be the primary means of ensuring coverage of this type of operation. For other operations, when general pooling of media representatives is selected as an option, the experience of ODS pool managers provides an excellent model from which to develop and tailor media management procedures and support when a pool is activated. The pool carries with it numerous logistics, administrative and communications support requirements which the operational commander must meet. But the pool is not to be used as a means to control the press. New DOD emphasis and specific policy guidance directs sweeping changes which operational commanders must integrate into their plans.

## POST DESERT STORM POLICY SHIFT

In response to media concerns following the Gulf War, the Department of Defense has adopted a new policy for media coverage of U.S. military operations. Department of Defense Directive 5122.5 (enclosure 3), specifies *Principles For News Media Coverage of DoD Operations* and is included in Appendix B. The new principles are of significant concern to operational commanders in that they provide a new set of planning assumptions to be used in all future military-media relations during combat operations. It is extremely important to note that the overarching policy directive is for **open and independent reporting**. Any commander who thinks that the ODS media pool solutions are still valid is on the wrong track and must rethink his plans at once.

A detailed analysis of the reasons for the policy shift is beyond the scope of this paper, however it is important for the warfighting CINCs to understand and think through the implications of the new rules. The media already have!

Open and independent reporting changes the planning assumptions for the conduct of military-media relations in future conflict scenarios. So while OPSEC has not been abandoned in every sense, the planners are safe in assuming they still have a legitimate right and obligation to safeguard information which would affect the safety of U.S. forces and military operations. What must change is the issue of "control" over the media. The contention of this paper is that in future conflict scenarios, the idea of "control" must be deleted from the military-media relations lexicon and replaced with a combination of 'cooperation and understanding.'

- What are the risks of open reporting? Clearly the overriding concerns for warfighters fall almost entirely under the area of OPSEC. Information reported by the press has the possibility of compromising ongoing and/or planned operations in theater thereby risking mission success and troop safety. In light of the blazing speed of broadcast journalism, the "race with CNN" poses a new challenge for the U.S. military. However, this is not a new concern. Historically, the free press has always capitalized on new technology to expand their ability to reach their constituents. From the Crimean and Civil Wars of the mid-19th century, military leaders have complained of the "damage" done by then-high-speed reporting over telegraph lines from the battlefield. Today's instant access satellite uplink capabilities are essentially no greater a challenge but are certainly a concern for the field commanders during war.

History is filled with lessons in this regard. During the Falkland Island operations, the U.K. commanders endured numerous media relations problems. As Woodward describes it:

"[T]he British press was more interested in the truth than in the consequences for our own people... Colonel H. Jones was killed leading his men towards Goose Green shortly after telling reporters that he wished to [sue the BBC], after the BBC broadcast the fact that an attack on Goose Green was imminent... There are still some who believe that BBC report was **directly responsible** for the Argentinean 'ambush' in which Col. Jones and many others died." (my emphasis)<sup>13</sup>

The experience of DESERT STORM uncovered a new issue which today's military commanders must deal with: the speed of high technology satellite broadcasts from the front. During ODS, U.S. TV broadcasts provided detailed information of Iraqi SCUD

impacts, often explaining exact miss distances (range and bearing) from U.S. or coalition target sites. Thus, the question for military commanders becomes: how to ensure OPSEC in an open and independent reporting environment? Does the CINC allow the journalist to see everything and trust that the reporter will decide what can and cannot be released? Or should the commander impose a detailed security review on all stories (including 'live' broadcasts) before they are released? During ODS, these questions were answered with a combination of restricted access and security review. The media complained extensively about those procedures and DOD policy has been changed. Clearly today's planners must derive a new model and a new set of rules to deal with this complex issue.

What are the potential benefits of open reporting? The U.S. military has a great deal to gain from open reporting of combat operations. In the vast majority of cases, the U.S. armed services are proficient and professional organizations with a good story to share with the American public. CJCS and all the service chiefs recognize this and have put out policy guidance designed to ensure harmonious relations between the military and the press. Objective and positive coverage of combat operations shapes public opinion, thus serving a vital role in our democratic society with additional benefits of improved troop morale and public support. As Gen Mundy points out:

"While we strive to accentuate the positive information to the public, we must never sacrifice the truth simply because it may prove embarrassing or negative... Bad news gets worse with time. If an attempt is made to mask the truth, the masking itself becomes a story, and the original bad news eventually comes out anyway--but worse!"<sup>14</sup>

Thus the commander must ensure that media relations are a part of his game plan in

conflict. He cannot wish away the media. He must account for the presence of increasingly intrusive journalists in his unit. He still needs to consider the myriad of OPSEC aspects relevant to his mission, and how to ensure that sensitive information is correctly handled by media representatives who are exposed to it.

From a planning perspective, there are great risks in using the wrong framework when planning media relations. Efforts to control the media will result in accusations of restricting access. Imposing a security review, even when it is in the clear and unambiguous interests of the military forces from an OPSEC view, will result in media accusations of censorship. Attempts to mislead the press, even with the noble goal of manipulating information so as to achieve deception, will result in a loss of credibility with the media, and, in turn, the public. Once lost, credibility will be difficult if not impossible to restore with a naturally skeptical media. If the commander loses favorable media relations, he descends a slippery slope towards increasingly negative reporting and a corresponding loss of public support for a mission which may otherwise be just and right.

Getting the media relations plan wrong may also result in direct intervention from higher authority. The CINC must understand that there is a strategic level of media relations, established by the NCA in Washington. A series of press relations miscues from any future conflict location will certainly result in a phone call from JCS which could be highly disruptive to the on scene commander. At the same time, alienation of the press by restricting access will result in more "pool busters" who, by operating outside of the ground rules, could compromise mission security, result in blue-on-press engagements, or produce

another Bob Simon incident.<sup>15</sup> Either alternative could result in negative public opinion backlashes at both the strategic and operational levels.

Thus, like it or not, the ability of the commander to communicate the story of the war hinges on harmonious relations with the intrusive and skeptical media. The theater CINC or JTF commander and his subordinate commanders down to the unit level must be able to get the good deeds of the troops published. A failure to do so will have a series of potentially negative affects: low troop morale, poor information flow to the families back home, and erosion of public opinion. None of these affects should be accepted by the field commander in pursuit of his mission objective.



## **DELIBERATE PLANNING AND MEDIA RELATIONS**

The Joint Operational Planning and Execution System (JOPES) provides the framework for developing war plans. Given the importance of media relations in combat operations, it is critical that consideration be given in the deliberate planning process to handle the media. The consequences of leaving the media plans exclusively to the PAO, and/or keeping the PAO outside of the loop in the planning process, could be severe.

Developing a media relations strategy. Regardless of the contingency, a theater commander must have a concept of how he wants to manage media relations. During ODS, Gen Schwarzkopf promulgated his strategy early on in the build-up phase:

"he determined from the start that Operation Desert Shield would not be another Grenada or Panama. He professed to feel strongly that the American people deserved to know the truth... 'Every time there is something new for the press to look at, I want them to see it, I want them to be out there. I want to create opportunities for them so they are kept informed.'"<sup>16</sup>

Planners for any future contingency operation would be well served by ensuring a similar concept is embedded in the OPLAN.

Subordinate commanders must also be supportive of the overall media relations plan. A superb example can be found in the guidance provided by Gen Boomer in Aug 90 to his USMC commanders in ODS:

"The long term success of DESERT SHIELD depends in great measure on support of the American people. The news media are the tools through which we can tell Americans about the dedication, motivation, and sacrifices of their Marines. Commanders should include public affairs requirements in their operational planning to ensure that the accomplishments of our Marines are reported to the public."<sup>17</sup>

With this message, despite the fact that ODS was less than three weeks old, General Boomer provided the foundation for the USMC media relations plan. In future combat operations, the methods for media relations are probably going to be vastly more open and independent than the pool procedures used in ODS, however, the principles for getting the tactical commanders thinking about the media must be pushed by the next generation of Schwarzkopfs and Boomers.

Lessons Learned: GRENADA. During URGENT FURY, the operational commander elected to completely exclude the media from reporting on the operation as it unfolded. Given the lack of current media coverage principles at that time, his decision was within his authority. During this operation, television was cited as creating a special situation regarding national security. As David Gergen said:

"I don't think we as a society.. have really faced up to what it means to carry out limited warfare on television. When you have cameras involved, do you begin to cut off options for limited conflict which in the past our governments... have often felt are a preferred means of preventing wider conflict?"<sup>18</sup>

Nonetheless, the military endured a great deal of criticism from the press (although the public's opinion was overwhelmingly in favor of what the Reagan Administration did), and the military's reputation was tarnished by that decision--despite the overall success of the operation! Again, Gen Eisenhower provides profound advice:

"[I]n modern war [it is a necessity] for a commander to concern himself always with the appearance of things in the public eye as well as with actual accomplishment. It is idle to say that the public may be ignored in the certainty that temporary misunderstandings will be forgiven in later victory." (my emphasis)<sup>19</sup>

**Lessons Learned: PANAMA.** In operation JUST CAUSE, numerous problems were encountered at the operational command level with regard to media relations. The Joint Universal Lessons Learned (JULLS) data base provides many specific recommendations for solving specific problems noted during the operation.<sup>20</sup> A summary is as follows:

- The Joint Information Bureau (JIB) becomes a messing and berthing facility with logistics problems (food and water).
- Transportation was not dedicated--one of Trainor's fatal flaws identified above.
- Media pool activation was too late, thus pool journalists were kept out of the action.
- Poor Special Operations Forces (SOF) coverage due to no SOF rep in the JIB.
- Hardware support for the JIB should be prepositioned and palletized or a mobile van set up for satellite uplink to be used by DOD Media Pool when activated for given theater.
- Daily operations briefs must be presented by a member of the Operations staff (as opposed to the PAO).
- Each CINC should establish a JIB Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). In theater, the facility should be predesigned, staged, and pre-wired for phones!

**Lessons Learned: OPERATION DESERT STORM.** The media relations issues from ODS have been the subject of countless articles, books etc. The gulf war was perhaps the most intensely covered conflict in history. The military was highly successful in its efforts to manage the press both on and off the battlefield. Secretary of State James Baker remarked: "After Desert Storm who could not be moved by the sight of that poor demoralized rabble--outwitted, outflanked, outmaneuvered by the U.S. military. But, I

think, given time, the press will bounce back!"<sup>21</sup> The sentiments of the media have been expressed in numerous articles and were the driving force behind the DOD decision to adopt a policy of "open reporting". From an operational command level, the lessons from ODS are many and varied. The successes of Schwarzkopf and Boomer can be used as a model of how to do it right at the higher levels of strategy. The Army provided several lessons of how to do it wrong:

"For the correspondents in pools, U.S. commanders all too often proved a hinderance more than a help. As John Balzar of the *Los Angeles Times* concluded after a frustrating stay with the 101st Airborne Division, 'We assumed that someone in the chain of command decided we were a nuisance.' His pool, Balzer wrote, was saddled with an Army PAO... who spent much of his time joyriding in a CH-47 helicopter, and a brigade commander... who answered a reporter's request for an after battle assessment with the comment: 'Do you have a security clearance?' In the end, the pool-which included a Pulitzer Prize winning magazine photographer and two Vietnam veterans-voted in disgust to disband."<sup>22</sup>

Another summary was provided by Bill Monroe: "Privates and sergeants were friendly to reporters, but Army commanders in particular were often hostile and as a result, a lopsided share of morale-building coverage went to the Marines."<sup>23</sup>

JCS Public Affairs Planning Guidance. The point of all this is that the military should know what it is up against with regard to news media relations during combat. The key at the operational level of war is for the commander to consider the media relations planning factors *before* the conflict starts and incorporate these factors into his OPLAN. The guidance provided in Joint Pub 5-03.2 ANNEX F: PLANNING GUIDANCE-- PUBLIC AFFAIRS is deficient in several areas and should be rethought to reflect the

current DOD policy of open and independent reporting. For example, the guidance directs the CINC to take responsibility for "Ensuring that PA planning and operational planning are conducted concurrently during both deliberate and crisis planning environments."<sup>24</sup>

However, the planning factors provided in follow on paragraphs are distinctly oriented towards general media pool management (using ODS models) and little or no guidance is provided for the open and independent reporting situation. Furthermore, the Annex F guidance specifies:

**"The CINCs will ensure that communications and transportation assets are identified in the planning stage and are available to support PA information programs during crisis... and general war. This support should include: Access as needed to intertheater and intratheater transportation for media representatives and local ground and air transportation to support a JIB, if established."**<sup>25</sup>

This guidance, while important to consider in a theater where the media cannot support themselves independently, is inconsistent with an overarching philosophy of open and independent reporting policy. It takes on too much responsibility for media support in a combat environment, which DESERT STORM proved we cannot do!

Thus the deliberate planning process must include a host of considerations for military-media relations during war. The CINC has detailed guidance for the concurrent planning of operations and public affairs. The staff planners and the PAO must work together in deriving a well thought out PA plan which is consistent with the mission, and which satisfies the policy guidance provided by higher authority. As General Mead points out:

**"The possibility of potential media coverage should be consciously considered in both the 'estimate of the situation' and the evaluation of alternative courses of action... The commander and PAO should consider the impact of possible media coverage on the unit's ability to attain surprise, maintain security, or conduct deception operations."<sup>26</sup>**

**Training, exercises and rehearsals should then be conducted to test the validity and readiness of the CINC's forces to execute the plan and lessons learned should be factored back into the process as appropriate.**

## **CINC PLANNING FACTORS--WHY THIS MATTERS**

Compelling reasons exist for the military commander to have harmonious relations with the media during war. Harry Summers states:

"Clausewitz reminds us that modern warfare rests on what he called the 'remarkable trinity' of the people, their government and their army. He goes on to emphasize that, while government provides the direction and the army provides the means, it is the passions of the people that are the very engine of war."<sup>27</sup>

At the national level, the civilian leadership will develop and execute a national public relations strategy in order to harmonize the three elements of Clausewitz' trinity. At the operational level, public opinion is no less a valid concern for the CINC since it affects the morale of the troops and since reports from the battlefield and relations with the media can be dominant forces in shaping that public opinion. Clearly, the CINC must get this right if he is to succeed.

Throughout American history, the military has experienced tensions with media coverage of combat operations. In circumstances ranging from severe criticism (Vietnam) to petty sniveling (Gulf War), media relations has never been an easy mission for the military. The fact that tensions are inevitable between military and media does not dampen the importance of the relationship between these two organizations. At the operational level, the success in dealing with the media will have a significant impact on the degree to which public opinion will be supportive of the conflict. Thus, the risks of failing in media relations are high:

"There is a constant, often urgent need to coordinate the various aspects of the

- information instrument of national security strategy: Public Affairs, Psychological Operations, and public diplomacy. The informational effort is crucial to the success of any contemporary military operation because it involves the support of the American People, allies and friendly nations and the morale of the opposing side."<sup>28</sup>

The problem for the CINC is the fact that the military is not in charge of any of these areas! It is left to the commander in the field to work skillfully, tactfully and persistently with the media to achieve both his mission objectives, and the national policy goals.

Real time reporting has many implications for the operational commander. He must recognize and account for the command and control aspects of live satellite television coverage of the battle he is fighting. In this sense, the CINC has new problems to worry about in his media relations plan. If it is not done right the enemy could use TV coverage to get inside the U.S. commander's decision cycle! James Webb points out that the presence of the media:

"...cannot help but affect policy decisions by commanders. Journalists like to boast that they make government officials accountable, and in most cases this is a beneficial check against abuse of power. But a military commander in a fluid operational environment is in a delicate position which often demands that he conceal his intentions and even his alternatives from a potential enemy. When his mission is complete, he will be held fully accountable, in graphic terms, for the rest of his life. It does little good, and potentially can do great harm, to query and elaborate on every minor decision."<sup>29</sup>

It will be up to the CINC and his subordinate commanders to balance the conflicting and confusing requirements of accommodating an intrusive and skeptical media with the need to manage information flows to the press.

Viewed in this way, the media relations mission becomes increasingly important in



today's environment. The strategic and operational implications of broadcast reports from the front can affect the CINC's decisions about operational fires and protection. His troop morale, good order and discipline, public support and opinion are all dependent in a variety of ways on the success of the media relations plan. During a situation where open reporting is permitted, the implications of media reports can be magnified significantly. In Grenada, VADM Metcalf assigned senior staff officers to push information up the chain of command, transmitting half-hourly SITREPS. In future conflicts, it is not unreasonable to forecast even greater demands by the media (already present in the theater of operations) for information, as well as less ability to protect information to which media representatives are exposed. Who will handle this task? Clearly this is not a situation that the PAO staff will be able to handle singlehandedly.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

There is no clear answer to the question of how to handle the media during a conflict. Many complicated issues are involved at all levels of war: strategic, operational, and tactical. Perhaps the best recommendation would be to develop a media relations strategy, as Ricks suggests, which is "proactively reactive: reactive to the extent they must be responsive to news media interest; proactive in that knowledgeable assessments, comprehensive planning and advanced preparation will inevitably determine how effectively they will be able to respond."<sup>30</sup>

There are several alternatives currently in practice to varying degrees today. Media pools, the joint information bureau, operational briefings, and managed access under military accreditation procedures all provide different means to enable and promote media coverage. Clearly the PAO cannot accomplish the task of media relations alone. He is neither equipped nor staffed to resolve all of the multitude of media issues which are inevitably encountered during conflict. The PAO should be used as the staff expert on military-media relations and the CINC must integrate the PAO among many other assets to effectively and efficiently carry out the media relations mission.

In an era of open and independent reporting, the media relations mission escalates in complexity and scope. The planning factors identified by Joint Pub 5-03.2 ANNEX F are good starting points, but do not address the full range of concerns in dealing with an intrusive media which has been promised a policy of open reporting. The following specific recommendations are provided:

1. Use the pool only in situations for which it is designed-short notice, remote area, or where OPSEC concerns override open reporting.

2. Adjust command and control plans to include closer proximity between operations center and media center functions.

3. Eliminate the DESERT STORM model of media control: substitute cooperation.

4. Train subordinates down to the unit level on the full spectrum of combat operations with media representatives present.

5. Exercise forces in operations with the media present. Commanders must, as Ricks suggests, address two questions: "How many reporters can I include in my unit without degrading its operational efficiency? and How do I accommodate those journalists who merely appear in a unit area with a desire to report on its activities?"<sup>31</sup>

6. Ensure the deliberate planning process fully integrates the commander's media relations plan into the OPLAN. This should be reflected in the articulation of media relations strategy in the Commander's estimate of the situation, the Concept of Operations, the Strategic Concept and the OPLAN.

7. Incorporate media relations training into the continuing training programs at the unit level (service-wide).

8. Revise Joint Pub 5-03.2 ANNEX F to reflect DOD policy concerning coverage of military operations using open and independent reporting. Identify new PA planning factors to be incorporated into this guidance such as: media relations without PAO liaison, publishing U.S. military ground rules and revising them as the situation changes, initiation of combat operations with the media already present in theater, and open reporting versus pool support requirements and ground rules.

9. Each CINC must have a prepositioned JIB for crisis response in theater. This should be tested as part of the theater exercise program. The training of PA and operations staff personnel in JIB operations should be included as part of the CINC staff's continuing training program. A JIB SOP should be prepared and periodically reviewed.

10. Combat Documentation (ComDoc) imagery collection and distribution should be integrated between the operations staff and the PA staff in an effort to provide commercial quality imagery for release to the media.<sup>32</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

The military is not where it should be with regard to preparing for military-media relations. There is a built-in animosity between the two organizations which is on display regularly. The most common attitudes are: 'We don't like the media, we don't understand the media, they get in the way, are intrusive and can often make us look bad unjustly.' There are numerous unanswered questions which should be explored in regard to how to operate in an era of open and independent coverage of combat operations. As Ricks suggests, while there is no way to remove the tension between the military and the media "an efficient media relations program is aware of any differences between what the command knows to be true and what the media is reporting."<sup>33</sup> The best that can be expected is for the commanders and the PA staffs to narrow the gap as much as possible within the context of mission accomplishment.

The military needs to shed its anti-media baggage. Any military leader who gives the impression that he has more important things to do in getting his troops ready to fight and then fighting, than worrying about the media must be retrained. Of course the mission is paramount, and there will be times when the press will not be easily accommodated, and it is ludicrous to suggest that commanders defer to the latest TV poll to decide upon a course of action. However, the adversarial relationship between the military and the press is almost entirely counterproductive to the military's mission, even in a combat situation. The commander may not agree with what the press thinks, and may not even agree with what the press says (particularly in the age of increasing 'advocacy journalism'), but he must

understand that what the press reports affects what the public thinks about its military.

Creating and nurturing an environment of mutual trust and understanding is possible even with the naturally skeptical media: if it is done right. And getting it right has to be on the mind of every operational commander, from the CINC down to the unit/tactical level of combat.

The role of the media is indispensable in shaping public opinion about U.S. military operations. The free press plays a critical role in linking the elements of Clausewitz' trinity: government, army and people. As Hiebert suggests: "To win a war today, government not only has to win on the battlefield, it must also win the minds of its publics."<sup>34</sup> The military commander must balance the presence of the media with his own functions of mission accomplishment. Often these functions will be in conflict. The CINC who can find the right balance between media access and military security will be successful. Today's U.S. military forces cannot afford to have it any other way.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **DOD NATIONAL MEDIA POOL PLANNING REQUIREMENTS**

Excerpts from CJCS WASHINGTON DC 182305ZMAY90:

"5. Commanders are reminded that military actions in Grenada and Panama demonstrated that otherwise successful operations are not total successes unless the media aspects are properly handled. Both operations, although successful, produced some unfavorable and often incorrect news stories, which detracted from the operation.

8. The next deployment of the National Media Pool may occur at any time to either an exercise or real world contingency operation. As a minimum the pool will require the following theater support:

A. Daily, comprehensive, unclassified operational briefings for pool personnel.

B. Access to areas of ongoing combat/exercise operations. The media realize and accept there is an element of risk involved in accompanying military forces into combat. Their personal safety is not a reason for excluding them from an area of ongoing operations. Essentially, the goal should be to treat reporters as members of the units, allowing them to move with the units, without recklessly exposing them to hostile fire. Whenever possible, their coverage should be from positions of reasonable safety.

C. Reasonable access to command and staff personnel. All information given out by these personnel will be unclassified and on the record.

D. An officer from the supported command in the grade of O-5 or O-6 to coordinate media pool requirements. This officer would normally be the command PAO, and should be intimately familiar with media pool operations, the ongoing operation, and participating commands. This officer should have immediate and unrestricted access to the commander to resolve media pool problems as they arise.

E. Itinerary planning that will enable media pool members to disperse throughout the combat area in order to provide balanced coverage of operations, and to regroup periodically to share information and to file stories. Commands should plan from the onset of operations to divide the pool into small elements of from 1-3 persons, to disperse those elements throughout the area of operation to facilitate coverage of the entire

operation, to periodically return them to a central location to pool their material, and then to return them to the operational area so that they may continue to cover the operational activities. This cycle should be repeated throughout the deployment, at a minimum of once a day.

F. Cooperation from all forces participating in the operation/exercise on a not-to-interfere basis. News media representatives have a legitimate role to fulfill in a combat area. Since the earliest days of our nation, they have helped the military services and the Department of Defense keep the American public informed of the activities of the U.S. armed forces.

9. Supported commanders will be responsible for planning logistical support for pool and escort personnel out of existing exercise or contingency funds. The National Media Pool may consist of up to 16 media personnel and 3 escort officers (2 DoD, 1 JCS). Required support may include, but may not be limited to:

A. Existing contingency/exercise airlift from CONUS to area of operations or exercise and return.

B. Theater ground, sea, or air transportation to allow for pool coverage of operations.

C. Messing and billeting on a reimbursable basis.

D. Issuance of any gear considered appropriate to the situation (eg. helmets, canteens, flak vests, etc.).

E. Access to communications facilities to file stories on an expedited basis.

F. Medical support as required."

## **APPENDIX B**

From Enclosure (3) of DODD 5122.5 dtd 19 May 1992:

### **STATEMENT OF DOD PRINCIPLES FOR NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE OF DOD OPERATIONS**

1. Open and independent reporting will be the principle means of coverage of U.S. military operations.
2. Pools are not to serve as the standard means of covering U.S. operations. but pools may sometimes provide the only feasible means of early access to a military operation. Pools should be as large as possible and disbanded at the earliest opportunity --within 24 to 36 hours when possible. The arrival of early-access pools will not cancel the principle of independent coverage for journalists already in the area.
3. Even under conditions of open coverage, pools may be appropriate for specific events, such as those at extremely remote locations or where space is limited.
4. Journalists in a combat zone will be credentialed by the U.S. military and will be required to abide by a clear set of military security ground rules that protect U.S. forces and their operations. Violation of the ground rules can result in suspension of credentials and expulsion from the combat zone of the journalist involved. News organizations will make their best efforts to assign experienced journalists to combat operations and to make them familiar with U.S. military operations.
5. Journalists will be provided access to major military units. Special operations restrictions may limit access in some cases.
6. Military public affairs officers should act as liaisons but should not interfere with the reporting process.
7. Under conditions of open coverage, field commanders should be instructed to permit journalists to ride on military vehicles and aircraft whenever feasible. The military will be responsible for the transportation of pools.
8. Consistent with its capabilities, the military will supply PAOs with facilities to enable timely, secure, compatible transmission of pool material and will make these facilities available whenever possible for filing independent coverage. In cases when government facilities are unavailable, journalists will, as always, file by any other means available. The



**military will not ban communications systems operated by news organizations, but electromagnetic operational security in battlefield situations may require limited restrictions on the use of such systems.**

**9. These principles will apply as well to the operations of the standing DoD National Media Pool System."**

## NOTES

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25. *ibid.*

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