Media on the Battlefield

"A Nonlethal Fire"

CAPTAIN DAVID CONNOLLY

Editor's Note: *Public Affairs and the media played a key role in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). This operation proved that now more than ever, the U.S. military must be prepared to engage the media and provide timely, factual information. This article shares some experiences with the media during Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and the early stages of OIF. The intent is to explain, from a company/field grade point of view, how media played a part in the operations and how our tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) related to current doctrine. It will also share thoughts on how field grade officers can prepare themselves to conduct media interviews in today's environment. At this time, it is uncertain how doctrine will change as a result of our lessons learned.*

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Former Chief of Staff of the Army, General Eric Shinseki, once said, "If we do not speak for the Army, others will." This is a very true statement. The media should be considered as a component of nonlethal fires/non-kinetic targeting, another tool at our disposal to help accomplish the mission. The media will write their stories, with or without our input. It only makes sense to engage the media to ensure the whole story is told. The media is a venue in which we can pass along our command messages, which contain truthful and factual information. The bottom line is that we should always keep in mind what we are there to do. Always remember the Soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines that are on the ground sacrificing every day. If we can help their morale and ultimately make their job easier by using the media, we should. It is safe to say that 99 times out of 100, we — the members of the U.S. military — are acting with the right intentions. Meaning, we have nothing to hide. We have been given our orders and are attempting to carry them out within laws of land warfare. But bad things happen in war. Not everything goes our way. During these times it is best to confront the media and articulate to the world our side of the story.

When integrated and synchronized with Information Operations (IO) efforts, Public Affairs and in particular, the media, can be a force multiplier. In CFLCC prior to crossing the LD, the Public Affairs (PA) staff leveraged the IO themes and messages to the fullest extent possible. It is important to understand the difference between IO and PA, however. Basically IO and PA belong to the same career field, Information Operations. One difference is that IO can use deception and specifically target the enemy. Public Affairs must be aware what themes and messages that IO is pushing during each phase of the operation. The intent is to leverage IO. During the initial phases of OIF, CFLCC always ensured that Public Affairs planners were involved in the Information Operations Working Groups (IOWG). This ensured they were involved in the effects targeting board process. In that case, they could bring that information to the media director. The media director would then have a clear picture of what the commander's intent was and what the staff was attempting to accomplish. Armed with this knowledge the media director could prioritize which of the thousands of media queries to work on while maintaining a level of fairness and equity to all reporters. As an example, prior to crossing the line of departure (LD), IO was pushing themes to the enemy concerning capitulation. Knowing this, the media director could push reporters out to units responsible for dealing with large numbers of enemy prisoners of war (EPWs). These types of stories would send a message to the enemy and the world. The enemy would see how they would be fed, clothed, and provided shelter. Capitulation might appear to be a good option given their current status. The world would see that we were trained and ready.

We should cooperate with the media within the limits of mission, safety, and operations security (OPSEC). There is always a tendency to over-classify information to avoid speaking to the media. There are essentially two things you always want to protect: timing and intentions. You must always ask yourself if the information that you are providing to the media will give an adversary something that they can use against us.

If OPSEC or safety concerns make it impossible to support a media request, then simply tell them so. Today's graphics may be classified, but once you have crossed that phase line or the information can no longer be used against you, they probably are no longer a secret. You still have to be responsible with information. The reporter must understand when he/she can write or speak about what they see. We were very successful during the decisive combat phase of OIF allowing reporters access to command centers. The practice of allowing reporters in command centers will be elaborated upon later when embedded

Staff Sergeant Jeffrey A. Wolfe

Minutes after gunfire interrupted a demonstration in downtown Kirkuk, Iraq, Major Douglas Vincent of the 173rd Airborne Brigade is interviewed by a local reporter.

reporters are discussed in detail. This is always a sensitive area.

"Go ugly early" is a term sometimes used in Public Affairs. Bad things happen in war. Again, not everything goes our way. We had nearly 700 embedded reporters with units prior to crossing the LD. They saw and heard everything. There were many times when something bad happened, and Soldiers were unsure how to respond when a reporter was on the scene. One case occurred early in the war near the Umm Qasr area. Some civilians had been injured by Coalition fire. A CNN embedded reporter captured the scene as British and U.S. troops attended to the injured. Initially Soldiers shouted at the reporter to get back and not be "such a ghoul." Eventually cooler heads prevailed, and they allowed the reporter to continue to film as long as he remained out of the way. The images of the Soldier's faces told the story. They were concerned that they had injured innocent civilians on the battlefield. The film showed that the primary concern at that point was to provide medical attention — the same care we would give to a Coalition Soldier. The embedded reporter had a right to be there to do his job, which was to report our activity. We could have gained even more leverage by engaging the reporter (by way of short stand-up interview) with a leader on the scene who could have released known information and delivered a command message. The message could have included the sympathy for the injured and how we make every attempt to avoid these things from happening followed by basic, releasable facts that were known. Coupled with the images, the world would understand the situation and not have only part of the story told or taken out of context.

We must now, more than ever be able to articulate our story on the spot without violating OPSEC. In order to do this, we must incorporate Public Affairs training at home station.

The best-case scenario is when Soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines are the spokespersons, not the PAO. All Soldiers must be prepared to answer questions pertaining to his or her area of responsibility. The 3rd Infantry Division (Mechanized) had the benefit of receiving a great deal of training prior to crossing the LD. During a rotation for Operation Desert Spring (ODS) in the fall of 2002, we began what we called "training embeds." We knew that if we went to war with Iraq we were going to embed hundreds of reporters like never before. Reporters were embedded with units for three to four-day periods. This gave the Soldiers an opportunity to get used to having reporters present 24/7 as they carried out their duties. They got used to the presence of reporters and learned how to deal with them. The reporters saw it all, the good, the bad, and the ugly. The reporters also learned how to do their job in the harsh desert conditions. They began to learn how their equipment would work, how to move with a unit, etc. The benefit from this experience was evident when they crossed the LD with the embeds. There were very few problems regarding the new relationship. Following the relief in place (RIP) in Baghdad between 1st Armored Division and 3rd ID, however, we immediately began getting several complaints about reporters having their cameras taken away and not being allowed to do their job. This may have happened for several reasons. 1st AD did not have the benefit of the training embed program. It appeared that 1st AD had trouble initially dealing with the volume of reporters. Even though by this time, there were relatively fewer embeds, there was still hundreds of reporters present.

As stated earlier, training and experience dealing with the media weren't the only issues. Initially, we did not have a Coalition Press Information Center (CPIC) established in Baghdad. There were problems with reporters using press badges issued in Kuwait and attempting to get through checkpoints with them in Baghdad. There were two types of badges issued in Kuwait. One for embeds and the other for those who were not. The badges issued to non-embeds in Kuwait were not intended for use in Iraq. They were only to be used during coordinated opportunities through the Kuwait CPIC.

The decision on whether or not to badge is debatable. CFLCC made a conscious decision not to badge in Baghdad initially. Reporters knew their way around the city. They didn't desire or need PAO escort. At that time, they only needed information on where to go to cover certain activities. On one hand, badges issued by the Coalition at least show Soldiers on the ground that this person has at least been through some sort of formal registry process with the military. On the other hand, badges can be badly abused by reporters. Initially in Baghdad, they became the "get into every checkpoint free pass." At this point, many reporters

and affiliates were tired of having their freedom of movement dictated by the military. That is one reason they chose to leave their embed slots. In some cases, it was apparent that the reporters wanted a badge in Iraq to make moving around easier, not to be escorted or coordinate opportunities. Some of the reporters in Iraq had not registered through Kuwait previously. As time went on and a CPIC was established, badges were once again issued and controlled. We failed to predict the early mass exodus of embeds once a few statues fell.

Preparing for Interviews

Preparing to conduct media interviews is a skill required of today's military members. For most of us, there are two types of interviews to be prepared for: the taped, stand-up interview and the print interview. During these types of interviews, no one hears the question, only the response. Press conferences are usually reserved for those higher in the chain of command. Press conferences are unique in that the audience hears the question as well as the response. The preparation for all types of interviews remains essentially the same however.

Preparing for an interview is basically a negotiation. Stress to the reporter your need for information before you begin. Remember, the media can be a nonlethal fire. Ask yourself what the story can do for your unit, the mission. Think about what phase of the operation you are in. What themes and messages is IO pushing? How does this story help leverage them? Is this the right time to do the story? Remember to protect timing and intentions. For example, in Kuwait prior to crossing the LD, you might not want to do a story about how you are going to fight oil well fires. Don't give the enemy that information yet. After you cross the LD and have passed that phase, go for it. Many reporters will want "fluff" stories. Those are fine, but given the choice, prioritize stories depending on what phase of the operation you are in. If you haven't crossed the LD yet, a story about Soldiers training in the desert should be given emphasis over one about women in the Army. Remember, you can send a message to the world and the enemy that you are trained and ready. You can do a story about women in the Army, or whatever requests a reporter has, later. Be polite, honest, helpful, and friendly to journalists, but remember the mission and Soldiers on the ground. How can you help them?

When preparing for an interview, do what you do in other military operations: gather intel. Ask questions like "what is the story about?" Know what angle reporters are after. What aspects of a subject are they after? Who else are they talking to? You may have to augment information they are already getting. Sometimes, if you know whom else they spoke to previously you may have to refute information. How knowledgeable are the reporters on the subject? What do they know about the military? You may have to educate them. What type of stories do these reporters typically write? Are they pro or anti-military? War? Gather background information on them, get their bios.

Consider asking the journalist to send you his/her questions. They won't give you everything, but what you are looking for is the focus area. You may have to gather facts from the rest of the subject matter experts (SMEs) on the staff to help you articulate our side or the rest of the story. Remember, you want the media to walk away with the whole story and our messages. Asking for questions also helps you prepare for what might be asked during the interview. You should sit down and brainstorm every question that you think might be asked. Especially, the hard ones. What question do you **not** want to be asked and be unprepared for? You have to have a response for all questions.

If you can't do the interview tell them why. More times than not, they will understand. For example, in Baghdad a CBS crew had gotten wind of what they thought was an effort to find a pilot downed in the 1991 Gulf War. CFLCC would often get off-the-wall requests like this, but after some investigation, it was learned that, in this particular case, it was true; a team was investigating

Colonel Anthony Cucolo, deputy commanding general of Combined Joint Task Force 180, meets with local media after a meeting in Afghanistan in March 2004. The meeting was held to improve political and military relations between the Pakistan and Afghanistan militaries near the border.

Sergeant First Class Sandra Watkins-Keough

the whereabouts of missing Navy Commander Michael Scott Speicher. For obvious reasons (timing and intentions), they could not do the story at that time because it would jeopardize their investigation. After a meeting between the CBS crew and investigating team, agreements were made to wait until such time as the information could be released without affecting the investigation.

Never get out in front of the President or DoD. Know what senior leaders are saying about your operation. This helps you anticipate questions. Public Affairs Guidance (PAG), also called "PAO by transcript," is sometimes used. If you have access to the Internet, review recent DoD transcripts. Chances are the same questions will be asked at your level. You don't have to regurgitate the Secretary of Defense's responses, but you can ensure that your messages are in line and focused on how things are from your foxhole. Military leaders must be aware of what is being said to avoid being taken out of context. For example, if the President said yesterday "there are indications that foreign fighters are involved in conducting these attacks" and you say, "We have no indications of foreign fighter involvement." It would appear that you are not on the same sheet of music. If you knew what the President's statement was, you could have rephrased your response to more accurately articulate your message. Maybe, in your specific area of responsibility (AOR) there are no indications of foreign fighters. The President is speaking for the entire country. You could have said, "In our area, there are no indications…" This way, you might avoid being taken out of context.

Know your current events. If you are doing an interview tomorrow, what happened in the news today that relates? How does that event impact what you are going to talk about? Remember, you are the expert to some journalists no matter what the topic. Stay in your lane and speak only about what you know about.

Conducting the Interview

The interview itself is all about control. You want it, the reporter wants it. You have to learn how to structure effective answers and control the interview. Don't be question driven, be message driven. The trick is to use your messages as guideposts and not repeated phrases. This is where the skill comes in. Everyone gets annoyed when they see someone on TV that sounds like they are a robot who continues to press rewind and then play over and over again. Those people lose credibility and appear never to actually answer anything. Some people can transition and flow well, some can't. It takes a certain amount of preparation and experience. You should be trying to articulate some command messages that will positively influence the outcome of your mission. Use the media as a nonlethal fire. Help raise the morale of that young E-4 on the checkpoint. If you have the information, and it is releasable, by all means give it. But consider what other information you need to deliver to tell the rest of the story.

For the purpose of this article, the focus will be on stand-up, taped interviews where the question is never heard. This will be a situation many of us will more than likely be involved in.

Structuring effective answers. As stated previously, you are engaging the media not only to respond to their questions, but also to deliver a message about your mission that is important for the world to understand. Again, you must constantly ask yourself how you can help the Soldiers on the ground by providing information to the media. To do this, you need to structure effective answers or responses. You should come to the interview with about three or four messages that you want to deliver. Think of each message as a pyramid (see Figure 1).

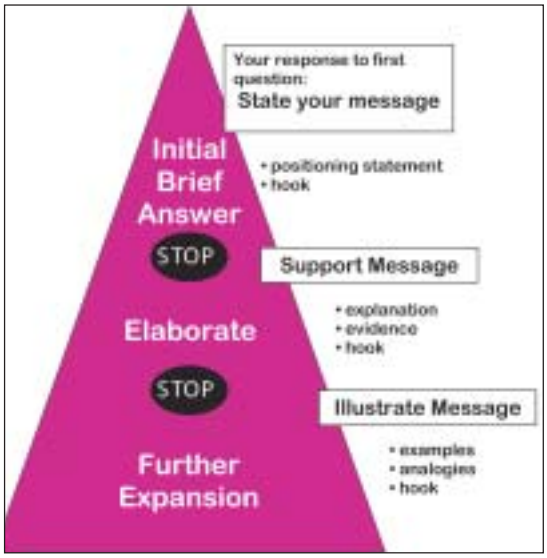


Figure 1

At the top of the pyramid, you should **state your message**. This is your response to the first question. And for a taped stand-up interview, it doesn't mater what the question is. You should deliver your most important message first. So, if you are interrupted later, it is already out there. Nobody will hear the question on a taped interview. Many times even if a journalist came to you with a specific question in mind, if you deliver a clearly articulated message, they will use it. You may tell them something that they didn't know. It may look and sound so good on tape that the affiliate's editors desire to use it as their sound bite.

For the many skeptics out there that will say this would never work, here is an example. Memorial Day was a bad day. The Coalition had some incidents in and around Fallujah. A number of Soldiers had lost their lives. About this time it was already clear that the media was tending to focus on things that went wrong, almost ignoring many details about the good things that were continuing to happen. Daily they would receive two news releases filled with facts and statistics about recovery and security. Yet, if one ambush or fatality occurred, that was all the public heard about. Who know the reason why, you can probably guess; maybe it was sensationalism, politically driven from their bureaus, whatever. CFLCC Commander Lieutenant General David D. McKiernan was painfully aware that this was happening as well. After the evening battle update assessment (BUA), he was providing the staff with some guidance. He told them that they must all become a public affairs officer and get this message out. He asked the staff, "What did we come here to do?" After a short silence, he started talking about the mission's objectives: removing the regime, searching for and eliminating weapons of mass destruction (WMD), etc. His basic message was "We are not done yet." We were only weeks into what we knew would be a long tough campaign, and it was important to him that the world knew this. We were prepared to hunker down and expected that these weren't the first or the last casualties we would endure.

The CG at this time was back in Kuwait. I, as the CFLCC media director,

was watching the BUA from our van in Baghdad. At this time, we still didn't have a CPIC established. I usually would meet reporters at the Baghdad convention center and attempt to field their queries. So, I knew the next morning what the focus of their queries would be, and I knew what the CG's message was. Normally as a PAO, I would not go on camera, but when it is important, it doesn't hurt. I didn't have time to prepare or even have access to a commander or other key leader. Bottom line was that time was of the essence, and I had what I had: me and a notebook, which I had scribbled notes on as the CG spoke. Early the next morning, one of our Marine PAOs and I finalized a position statement, based directly from the CG's comments. I ran it by my boss, the CFLCC PAO, who said go for it.

The first call came from Associated Press Television (APTN) I think. They called me and asked, "What happened at Fallujah?" I gave my statement and never mentioned any facts of any specific incident at Fallujah. They quickly said thanks and packed up and ran. They wanted to be the first, the exclusive. Next came CNN, Reuters, all with international audiences. Only Reuters asked a follow-up, "OK, got that, but can you tell me what happened at Fallujah." After everyone was running the position statement, they needed and wanted the rest of the story, which I then gave out because I had the information and it was releasable. The important thing is that the world heard, first thing in the morning, what the CG wanted them to hear. When my segments aired, everyone remembered where he or she heard those words. "Isn't that what the CG said last night?" Exactly! My point is that it doesn't take a PAO to do this. Anyone listening could have done the same thing. Being a PAO and having other good PAOs from our sister services and Coalition partners around me helped accomplish the mission. Know what is important to your commander. Know the message.

After delivering your message, you then need to **support your message.** In the middle of the pyramid, you elaborate on your position statement. Provide an explanation, evidence that supports your initial statement. At this point, provide facts, key stats, description of a certain program, or a supporting argument or rationale. For example, if you are supporting a statement you made about what you are doing in Western Iraq, you can talk about how many patrols you have conducted, number of arrests made, or how much food or water was delivered. If your position statement said that you are doing great and wonderful things winning hearts and minds, back it up with the facts that the media may have overlooked.

At the bottom of the pyramid, you further expand. Here you illustrate your message. Give a prepared example or analogy. If using the example above, tell them about a specific raid in one of the towns.

During this entire process, your goal is to be in control of the interview. Have them follow you. **Hook** the reporter's interest. Be passionate about what you are talking about. Usually you can have a reporter follow you through one message or pyramid. The skill comes in when you can bridge to a second or third message. The goal is to smoothly transition to your messages so you don't sound like an idiot or a parrot repeating things over and over. This takes practice and experience and sometimes a bit of charm. One key leader that comes to mind is Colin Powell. He uses textbook communication skills both during speeches and while talking with reporters. He transitions so fluidly, the untrained eye may not notice. The fact is, he effectively communicates his messages and avoids losing credibility by sounding like a robot. You have to continually bridge back to your messages. The hard part is to always be aware of which questions are out of your lane. The tendency is to attempt to answer any and all questions. The key is to first think about what is being asked. If it's not for you to answer, get them back on track by saying, "I don't know about that, but what I can tell you is…" or "DoD might have more information on that, but the important thing to remember is…". Control the interview. Flag or spotlight your message with phrases like "First, let's clarify the facts…" or "Let's look at what is really important…".

The hook is a tool you use to effectively control the interview. You want the reporter to follow you. The pyramid will tell you to briefly stop between your initial answer and elaboration. What that means is to offer a statement like, "You should have seen what happened yesterday.." or "We have this new approach…." Then pause briefly enough time so the reporter can ask, "Well, what's that?" I realize that this won't work that easily every time especially, with savvy reporters. But, you get the idea. You want the control.

Embeds

During the decisive combat phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom, CFLCC embedded an unprecedented number of reporters. It is debatable whether or not this is the way of the future or not. It remains to be seen how the military will deploy embedded reporters in the future. We may never embed reporters in the numbers seen during OIF. The affiliates have a say in the issue as well. They need to commit resources to the idea as much as anybody. The notion of embedding from "beginning to end" never really materialized. Many reporters dis-embedded themselves for different reasons soon after arriving in Baghdad or shortly thereafter. Some left simply because they were exhausted, mentally and physically. They had seen a lot of action. And in some cases, seen fellow journalists killed or wounded. Embedding during decisive combat was a good deal. They didn't seem to mind the structure and limited freedom of movement (between units). They enjoyed a certain sense of security, especially when facing many unknown circumstances. Once decisive combat was declared over, many journalists and their affiliates decided it was time to dis-embed. Some took pressure from colleagues who called them "turncoats" or accused them of losing their objectivity. They desired to go back to "real" reporting.

Embeds worked for us because many did assimilate to the military. No longer did they report "they just did this," rather they started saying "we just did this." They became part of the unit. They saw that human beings who cared about their actions fought the war. They saw that even when things went bad, the military members went out of their way to do the right thing, many times at risk to their own safety.

Embeds saw things that we have been saying for years but could never really prove. They saw that we care about limiting collateral damage. They saw in command posts, hundreds of minds struggling all night over target lists and the effects of striking specific targets. They saw the amount of thought and work

involved in deciding on each and every target. We didn't simply "carpet bomb" Baghdad or target every single power source. We took a look at the effect of each location to be hit and if striking that target would achieve the desired effect. They saw Soldiers put their own lives in danger to save the lives of civilians on the battlefield. There was a reporter from the Associated Press who was embedded with the 3rd ID during its "Thunder Run" into Baghdad. This reporter was in a tank within the column and was given a headset. Every intersection was heavily defended. The roads were crowded with everything from uniformed enemy soldiers, to combatants in civilian clothes in technical trucks, to average citizens going about their business. The fighting was very aggressive. Soldiers and leaders all where fighting outside the hatch with M16s, M4s, and sometimes beating people off their vehicles with ammo cans. With this happening, lead vehicles were still passing information like "Blue car, bad guys with RPG; white car, family of four, let them go." The reporter simply could not believe this. You can tell someone about it, but unless you show them, they may never believe you.

Sergeant Igor Paustovski

Embedded photojournalist David Kamerman of the Boston Globe watches a couple of 1st Armored Division Soldiers March 12, 2003, in Kuwait.

Getting back to the future of embeds, there are two thoughts: one is that we are currently riding a wave of popularity with the media. We are in their favor, for now. Things may go back to a certain level of tolerance with each other. But what we have accomplished with embeds can continue. Many of the embedded reporters were young, 20 or 30 somethings. They were some of the best and brightest that their affiliate had to offer. They will be the leaders of their organizations some day. They may be the anchors, or key leaders who can advise the bureau chiefs on military-related matters. Already some who previously were relatively unknown, are working the weekend anchor slots. These reporters saw for themselves and have developed a certain understanding, respect, and rapport with us that can continue for years to come.

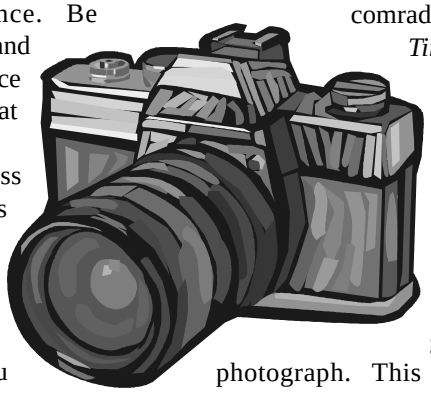
Another thing we learned by embedding hundreds of reporters is that the rate of information had drastically increased. We didn't fully appreciate how much information would be out before it went through the official reporting chain. We still had to be responsible with information and not officially "release" it until it was confirmed and on the significant actions (SIGACTS) report. There was a lot of pressure to confirm things, which we simply couldn't do on the spot. We had to accept that they were out there and let them report. We would still handle information in the same manner. Once it was confirmed, we would acknowledge. If unconfirmed, we would either refute or simply state that to our knowledge, it didn't happen.

The way in which we released or articulated information had also changed. We now, more than ever, had to confirm the obvious. There was a young Soldier who apparently shot himself in a porta potty in one of the camps in Kuwait before we crossed the LD. We had just recently embedded reporters in the units. When the release was written, it stated something to the effect, "A Soldier has died from an apparent, self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head." CENTCOM asked why we chose those words. We never used those words strongly speculating a suicide, but we never had a FOX reporter as the first person on the scene either. The reporter heard the shot and was standing right there when the door was opened. One Soldier, one weapon, and a gunshot wound to the head. Apparently, he died of a self-inflicted wound. We didn't say that he killed himself. The investigation would reveal what happened. The point is that we all realized at that moment that the game was different. If we didn't confirm the obvious up front, we would have lost a certain amount of credibility.

I think it is useful to understand how embeds were deployed. For OIF it worked like this: DoD asked CFLCC how many reporters they could handle given the task organization. CFLCC worked with subordinate PAOs to work out specific numbers. CFLCC then provided DoD with a number. DoD took the number and allocated slots to specific affiliates and media organizations. Those affiliates and organizations assigned personnel to fill the slots. Not all the reporters assigned as embeds wanted the slot. Some had been in the AOR for months and benefited from the training embeds. Some had never been there at all. Between DoD and CFLCC, the best attempt was made to ensure the right reporters and media types were in the right place. There was a mix of different categories of media spread out amongst the task force (print, TV, weekly magazines, regional/Arab media, etc). Subordinate commands had input if they desired a specific anchor or reporter to embed with their headquarters. Some had already built a good rapport with individuals through training. The DoD embed list assigned reporters down to division level. Divisions

then pushed them down, at times, to company level.

Some are very passionate to disagree with letting reporters in command centers without a security clearance. It is safe to say that it was proven that we can do this without violating OPSEC by establishing strict ground rules while still being responsible with information. Some have said, "We give away too much about our capabilities by letting in civilians without clearances." One example given is that reporters learn too much about how far and fast we can go. We give this away by doing it. After we cross the LD and execute, everybody knows our capability. What we must protect are our TTPs and information that we will use again in the future. Just because a reporter is let into a command center doesn't mean that you show them every secret in the book. You must still be responsible with information. It is challenging but doable. Again, we need to get away from the tendency to over-classify while still protecting sensitive information that should remain classified even after the current fight is over. It is a balancing act that requires thought. Security at the source requires that each individual understand the difference. Be conscious of what information you are providing and the situation at the time you are providing it. Once more, protect timing, intentions, and anything that an adversary can use against us.



Ground Rules. All reporters who desire access to our forces are required to agree to ground rules whether they are embedded or not. Most will abide by them because they want to continue to have access to our forces. Enforcing the ground rules is sometimes difficult. As mentioned, once embeds were pushed down to the units, before you knew it, there was some poor company executive officer (XO) who had the additional duty of "baby-sitting" a reporter. Security at the source was the rule. It became impossible to watch a reporter 24/7. It was especially dangerous when reporters had satellite phones and the capability to go live at any moment. Geraldo Rivera is a prime example. He went live on air and basically violated everything you would normally protect: timing, intentions, and things an adversary can use against you. He was embedded with the 101st Airborne Division while they were on the move toward Baghdad. He scratched out a sketch in the sand that showed their formation, where they were, how far and fast they had traveled, and when they would be at their next location. V Corps immediately notified CFLCC and asked to pull him, which was CFLCC initiated. The 101st, who did not have the benefit of live television, was upset because, "he was their man." Say what you will about Geraldo, but he is great for morale. That was apparent even when he came to Kuwait for a meeting on Camp Doha to plead for a late embed slot. Even lieutenant colonels and colonels would light up at the site of him. He was a nice break from endless hours of tedious staff work and operations orders. Not many reporters drew that sort of reaction. His incident with the 101st was an example of the difficulty in watching a reporter 24/7. He was eventually pulled, knowing he would go back because the division wanted him back. This was after a heartfelt apology, of course. Luckily, it did not appear that his actions ever got anyone killed.

Units can always add to ground rules that reporters sign with the higher headquarters, in this case, CFLCC. One good one would be to instruct the reporter never to go live unless there is a Soldier or "handler" present. This would have worked well in the Geraldo situation. Depending on the reporter, they may have good intentions and just not realize that a certain piece of information may be sensitive at the time. Remember, reporters are just like Soldiers in that there are good ones, bad ones, experienced, and even not so high speed. You have to train them and set the standard of conduct at your level.

No ground rule is foolproof. If it is in writing, we must live with it. One of the CFLCC ground rules stated that no image or photograph would be taken of a deceased Coalition Soldier. LTG McKiernan felt strongly about this ground rule. He did not want family members to learn of their loved ones fate in the media. There was much debate with DoD of whether or not it should be a ground rule. *Army Times* had a photograph of a young 101st Soldier who was badly wounded and was being carried by his comrades. He later died. The first reaction to *Army Times* was, "You can't run that photo, it violates the ground rules." They took the position that they were not violating a ground rule because the Soldier was "dying" and at the time of the photo was not dead. Even after CFLCC and the Soldier's family pleaded that they not run the photo, they did. We dis-embedded four journalists and two photographers because the intent of the ground rule was on publication of the photograph. This was obviously an editorial position taken by Times Publishing. As a result, all Times Publishing employees were dis-embedded for one week. DoD did not re-embed them, CFLCC did. To be fair, one of the journalists and one of the photographers were leaving anyway. Of the remaining three, we allowed one to go back to a unit. It was not the person who took the photograph. The other recourse that was taken was to have the paper publish a letter to the editor from LTG McKiernan. It wasn't as effective since they did not have to print his last line, which stated that he and hopefully nobody he ever associates with ever buys another copy of the *Army Times*. So, even when you think a ground rule is self-explanatory or simply in good taste, be sure if they are in writing to articulate your intentions in detail.

Dealing with media effectively requires training and experience like anything else. You won't personally like every reporter you encounter. You must be able to put your personal feelings aside and get on with your mission and allow them to do theirs. When encountering the media, you should always ask yourself how you can use this nonlethal fire to help accomplish the mission and most importantly, how to assist the Soldier on the ground at the checkpoint or on patrol.

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