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MILITARY - MEDIA RELATIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE OPERATIONAL  
COMMANDER

by

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

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: James P. Clager

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An examination of the military-media relationship and its affect on military operations. The paper starts with a brief review of this relationship during significant points in U.S. military history: the Civil War, World War I and II, Vietnam, and the operations against Grenada and Panama. The formation of the Sidle panel to improve military-media relations and the panel's recommendations. The mistakes and successes of each of these historic episodes are extracted as a foundation to build the military-media relationship going into Desert Shield. Media issues of Desert Shield/Storm are examined in depth and lessons learned here are compared with the lessons of the past. Implications for the Operational Commander in future operations are proposed and include advancing communications technology, competition between news organizations, operational security, military training in media issues and getting the public affairs officer (PAO) more involved at all levels of staff activity. Recommendations for enhancing military-media relations are 1) Commander and staff education and training, 2) Expand the role and responsibility of the PAO, 3) Plan for public affairs and test plans in exercises, 4) Ensure the Commander's concept for public affairs is understood and uniformly executed throughout all echelons of the force.



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MILITARY-MEDIA RELATIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE OPERATIONAL  
COMMANDER

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Listen... I ain't no dummy when it comes to dealing  
with the press.<sup>1</sup>

General H. Norman Schwarzkopf

Today's military leaders are more strategically, operationally, and tactically innovative and proficient than at any time before. Professional military education opportunities have never been greater. But military education and training falls short in the area of mass communications. Military leaders are assumed to be articulate, intelligent, charismatic, and able to hold their own in conversation and debate. Indeed, this assumption is true to an extent; a leader in today's armed forces must naturally possess those traits in order to advance in rank and responsibility. Yet, dealing with the news media establishment, particularly as the leader of a military organization, requires more than just personal communication attributes to develop and foster a productive military-media relationship.

The media plays a pivotal role in the perceived success or failure of military operations and as such I start out this paper by posing three questions:

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<sup>1</sup>. Richard Pyle, Schwarzkopf: The Man, the Mission, the Triumph, (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 103.

- Does the Operational Commander need to be concerned about dealing with the Media?

- Does the Operational Commander and his staff have an appreciation for public relations and its potential impact?

- Does the Operational Commander and his staff have the training and education needed to operate effectively in today's modern media environment?

All of us know the power of the pen (and the television camera) and how it creates and shapes perceptions through the manner in which the "facts" are reported. To ignore the potential benefits and the potential disasters that can be produced by the media is not an option in modern day military operations. Military leaders must understand how the media works, what their goals are, their sensitivities, and why we need them.

This paper will not examine Constitutional First Amendment rights of freedom of the press and all of its implications. There is no argument that the press has a right to report and the public has a right to know. The paper will focus on the aspects of the military-media relationship that affect the operational commander and influence his planning and decision making process.

## CHAPTER II

### MILITARY - MEDIA RELATIONS: CIVIL WAR TO VIETNAM

Over the years, the relationship between the military establishment and the media could be described as contentious; a relationship filled with deeply rooted suspicions and prejudices, discoveries of improper conduct and periods of strained communication and cooperation. I do not intend to delve too deeply into why this is so. Suffice it to say that the military and the media have always been at odds over many topics of importance: freedom of information, censorship, fiscal responsibility, and so forth. However, the modern military commander must understand and learn from the past (both mistakes and successes) how the relationship with the media affects military operations.

CIVIL WAR. At the time of the United States Civil War, the technology of the day had advanced to the degree that news of the war's progress was able to be collected from the battlefields and disseminated to the public at speeds far greater than experienced before. Unwittingly, the press, with few restrictions imposed upon it, passed information on vital military capabilities and intentions to the enemy.<sup>1</sup> The Battle of Manassas was greatly influenced by information the South received from the press in that they were alerted to an

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<sup>1</sup>. John W. Sergeant, "Freedom of the Press: A Challenge to the Operational Commander," Newport: Naval War College, June 1988.

impending attack and where it was to occur. The resultant outcome was a defeat for the North. General William T. Sherman on the subject of news reporters said, "Never had an enemy a better corps of spies than our army carries along, paid, transported, and fed by the United States."<sup>2</sup> Sherman expresses a viewpoint that many military commanders since then have shared to some degree.

WORLD WAR I. In World War One, Lord Kitchener, British Secretary of State for War, declared that "any correspondent found in the field should be arrested, have his passport taken, and be expelled."<sup>3</sup> Press censorship by the Allies was so restrictive that frustrated reporters sought to obtain news not from the Allies but from sources they developed elsewhere including the Germans. Upon realizing this backfiring of their total silence policy, the Allies revised the policy and the media and military were on speaking terms again.

WORLD WAR II. What the media writes and how it portrays events may well be influenced by the national feeling at the time. By and large, patriotic support for World War Two was pervasive throughout the United States. The entire country was mobilized and motivated to the war effort. This included

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<sup>2</sup>. Joseph H. Ewing, "The New Sherman Letters," American Heritage, July/August 1987, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup>. Phillip Knightly, The First Casualty: From the Crimea to Vietnam: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth Maker, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), p. 16.

the media which sought to bring Americans news of progress and victories from the front. Explanations on why the military enjoyed such a favorable light may be found among such observations as "... we won our last war with the support of field press censorship, responsible and committed correspondents, a recognition of the importance of national morale and resolve, and a citizenry that understood there were limits to their 'right to know'."<sup>4</sup> Press censorship was still an ongoing requirement when necessary and "the technology of the World War II era ... made press censorship much easier. The Armed Forces controlled the communications network."<sup>5</sup> Censorship aside, General Dwight D. Eisenhower in his book Crusade in Europe, was fairly impressed with the loyalty and integrity of the media saying, "the great body of the American and British press representatives comprised an intelligent, patriotic, and energetic group of individuals. They could, with complete safety and mutual advantage, be taken into the confidence of the commander."<sup>6</sup>

VIETNAM. The Vietnam War brought a new trend in news reporting and marked the beginning of a new relationship between military and the media. "The miracle of television

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<sup>4</sup>. Gordon d. Batcheller, "Meeting the Press: A Rebuttal," Marine Corps Gazette, Nov 1987, p. 72.

<sup>5</sup>. Walter F. Boomer, "Censorship of the Press," Marine Corps Gazette, Jan 1988, p. 18.

<sup>6</sup>. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Crusade in Europe (New York: Doubleday, 1948), p. 300.

that brought the Dallas Cowboys into American living rooms also placed the stench, gore, and tragedy of the Vietnam War right in the laps of the American people. Members of the news media seemed convinced that they alone had discovered that war is ugly and felt compelled to share their discovery with every American citizen."<sup>7</sup> The evolution and expansion in the United States of civil liberties including greater freedoms of individuals and the press during the years since World War II, seemingly by default allowed the media establishment almost unlimited and uncensored reporting of the Vietnam War.

Interestingly, just as gaining combat experience is valuable to a soldier, giving him the advantage for future battles and conflicts, it also valuable for the media correspondents in the climb up their news organizations' success ladder. Former Secretary of the Navy James Webb points out:

... it is no secret that media careers are often made by covering the American military. ... Few media careers were made in Vietnam through positive reporting, and the rewards for attacking U.S. policy were not lost on other aspiring journalists. The way to get ahead in the media is to hook into a 'Big Story.' A 'Big Story' is not always a fair story, and particularly is not always a story that represents the universality of the military experience.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>. Richard L. Upchurch, "Wanted: A Fair Press," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, July 1984, p. 69.

<sup>8</sup>. James H. Webb, Jr., "The Military and the Media," Marine Corps Gazette, Nov 1984, p. 33.

The negative press coming from the War was high octane fuel for the anti-war movement at home. Public opinion and national morale eroded quickly for this distant war being waged for uncertain gains. Much attention was given by the press to alleged accounts of U.S. forces ineptitude, and unethical use of violence perpetrated on what were portrayed as innocent civilians. It is easy to understand that "in Vietnam, the military's attitude toward the media generally consisted of suspicion, distrust, and sometimes, outright animosity."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>. Jack M. White, "The Military and The Media," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, July 1974, p. 18.

### CHAPTER III

#### MILITARY - MEDIA RELATIONS: GRENADA, PERSIAN GULF, PANAMA

GRENADA. If Vietnam represented a conflict with wide open media access, then Grenada represented, at least in its initial stages, the complete opposite. In fact, considerations for media coverage and involvement were not addressed fully until well into the planning and execution of the Grenada rescue operation. The Joint Task Force commander, Vice Adm. Joseph Metcalf, had decided that media coverage would not be appropriate until the military situation on the island was secure. Concerns for operational security, safety of the troops going ashore, and the attendant safety and logistical burdens incurred by the needs of the press corps were his justification for total media exclusion.

As expected, the media establishment was outraged. Cries of infringement on their Constitutional right to free press rang throughout the country leading to an news campaign which sought, overall, to discredit the actions of the military in Grenada and the policies of the Reagan Administration.

"Reporters were obviously disappointed when returning medical students continued to express relief and gratitude for their rescue, despite the reporters' repeated attempts to ferret out doubt or displeasure."<sup>1</sup>

Many American citizens also had few doubts or

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<sup>1</sup>. Upchurch, p. 71.

displeasures about the Grenada operation or the way it was handled by the government, but did indicate a certain distaste for the media's style of coverage. Perhaps the media establishment was not in touch with the mood of the American citizens over this particular conflict and by appearing to be satisfying their own self-serving agenda, unintentionally alienated the public which they claim to serve. One clear example of this involves a photograph of a dead marine pilot on a Grenada beach appearing in the 7 Nov 1983 issue of Time. In a Good Morning America panel discussion,

...one reporter brought up negative reader reaction to the picture... The panel member stated the picture was not particularly 'gory or gruesome,' but Americans simply did not want to be reminded of the horrible price of war. Letters to the Time editor, however, did not convey the reporter's message. The letter writers considered the picture disrespectful of the pilot's dignity, honor, and family.<sup>2</sup>

This theme of the "horrors of war," is one which the media is eager to embrace and exploit since it carries lots of power to mold and shape public opinion. The difficulty in finding and filming these "horrors" during Desert Storm frustrated the media who needed that kind of ammunition to take shots at the government's use of military force for what they considered a questionable cause.

Side Panel. Because of the extensive criticism by the media over Grenada, particularly their restricted access to

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<sup>2</sup>. Ibid.

the operation, a Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Media-Military Relations Panel was convened in Feb 1984. This panel became commonly known as the Sidle Panel, named after its chairman MajGen Winant Sidle, USA(Ret). Its purpose: formulate recommendations to answer the question, "How to 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?" Members on the panel included experienced retired military personnel, public affairs officers or similar agents from the four military Services, a representative of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), operations officers from the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (OJCS), and professors from schools of journalism with experience in military-media relations.

Some of the key recommendations produced were:

- a. Formation of a national press pool that could be ready on short notice to participate in contingency operations.
- b. Perform public affairs planning concurrently with operational planning. Ensure public affairs advisors in brought into the plan as early as possible.
- c. Establish "ground rules" for handling of media coverage in future operations.
- d. Put greater emphasis on public affairs training in the Service academies and Service schools.

PERSIAN GULF. The media pool system had been born. It's first test was during the Iran-Iraq War when the U.S. began its practice of escorting re-flagged tankers into the Persian Gulf. Since the involvement by the U.S. consisted only of the Navy, pool reporters were forced to abide by the naturally restricted environment (transportation, communication, access to information and action) of the ship on which they rode. Additionally, ground rules were drawn up that required security reviews of media obtained material before its release. While this limitations produced some carping, overall the media was happier being able to cover the operation in some form than having no access whatsoever.

PANAMA. If the press pool system in the Persian Gulf could be deemed a definite step forward toward advancement of better media relations with the military, then the Panama operation was a step backward. The two major deficiencies identified were: 1) Late activation of the media pool leading to late arrival of media reps on scene, and 2) General lack of detailed public affairs planning resulting in problems such as transportation delays, safety and security risks to both media and escort personnel, missed opportunities to get to breaking news or combat action, and delays (communications limitations and security review) in filing reports. The Panama experience led many members of the press to believe that media pool concept was nothing more than a convenient tool enabling the military to control the access and flow of information about

its operations. It is clear that media pool system, although designed with good intentions and sound procedures, would require extensive fine tuning to ensure a smoother performance in the future.

## CHAPTER IV

### DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM

Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm will serve a valuable military-media relations case study for years to come. Vietnam is considered to be the first T.V. war America has fought; by comparison, Desert Storm could be introduced a la *Saturday Night Live* as "Live from Riyadh, it's the Persian Gulf War! Starring George Bush, Saddam Hussein, Peter Arnett, Pete Williams and Colin Powell. With musical guests...the B-52s, and your host... General Norman Schwarzkopf!"

The media establishment pulled out all the stops to provide the most extensive coverage possible. They knew this was an opportunity of immense proportion; the first time in recent years that the media could be in place from the outset, to report a major conflict involving the greatest number of U.S. troops since Vietnam.

Unique media aspects of Desert Storm. In bulletized form below is a listing of some of the significant and unique characteristics of Desert Shield/Desert Storm:

- Roughly 1600 correspondents covering the conflict (some estimates range from 1400 to as much as 2500) compared to about 700 in Vietnam.

- Unprecedented live coverage of events and the capability to report 24 hours a day. The communications technological explosion has given the media compact, portable

T.V. gear, mobile satellite uplink facilities, notebook personal computers, high speed voice, image, and data transmission to just about anywhere in the world.

- Extensive use of media pools to manage the media personnel/equipment onslaught while still providing them access to the troops and the stories from the field.

- Cable News Network (CNN) reporter Peter Arnett filing reports from the "enemy" camp in Baghdad, Iraq.

- Video tapes of smart weapons hitting their targets with pinpoint accuracy.

- Daily briefings on the status of the campaign by the people who were running the show (LtGen Kelly, BrigGen Neal, Gen Schwarzkopf), not their public affairs officers.

The Joint Information Bureau. The previous experiences of Grenada, Panama, and Vietnam, combined with the Media Pool and Military-Media cooperation concepts conceived from the Sidle panel, forced the military public affairs organization to gear up for handling the media like never before. A Joint Information Bureau (JIB) was established in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia during the initial stages of Desert Shield to accommodate the influx of media. A second JIB was later created in Riyadh. The JIB served as a 24 hour centralized press center representing all branches of the multinational forces involved in the conflict.<sup>1</sup> JIB responsibilities (which

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<sup>1</sup>. Mike Sherman, "Informing through the JIB," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, August 1991, p. 59.

constantly evolved throughout the campaign) included:

- Accrediting, registering, and issuing appropriate press credentials to each journalist.

- Coordinating and arranging media visits to units in the field.

- Screening all news stories and pictures as part of the security review process in accordance with the news media "ground rules" (see appendix A).

- Arranging itineraries and escorting senior U.S. military, U.S. congressional, and Arab leadership.

- Education of journalists on life in Saudi Arabia.

What did we learn from Desert Shield/Desert Storm? As the analysts assess the victories and failures of the numerous contributing components, plans, and actions of Desert Storm, it is clear that the intensity and the capability of the media was surprising. They've come a long way since Vietnam and one can only wonder what new tricks the media will come up with for the next major conflict. Desert Storm, by and large, was a success story for military-media relations and here are some of the reasons why:

- a. Time. Unlike the quickly devised and executed operations of Grenada and Panama, the media (and the military) had the luxury of time to get their operations set up and debugged prior to offensive military operations. The media pools were activated in a timely manner and flew out to Saudi Arabia to cover the initial deployment of U.S. troops. But

activation of the media pool system in this instance did not endanger any operational security aspects of this deployment due to the overt defensive nature of the Desert Shield operation. Operations such as Grenada and Panama must maintain secrecy until commencement and when they do commence, the military has its operational and logistical hands full enough without having to worry about providing for the immediate concerns of the media. The ability of the military to accommodate the media in future conflicts may well depend on the nature of the operation.

b. Media pools, the JIB, and Ground rules for the News Media. Although very much disliked by the press, media pools are the best compromise to date for both military and press. Pools get journalists to the action almost as quickly as the troops and permits ready access to units in the field and theater in general. Pools allow the military to provide security for the press and plan logistical support for the care and feeding of journalists in a pool status.

The JIB was an essential element in the successful handling of the media in Desert Shield/Storm. To have a single entity control all aspects of media relations removes a tremendous amount of burden from the JTF staff and other command elements. The policies and procedures of the Desert Shield/Storm JIB must be reviewed and refined for use in future operations.

Lastly, the Ground Rules for News Media was an excellent

vehicle to clarify for the media, exactly what the military believed was fair game to cover and what was considered off limits due to security or humanitarian reasons. Such rules serve notice to the media that their actions could jeopardize lives and the success of an operation. Ground rules in greater detail may be required in future conflicts so that even the novice reporter with little military background or knowledge can determine what should or should not be reported.

c. Clearly defined Goals, Intelligent Measures of Effectiveness (MOEs), Effective Weapons and Tactics. In Vietnam, the war's goals, objectives, and even the enemy were difficult to clearly define and became even more so as the conflict dragged on. Using enemy body count as a primary measure of effectiveness became distasteful to an American public innundated nightly with more and more war with seemingly little progress and certainly weakening public support. Weapons systems of the Vietnam era were less sophisticated and less precise in their accuracy resulting in extensive collateral damage and requiring massive or multiple strikes to achieve desired levels of target destruction. (as a general example, one F-117 stealth fighter, with one precision bomb, could produce the same level of target destruction as four fully loaded A-7 Corsair II attack aircraft with standard MK-80 series bombs). The efforts to direct the Vietnam war from Washington D.C. handcuffed the military leadership resulting in reduced military options and

restricting the use of some military tactics. By comparison, Desert Storm had clearly defined goals as outlined in the United Nations resolutions. Measures of effectiveness were well chosen as to be both physically measurable and reflecting the positive efforts of the coalition forces. The weapons and tactics employed were undeniably superb and promoted the capabilities and professionalism of the military. A word of caution: not all operations in which the military becomes involved will have such clear cut goals, objectives, and MOEs. Military men are trained to fight battles, not engage in diplomatic maneuvering. When an operation takes on a strong diplomatic flavor (peacekeeping missions in Lebanon, or support to nations in counter-insurgency actions) the ability to gauge success and effectiveness diminishes.

## CHAPTER V

### IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Technology. The communications technology of tomorrow may give every reporter in the theater of operations the ability, single-handedly, to broadcast live battlefield scenes via satellite to news outlets throughout the world. Watch for the debut of the "Combat Cable Channel," on your local cable television system. This future scenario will be a nightmare for the operational commander. While the news media find ways to perform their mission more autonomously, the military commander will seek more controls on media operations. There is no doubt that future technology will result in increased friction between military and media.

Operational Security vs Freedom of the Press. The very word "censorship" strikes fear and hate in the hearts of journalists. The media decries censorship in any form, from any source, for any purpose. The open and free American society was built on the principle of freedom of the press and to censor their (or anyone's) expressions is counter to the democratic principles of the United States.

In military operations, censorship is imposed for reasons of operational security, although many media personnel like to think that the military abuses its censorship rules to hide its faults and blunders. Indeed, journalists "... mistrust the Government and especially the military in large part

because of their experience of having been deceived in Vietnam, where officials consistently painted a much rosier picture of the war than turned out to be justified."<sup>1</sup> The military's mishandling of the media in Vietnam would shape its future relations. Perhaps the lesson learned was that it is better to say nothing than to give a wrong impression. Was the media excluded from Grenada as part of some new unwritten doctrine? Any person or institution that has dealt with the media comes to realize that "it is in the nature of journalism that bad news tends to be overemphasized and good news underplayed."<sup>2</sup> David Gergen, editor at large of U.S. News & World Report, says, "I can appreciate the national security concerns... But it appears to me that there is too strong a tendency to lean toward less coverage the better."<sup>3</sup>

Although the press felt the military was too restrictive during Desert Shield/Storm, the general population was not complaining. A poll conducted by the Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press between Jan 25 to Jan 27 1991 reveal:

- 57% would favor increased military control over information than letting news organizations decide on how to report the war.

- 79% thought military censorship was a good idea.

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<sup>1</sup>. David E. Rosenbaum, "Press and U.S. Officials at Odds on News Curbs," The New York Times, 20 Jan 1991, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>. Ibid.

- 78% thought the military was telling as much as it could.<sup>4</sup>

And so the debate over military censorship vs unrestricted press reporting continues. Extensive public affairs pre-planning, indoctrination and education of journalists in military subjects, and publication and enforcement of media "Ground Rules" will produce the best balance of news access and operational security.

Competition. Today's media establishment is just as interested in serving themselves as they are the interests of the public. The biggest reason for this is competition. The public appetite for news has grown phenomenally with the introduction of new communications technology and 24 hour dedicated news services. News organizations cannot afford to hold back any efforts to cover news events; exercising self-restraint may result in reporting old news, and nobody wants to see old news when there is new news on the other network. "The words of a reporter for a national news syndicate best sum it up....'I don't care if I get it right; I only care if I get it first.'"<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, this attitude of "getting it first" frequently results in getting it wrong. The "fog of war" applies equally to the media as to the military. When correspondents ignore the fog and instead rush to tell the

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<sup>4</sup>. Alex S. Jones, "Military Control of News Backed in Poll," The New York Times, 31 January 1991, p. C24.

<sup>5</sup>. Malcolm W. Browne, "The Military vs. The Press," The New York Times Magazine, March 3, 1991, p. 30.

story as they initially get it, the chance for error and misinformation is great. When the truth is finally known, who will provide the correction? White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater laments, "I spend more time putting out fires [generated by the airing of unreliable material] than dealing with real information."<sup>6</sup> Setting the record straight does not fully rebuild the public relations damage already incurred. Competition, combined with new technology, will only increase these incidents of broadcasting unsubstantiated news information.

Commander and Staff Training. As the news media becomes more sophisticated and technologically capable, so must the military commander and his staff understand those media capabilities and prepare for them. It is important to have an understanding of all aspects of military-media relations in developing future operations plans. Future courses of instruction and levels of training could include: 1) individual education, 2) staff team education, 3) live exercises or Command Post Exercises, 4) mobile training team visits.

The Public Affairs Officer (PAO). The staff PAO is the one person with all the specialized training and expertise to deal with media issues and as such, must be involved with all operational issues at all levels of planning and execution. The PAO "... must be in on each stage of operational planning,

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<sup>6</sup>. Rosenbaum.

not so they know the number of typewriters to insert in Annex F of the Operations Order, but to provide guidance on potential problem areas."<sup>7</sup> This is the guy that will set up, staff, and operate a joint information bureau if one is deemed necessary. He is the Commander's main interface with the media. The PAO's roles, responsibilities, and equipment/personnel allocation must expand in order to satisfy the future appetites of a news media hungry to report on anything and everything in a military operation.

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<sup>7</sup>. Jonathan F. Abel, "Meeting the Press: More To Be Said," Marine Corps Gazette, November 1987, p. 78.

## CHAPTER VI

### RECOMMENDATIONS

As well as Desert Storm turned out with respect to media relations and issues, more can be done to prepare for the next conflict. In fact, a conflict is not at all required to begin looking at new strategies for media involvement and to test them using the various training exercises in which the military participates. Specific recommendations:

1. Educate and train the Commander and his staff.

Dedicated joint or service specific training would be the preferred method, but other opportunities exist such as the military-media relations elective course at the Naval War College.

2. Expand the role and responsibilities of the PAO. As history has shown, efforts to deal with the media are normally relegated to the "back burner" in favor of the more operationally significant issues such as employment, logistics, and strategy planning. But history also shows that shunning the media produces unfavorable press which damages morale, public opinion, and ultimately the military operation. Get the PAO involved and integrated into the planning process. His part of the operation cannot stand alone and will require support from the J2 (Intelligence), J3 (Plans and operations), and the J4 (Logistics) office just to name a few. The staff PAO may one day assume the role of Joint Forces Media

Component Coordinator (JFMCC) responsible for theater coordination of media planning and relations. He should at least have the education, training, and experience to fill such a billet should one be generated in the future.

3. Plan for Public Affairs and test/improve those plans in exercises. Perhaps the most immediate step that can be made to prepare for the media is in planning, to as much detail as possible, the public affairs policies and procedures to be executed in an operation. A detailed, comprehensive plan will keep the operational Commander "ahead of the media power curve" when the intensity of an operation heats up.

4. Ensure the Operational Commander's public affairs policies are known and executed consistently throughout all echelons of the force. In Desert Storm, there were instances where inconsistencies in dealing with the press surfaced, causing confusion for the press and making the military look disunited in their efforts. Inconsistent dealings with the media will result in a hostile and suspicious press, a condition that strains an already tenuous relationship. All levels of command must know the public affairs plan, the operational security considerations, and be aware of the ground rules that the press and the military must follow.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSIONS

In concluding this paper, I return to the questions posed in the introduction section to reaffirm their validity and to provide a reasonable answer for each.

- *Does the Operational Commander need to be concerned about dealing with the Media?* The answer to this question is an obvious yes. The media will always exist, it will always be where the news and the action is. The military establishment will always generate news and, especially during conflict, will generate plenty of action. How the media portrays what the military is doing and how the military is doing it, will depend largely on the media-military relationship established at the operational level.

- *Does the Operational Commander and his staff have an appreciation for public relations and its potential impact?* This question can only be answered by the Commander himself. The answer will be revealed in how he and his staff deal with public relations; how he uses his Public Affairs Officer; the attention and detail given to public affairs in his Opplans and Oporders; the guidance he provides all echelons of the chain of command in public relations. Appreciation can only be gained from examining the military-media relations of the past, and extracting the lessons learned from those episodes. This paper has briefly examined this relationship from the

Civil War through Desert Storm and highlighted significant lessons learned along the way. These lessons serve as a foundation to build upon in future relations with the media.

- Does the Operational Commander and his staff have the training and education needed to operate effectively in today's modern media environment? As of now, only the Marine Corps conducts media training of any kind for its field commanders. Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) Commanders undergo training sessions that focus on press conference and interview situations. But more can be done. To be trained as an effective spokesman does not directly translate to effective, comprehensive planning and formulation of concepts of operations in dealing with public relations matters. No command "pipeline" training exists which serve to better prepare our future leaders in military-media relations. The Commander and staff must seek out appropriate courses of education and instruction which arm them with the knowledge and the tools to effectively deal with media issues. And let's not forget the PAO. His role in the staff as the media "expert" must be expanded such that he is an integral part of all staff functions in every department. PAO responsibilities will only increase with time, as news organizations become more sophisticated and technologically capable.

## APPENDIX I

### OPERATION DESERT SHIELD GROUND RULES

The following information should not be reported because its publication or broadcast could jeopardize operations and endanger lives:

(1) For U.S. or coalition units, specific numerical information on troop strength, aircraft, weapons systems, on-hand equipment, or supplies (e.g., artillery, tanks, radars, missiles, trucks, water), including amounts of ammunition or fuel moved by or on hand in support and combat units. Unit size may be described in general terms such as "company-size," "multibattalian," "multidivision," "naval task force," and "carrier battle group." Number or amount of equipment and supplies may be described in general terms such as "large," "small," or "many."

(2) Any information that reveals details of future plans, operations, or strikes, including postponed or cancelled operations.

(3) Information, photography, and imagery that would reveal the specific location of military forces or show the level of security at military installations or encampments. Locations may be described as follows: all Navy embark stories can identify the ship upon which embarked as a dateline and will state that the report is coming from the "Persian Gulf," "Red Sea," or "North Arabian Sea." Stories written in Saudi Arabia may be datelined "Eastern Saudi Arabia," "Near the Kuwaiti border," etc. For specific countries outside Saudi Arabia, stories will state that the report is coming from the Persian Gulf region unless that country has acknowledged its participation.

(4) Rules of engagement details.

(5) Information on intelligence collection activities, including targets, methods, and results.

(6) During an operation, specific information on friendly force troop movements, tactical deployments, and dispositions that would jeopardize operational security or lives. This would include unit designations, names of operations, and size of friendly forces involved, until released by CENTCOM.

(7) Identification of mission aircraft points of origin, other than as land- or carrier-based.

(8) Information on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of enemy camouflage, cover, deception, targeting, direct and indirect fire, intelligence collection, or security measures.

(9) Specific identifying information on missing or downed aircraft or ships while search and rescue operations are planned or underway.

(10) Special operations forces' methods, unique equipment or tactics.

(11) Specific operating methods and tactics, (e.g., air angle of attack or speeds, or naval tactics and evasive manervers). General terms such as "low" or "fast" may be used.

(12) Information on operational or support vulnerabilities that could be used against U.S. forces, such as details of major battle damage or major personnel loss of specific U.S. or coalition units, until that information no longer provide tactical advantage the the enemy and is, therefore, released by CENTCOM. Damage and casualties may be described as "light," "moderate," or "heavy."

## APPENDIX II

### GUIDELINES FOR NEWS MEDIA

News media personnel must carry and support any personal and professional gear they take with them, including protective cases for professional equipment, batteries, cables, converters, etc.

Night Operations -- Light discipline restrictions will be followed. The only approved light source is a flashlight with a red lens. No visible light source, including flash or television lights, will be used when operating with forces at night unless specifically approved by the on-scene commander.

Because of host-nation requirements, you must stay with your public affairs escort while on Saudi bases. At other U.S. tactical or field locations and encampments, a public affairs escort may be required because of security, safety, and mission requirements as determined by the host commander.

Casualty information, because of concern of the notification of the next of kin, is extremely sensitive. By executive directive, next of kin of all military fatalities must be notified in person by a uniformed member of the appropriate service. There have been instances in which the next of kin have first learned of the death or wounding of a loved one through the news media. The problem is particularly difficult for visual media. Casualty photographs showing a recognizable face, name tag, or other identifying feature or item should not be used before the next of kin have been notified. The anguish that sudden recognition at home can cause far outweighs the news value of the photograph, film, or videotape. News coverage of casualties in medical centers will be in strict compliance with the instructions of doctors and medical officials.

To the extent that individuals in the news media seek access to the U.S. area of operation, the following rule applies: Prior to or upon commencement of hostilities, media pools will be established to provide initial combat coverage of U.S. forces. U.S. news media personnel present in Saudi Arabia will be given the opportunity to join CENTCOM media pools, provided they agree to pool their products. News media personnel who are not members of the official CENTCOM media pools will not be permitted into forward areas. Reporters are strongly discouraged from attempting to link up on their own with combat units. U.S. commanders will maintain extremely tight security throughout the operational area and will exclude from the area of operation all unauthorized individuals.

For news media personnel participating in designated CENTCOM Media Pools:

(1) Upon registering with the JIB, news media should contact their respective pool coordinator for an explanation of pool operations.

(2) In the event of hostilities, pool products will be the subject to review before release to determine if they contain sensitive information about military plans, capabilities, operations, or vulnerabilities (see attached ground rules) that would jeopardize the outcome of an operation or the safety of U.S. or coalition forces. Material will be examined solely

for its conformance to the attached ground rules, not for its potential to express criticism or cause embarrassment. The public affairs escort officer on scene will review pool reports, discuss ground rule problems with the reporter, and in the limited circumstances when no agreement can be reached with a reporter about disputed materials, immediately send the disputed materials to JIB Dhahran for review by the JIB Director and the appropriate news media representative. If no agreement can be reached, the issue will be immediately forwarded to OASD(PA) for review with the appropriate bureau chief. The ultimate decision on publication will be made by the originating reporter's news organization.

(3) Correspondents may not carry a personal weapon.

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