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ANALYSIS OF THE PENTAGON'S PRESS POOL TESTS

BY

William G. Ackerly

B.A., The Citadel, 1971

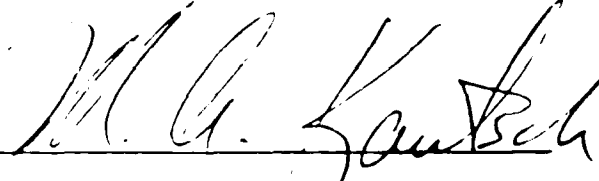
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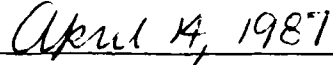
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ANALYSIS OF THE PENTAGON'S PRESS POOL TESTS

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University of Kansas, 1987

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On April 20, 1985, the Pentagon conducted the first in a series of tests of the Department of Defense (DOD) press pool. A result of the uproar raised over the media's exclusion from the American invasion of the island of Grenada in October 1983, the tests seek to determine whether the press can provide the media with the means to access and report the initial phases of an armed conflict involving U.S. ground forces, and, at the same time, prevent premature disclosure of military operations.

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Although the study found that the tests were successful, it also determined that more overseas deployments of the DOD press pool are required to adequately define the role of the press pool.

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I. Introduction

During the Civil War, Washington, D.C. newspapers published the details of General McDowell's battle plans before the first battle of Manassas. Since then, the military and the media in the United States have explored how to work with each other. The two have a love-and-hate relationship. Each partner acknowledges the necessity of the other, but neither side is willing to compromise their Constitutionally mandated mission. Although both serve the same public, one is obligated to protect that public, while the other seeks to inform it.

The sternest test comes during armed conflict. Whenever the "theater of war" has been staged, whether it be the Civil War, World War I or II, Korea or Vietnam, these two actors have rendezvoused to perform their opposing roles.

After the American invasion of Grenada in 1983, the relationship between the military and the media fell to an all-time low. In an attempt to improve that relationship, the Department of Defense (DOD) created a press pool, an organization of reporters and photographers who represent the major types of U.S. media.

The purpose of the DOD press pool is to provide the media with a means to access and report the initial phases of an armed conflict involving U.S. ground forces. At the same time, the use of the pool should prevent premature

disclosure of the military operation, which also enhances the safety of U.S. troops - - primary concerns of the military.

By analyzing recent Pentagon tests of the pooling concept, this study determines whether the press pool provides the media with its desired access, and, at the same time, ensures the secrecy which the military desires.

II. Significance of the Problem: A Historical Perspective

Press pooling, as a concept is not a new idea. The major wire services have used pooling to gather and disseminate news. Interest in reducing costs and consolidating resources was a primary reason behind the beginning of the Associated Press in 1849. Member organizations of a pool also have rules to abide by. As Victor Rosewater said:

The original Associated Press was simply a mutual arrangement, or, more accurately, series of arrangements, for joint news-gathering at common expense by six of the New York morning dailies...the one condition imposed on the members, at the start, required prompt payment of an equal share of the cost...the avowed policy was to share the service with any paper... agreeing to abide by such regulations as the Association may find necessary for the protection of the parties to the arrangement.¹

¹Victor Rosewater, History of Cooperative News-Gathering in the United States (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1930), p. 69.

The use of press pools during periods of conflict is a reflection of the ebb and flow of the military-media relationship. Throughout the history of American combat, the media have always been able to obtain some degree of access to the battlefield. Even Custer had a reporter, Mark Kellogg, ride with him into history at the Little Big Horn on June 25, 1876.² Of course, allowing members of the press to be present on the battlefield and aiding them in their work are two different matters.

In the Civil War, press access was a function of available transportation. Press coverage was random and informal. The military censored the news, but newsmen, as well as other civilians, could wander more or less unrestrained among the troops. General William T. Sherman complained of correspondents "picking up dropped expressions, inciting jealousy and discontent and doing infinite mischief."³

Procedures for accrediting and providing logistical support for the press arose during World War I. The government was eager to transmit news of the war in an

²Donald Atwell Zoll, "The Press and the Military," Parameters 14, Spring 1984, p. 34.

³Drew Middleton, "Barring Reporters from the Battlefield," New York Times Magazine, February 5, 1984, p. 37.

effort to mobilize public support for the war. To this end, in 1916, Douglas MacArthur was appointed "press release officer" of the War Department. Two years later, public relations was formally recognized as an Army staff function.⁴ During World War I, an adversarial relationship did not exist between the press and the military, in large part because of the character of the journalists themselves, most of whom had military experience or knowledge.

During World War II, American newsmen were allowed easy access to the battlefield. Although subject to censorship like their World War I counterparts, they were usually allowed to go where they wished, often with a public affairs officer as escort.

Newsmen were considered a part of the war effort. While they were allowed to go everywhere, they didn't--there simply were not enough reporters to cover every battle. Indeed, many major battles, including D-Day, were covered from rear echelon headquarters. Only a handful of reporters went ashore in Normandy on June 6, 1944.⁵

⁴Scott M. Cutlip and Allen H. Center, Effective Public Relations (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1971), p. 612.

⁵Peter Braestrup, Battle Lines (New York: Priority Press, 1985), p. 27.

Correspondents attached to the amphibious landing forces for the Normandy invasion were briefed one hour before embarkation of the first wave of soldiers. Planning documents for D-Day dealt with accommodations, accreditation and pooling for the press. All accredited civilian correspondents were given the rank of captain in the U.S. Army or major in the British Army.⁶

In late May 1944, Lieutenant General Walter Bedell Smith, Eisenhower's chief of staff, spoke with a group of correspondents. His remarks reflect an appreciation of how pooling could assist the reporters in their gathering and reporting of war news:

We recognize that there are two controlling forces in your work. First, to get the facts. Second, to get them to your medium of publication, press or radio. It is our job to see that you are provided with the proper opportunity to do both...On the subject of communications...in many cases it will be of greater advantage for you to work in groups. This will give you not only better communications but will give you an opportunity to be briefed and get the overall picture.⁷

Relatively few reporters were allowed to accompany the troops in the assault phase of D-Day. For example, within the entire First Army sector on Omaha and Utah beaches, there were only twenty U.S. correspondents. And not all of these landed in the first wave. Of the twenty

⁶Ibid., p. 33.

⁷Ibid., p. 35.

men, seven were with the three American wire services; three were with U.S. newspapers and one each came from the three major networks serving radio. Four were photographers in a picture pool. The remaining three represented The New Yorker, Stars and Stripes, and the newsreel pool.⁸

It is worth noting that the three major picture agencies--Associated Press, Acme, International News Photos--and Life created a photographic war pool under an agreement signed in late January 1942.

Commenting on the development of that photo pool, Peter Braestrup noted that they pooled their resources, supplying photographers for the war fronts from the staffs of all four organizations whose pictures were then available to all four organizations. By April 1943, twenty-eight pool photographers were on assignment in every part of the world where the war was being fought. After initial field censorship, the Army Signal Corps transmitted the photographs. The photographs were again reviewed in Washington by the War or Navy Department.⁹

The use of a press pool to help ensure the security of a combat operation was realized during the World War II operation at Dieppe. According to Drew Middleton, "Before

⁸Braestrup, Battle Lines, p. 37.

⁹Ibid., p. 29.

the raid on Dieppe in August, 1942, reporters were spirited away to Bath in England and kept incommunicado for four days before joining the units to which they had been assigned."¹⁰

Orders stated that nothing was to be passed regarding what happened at Dieppe unless it was written by the reporters who accompanied the troops and that their stories were to be pooled and made available to everyone after they returned to London.¹¹

Radio broadcasts during World II added new meaning to the word "press." Technology enabled expanded, quicker media coverage of the military. Moreover, combat reporters often trained, marched and went in to battle with the same unit. As a result, their stories about the soldiers, sailors or marines were quite personal, even compassionate. In a strange sort of way, the existence of a formal censorship policy in World War II improved press coverage. Commanders were able to talk to reporters with a freedom absent in later wars. They were accessible on the various fronts, with General Eisenhower taking the lead. He conducted full and detailed briefings for the

¹⁰Middleton, "Barring Reporters from the Battlefield," p. 92.

¹¹Peter Braestrup, Battle Lines, p. 42.

press before each major operation.¹²

Again, correspondents had complete freedom of movement on the battlefield, and, if they risked their lives by getting too close to the fighting, it was their concern. In fact the best-known reporter of World War II, Ernie Pyle, was killed by a Japanese sniper during the Okinawa campaign in April 1945.

The Korean War saw a transition in the style of reporting. The Ernie Pyles and Bill Mauldins became obsolete as the feature writer and columnist were replaced by news reporters. Television cameras and long-distance telephone communications made their first battlefield appearance during the Korean War. While not faced with the security precautions that plagued the media during the Normandy invasion of World War II, the thirty reporters who went ashore with the invasion troops at Inchon had to struggle with communications difficulties and the general confusion inherent in rapidly moving major operations.¹³

Another change from World War II was the censorship policy. Initially, the military followed a policy of voluntary self-censorship. General MacArthur refused to

¹²Middleton, "Barring Reporters from the Battlefield," p. 61

¹³Braestrup, Battle Lines, p. 53.

impose censorship because he thought it was unworkable. However, after repeated breaches in security because of a lack of common ground rules, censorship was finally imposed on December 20, 1950.¹⁴

Next came Vietnam, a difficult and frustrating war for the American military. There were no front lines, no easily identifiable enemy, no focus, no simply explained cause, no menace to the homeland, and, therefore, no nation-wide fervor of patriotism.¹⁵ The war also perplexed the press. Vietnam was an extremely complex war, with numerous political connotations to sort out, and there were news "blackouts" before major operations.

Most important, the military imposed no formal censorship on the press corps. Unlike the rigid censorship of World War II, Vietnam correspondents were required to edit their own stories under a set of ground rules that only generally described the types of combat information that could not be reported.¹⁶

The core of the military-media feud lay in the central contradictions of the policies pursued by Presidents Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon. Each president

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Phillip Knightley, The First Casualty (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), p. 381.

¹⁶ Robert Waters, "The Media vs the Military," Hartford Courant, December 23, 1985, p. 1.

sought to avoid making Vietnam the prime focus of U.S. policy, but each also feared that no U.S. president could "lose Vietnam" without adverse political repercussions. Thus, the U.S. military was told by the White House to avoid "losing Vietnam" -- at the lowest possible cost, militarily and politically.¹⁷ The only problem was that this "lowest cost" kept getting more and more expensive, especially in terms of American lives. And the American press was there to see it. The press covered the government's attempts to simultaneously appease society's "hawks" and "doves."

Television came of age during the Vietnam War, adding a new dimension to the military-media conflict. Describing television's impact, Marine Colonel Richard Upchurch said it placed "the stench, gore and tragedy of the Vietnam War right in the laps of the American people."¹⁸ Television focused on action and drama, and it looked for simple answers. Unfortunately, there were no simple answers. Countless network, syndicated and free-lance reporters roamed Southeast Asia, battling each other for bigger stories and more dramatic footage. The relative ease of entering the battlefield and the intense competition diluted any necessity or desire for pooling.

¹⁷Braestrup, Battle Lines, p. 61.

¹⁸Richard Upchurch, "Wanted: A Fair Press," Proceedings, (July 1984), p. 69.

Ironically, the ease with which the media had access to the Vietnam War threatened the very coverage of that war. It was "shuttle" and "sterile" mid-morning coverage. Reporters, with relative ease, could hitchhike a ride aboard a helicopter out of Saigon, catch a firefight in the middle of some rice paddy and still make it back to Saigon in time for "happy hour" at an air-conditioned bar.

This doesn't mean that there was no other type of reporting. To be sure, there was a great deal of thorough and in-depth coverage of the war. But, the above example is a common perception that many military officers had when they left Vietnam. Vietnam's lieutenants and captains who followed procedures on dealing with the media are today's colonels and generals who establish those procedures. The legacy of the Vietnam military-media relationship returned when American troops invaded Grenada on October 25, 1983.

Grenada was the stage for yet another scene in the military-media drama. However, unlike previous "plays," the American media were not even invited to attend this one. The media clamored for tickets at the stage door in neighboring Barbados, but had to settle for interviews in the dressing room after the play ended.

One of the justifications for excluding the press from the initial operations on Grenada was a concern for

the journalists' safety. However, according to author Donald Zoll, there is suspicion "that inadequate intelligence preparation for the Grenada operation rendered the Defense Department decidedly unsure as to just what it would discover once the island was invested, and that, consequently, it chose to bar the press until those conditions could be determined."¹⁹

Journalists said the exclusion undermined the primary role of the media. ABC's John McWethy said, "The job of the government is to deal with national crises and dispatch military forces, and collect intelligence and so forth. My job as a responsible citizen and as a responsible journalist is to chronicle what the government is doing."²⁰ In a Nightly News broadcast following the Grenada invasion, NBC commentator John Chancellor said, "The American government is doing whatever it wants to, without any representation of the American public watching what it is doing."²¹

Recognizing the bitterness and antagonism toward the media with which many soldiers left Vietnam, a comment by

¹⁹Zoll, "The Press and the Military," p. 31.

²⁰John Weisman, "Is TV Revealing Too Many Government Secrets?" TV Guide, February 15, 1986, p. 8.

²¹Morgan J. Smith, "Wanted: A Responsible Free Press," Proceedings (July 1984), p. 83.

Max Frankel, a former editorial page editor for The New York Times, probably reflected the attitude of some military officers: "The most astounding thing about the Grenada situation was the quick, facile assumption by some of the public that the press wanted to get in, not to witness the invasion on behalf of the people, but to sabotage it."²²

The subject of media access and the First Amendment was hotly debated in the aftermath of Grenada. Ann Devroy, White House correspondent for Gannett News Service, said "...It really alarms me that people start linking performance with access. I know the press does a lot wrong...I just think you can't give an inch on the First Amendment."²³

Some journalists point to the Supreme Court's 1980 decision in Richmond Newspapers vs Virginia as legal rationale for press access to Grenada. Lyle Denniston, who covers the Supreme Court for the Baltimore Sun, said:

...The Court for the first time recognized within the First Amendment press clause at least a limited guarantee of press access to cover some governmental activity. If an official activity -- criminal

²²Ibid.

²³Carl Sessions Stepp, "In the Wake of Grenada," The Quill (March 1984), p. 15.

trials, in that case -- has been open traditionally to the press, a right to cover²⁴ it builds up over time, according to that decision.

Jack Landau of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, said, "Since the Revolutionary War, we cannot find a publicly known battle from which the press was excluded, when it was there. It has always been given front-line access as soon as it arrived."²⁵ But the Pentagon contends that press access depends first upon access for the public in general: If it is true, as a historical matter, that the general public has not been routinely welcome at the scene of battle, then the press can claim no historical right of access for itself.²⁶

The proliferation of media and individuals seeking to cover the Grenada operation would have overwhelmed the military who, quite frankly, was not prepared to support media coverage of its operations. It is estimated that almost 700 "media representatives" were waiting in the wings to descend on Grenada. Of that number, about 400 were official representatives of media organizations. Trying to accredit even 400 reporters would have been an intolerable situation for the on-scene commander who was

²⁴Lyle Denniston, "Planning for Future Grenadas," The Quill (January 1984), p. 12.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., p. 13.

trying to fight a battle. Michael Burch, assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, admitted:

...(before Grenada) there was not sufficient public affairs awareness on the part of commanders and the planning staffs. There was always consideration of public affairs, but it was not formalized and, at times, I think public affairs was not brought in very early in the problem.²⁷

The problems created by today's electronic satellite news-gathering raised special concerns over media access to Grenada and similar situations. Navy Captain Brent Baker, a former assistant chief of information for the Navy Department, observed:

In Grenada, the American television networks (including CNN) had a civilian C-130 aircraft loaded with a ground satellite television station at the airfield in Barbados. They wanted to land and broadcast directly from Grenada. Thus, the new dimension of direct international broadcast from an earth satellite station on or near the battlefield poses a security problem with live or almost live battlefield broadcasts. The media and the military must discuss this new element of instant coverage.²⁸

Other than that acquired during Vietnam, the military has little institutional experience working with the electronic arm of the media. Former Chief of Naval Operations Admiral James Watkins said, "We have a long

²⁷Daily Pentagon News Briefing conducted by Mr. Michael Burch, transcript, August 23, 1984.

²⁸Brent Baker, "Wanted: A Professional Press," Proceedings (July 1984), p. 76.

history of working with the print media, but we have a very short history of dealing with television cameras employed on the military battlefield, capable of instantly beaming pictures via satellite to the world."²⁹

It is reasonable to assume that the experience in 1983 in Grenada is the type conflict the United States most likely will face in the future. International hot spots such as Korea, Central America or the Persian Gulf, could flare overnight into armed actions, providing another test for the military and the media.

It is within this brittle framework of warfare that the military and the media must develop and practice ways to operate side by side. Through an analysis of the Pentagon's press pool tests, this study can contribute to on-going efforts to improve the military-media relationship.

III. The Sidle Panel

If the debate over the media's exclusion from Grenada did nothing else, it signaled that whatever relationship did exist between the military and the media could disintegrate. As a result of the furor raised over the

²⁹James D. Watkins, "The Media and the Military," Vital Speeches of the Day (November 1985), p. 201.

media's exclusion from Grenada, General John Vessey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, directed the formation of a panel to conduct an extensive review of the relationship between the military and the media.

The Media-Military Relations panel was composed of public affairs representatives from the Department of Defense, retired journalists and former war correspondents. Vessy named Major General (Retired) Winant Sidle, a chief of information during Vietnam and a former deputy assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, to head the panel, commonly called the Sidle Panel.

After receiving the Sidle Panel's final report in August 1984, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger directed that the Department of Defense take appropriate measures to implement the recommendations of the Sidle Panel. In accordance with that directive, the Pentagon had conducted four tests of the press pool by August 1986.

The panel made three assumptions at the outset of its deliberations.

First, the members decided that the matter of First Amendment rights in combat was an extremely gray area. Therefore, they unanimously agreed "that the U.S. media should cover U.S. military operations to the maximum

degree possible consistent with mission security and the safety of U.S. forces."³⁰

Second, the panel would not assess the handling of the media at Grenada.

Third, the panel acknowledged the mutual responsibilities of the military and the media, and assumed that both would discharge those responsibilities. In other words, the panel limited itself to reviewing only the mechanics of improving the military-media relationship.³¹

On the way to making its recommendations, the panel heard from representatives from major news organizations, who offered their comments on ways to improve the military-media relationship.

The panel's final report included eight recommendations for improving the military-media relationship, along with a comment section for each recommendation. The comment section was particularly useful, because it listed the differences in opinion over the issues.

³⁰Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Media-Military Relations Panel Report No. 450-84, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), Washington, D.C.: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 23, 1986.

³¹Ibid.

Recommendation Two, one of the panel's eight recommendations, dealt specifically with press pools. It stated:

When it becomes apparent during military operational planning that news media pooling provides the only feasible means of furnishing the media with early access to an operation, planning should provide for the largest possible press pool that is practical and minimize the length of time the pool will be necessary before 'full coverage' is feasible.³²

The comment section for Recommendation Two indicated that there were differences of opinion among the panel members over a number of issues: the size of the pool; which news organizations should make up the pool; who should select and approve the assignment of individual news representatives to the pool; at what point in a military operation should the pool be activated; and at what point should pool operations be terminated and the military operation opened up to full media coverage.

The panel addressed some of these issues by saying they would have to be resolved on a case-by-case basis. Others remained totally unresolved as the panel completed its deliberations. Although it was not a primary focus of this study, the success of the press pool tests in resolving those lingering issues was also addressed.

The panel did agree that pool members should be in good physical condition and should be prepared to accept

³²Ibid.

the physical dangers inherent in military operations. Also, media representatives who appeared before the panel unanimously opposed pools in general. However, they also agreed that they would cooperate in pooling agreements if that were necessary for them to obtain early access to an operation.³³

In an August 23, 1984, press conference announcing the release of the findings of the Sidle Panel, Michael Burch, assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, mentioned several other unresolved topics concerning press pools, such as operations in another country, accreditation procedures and television operations in a pool and how a pool could deal with media that were already on the battle scene when the pool arrived.³⁴

Media reports after the announcement of the Sidle Panel's findings expanded on the testimony of media representatives who had appeared before the panel. Articles also followed up on issues raised by the panel. The media were quick to respond to the announcement of the Sidle Panel's recommendations, especially concerning press pools. Walter Mossberg, the Wall Street Journal's assistant Washington bureau chief, was skeptical about the

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Daily Pentagon News Briefing conducted by Mr. Michael Burch, transcript, August 23, 1984.

pool, saying, "In the future, you can be sure that when the press gets wind of something, it will be much quicker and surer to get a reporter on the scene -- even before the military contacts them."³⁵

An article in Editor & Publisher said that reporters who somehow got to the scene before the pool should be made part of the pool despite their protests. The article also cited testimony before the panel which said that the press should have a large role in accreditation procedures. John Siegenthaler, editor and publisher of the Nashville Tennessean, said, "We want a system where persons assigned by the media will be accepted by the military."³⁶

In discussing the panel's recommendations, a Time article said that non-U.S. citizens should be allowed in the pool, pointing out that any rule to the contrary would prevent reporters such as ABC Anchorman Peter Jennings, a Canadian citizen, from joining the pool.³⁷ When asked during an interview about pool operations in another country, Sidle said that "...if you are going to have an

³⁵ Andrew Radolf, "Press Escorts Suggested," Editor & Publisher, February 18, 1984, p. 11.

³⁶ Andrew Radolf, "Military Meets the Press," Editor & Publisher, February 11, 1984, p. 10.

³⁷ Janice Castro, "Peace Pact on War Coverage," Time, September 3, 1984, p. 73.

attack by an allied force, the allied media have to be given some attention, and we couldn't just use U.S. media correspondents."³⁸

The media gave particular coverage to the flap raised by the Pentagon's initial decision to exclude newspapers from the pool.

The Pentagon contended that the news agencies could provide dispatches for newspapers. Edward R. Cony, chairman of the ASNE's Freedom of Information Committee, said, "The decision to exclude newspaper reporters from the pool strikes me as strange, unfair, and downright outrageous."³⁹ The Pentagon later reversed its decision, expanding the pool from eleven to twelve members, adding a newspaper reporter. The desired composition of the pool would be one reporter and a two-member film-sound crew from one of the four major television networks (ABC, CBS, NBC and CNN); two representatives from AP, UPI or Reuters; one correspondent and one photographer representing the three national news magazines (Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News & World Report); one representative from a radio network; and, finally, one to three newspaper reporters.

³⁸"Advice to Both Sides: Pay More Attention," Sea Power, (July 1984), p. 14.

³⁹Gerald F. Seib, "Pentagon Says It Will Study Plan to Let Reporters Accompany Troops into Battle," Wall Street Journal, August 24, 1984, p. 1.

The pool could be unlimited in size or it could be as few as one person, depending on the particular situation.

In responding to concerns raised over the media's ability to maintain secrecy once a pool was activated, Richard Halloran, a defense correspondent for The New York Times, pointed out,

Once a reporter joins an operation, his news organization has a vested interest in maintaining security. Its reporter would be aboard aircraft or landing ships, where bullets and bombs have an unfortunate way of not discriminating between soldiers and scribblers.⁴⁰

In addition, bureau chiefs said that they would probably not assign their regular Pentagon correspondents to a pool because their absence during a call-up of the pool would be noticeable.

IV. Literature Review

There are no published documents that deal totally and specifically with the Pentagon's press pool tests. Three related theses have been completed since the press pool tests began. Although all three documents include a discussion of the Sidle Panel's report, only one addressed the press pool tests that grew out of the panel's study.

⁴⁰Richard Halloran, "How the Pentagon and the Press Can Call a Truce," Washington Journalism Review (January/February 1984), p. 22.

In 1985, Dwight C. Daniels, a graduate student at the University of Missouri-Columbia, conducted a study titled "The Military and the Media: Historical Perspective and Prospective Study of the Relationship." His method focused on an analysis of the results of a questionnaire administered to ROTC cadets and journalism students at the University of Missouri-Columbia. During a review of the evolution of the military-media relationship, he devoted three pages to a brief description of the Pentagon's first two press pool tests.

Daniels discussed the press pool tests only as a part of the Pentagon's program to educate its officers on how the press and government interact. In his review of the first test, he focused on the issue of secrecy and how it had failed. He also offered several comments from journalists concerning the effect communications equipment had in filing stories during the test. He noted the second test's qualified success and how it could set the stage for future and more rigorous tests of the press pool.

In another 1985 thesis, "A Pilot Study of Press-Military Relationships," Peter Gabriel, a graduate student at the University of Maryland, reviewed press-military relationships from the Civil War through Grenada. He discussed the Sidle Panel and interviewed correspondents and military public affairs officers at the Pentagon about the status of the military-media

relationship since Grenada. His treatment of the press pool did not cover the tests themselves.

Timothy Ondracek produced a thesis in 1985 titled "The Changing Relationship Between the Military and the Media." Through a literature analysis, he investigated how and why the military-media relationship changed from World War I to Grenada. His analysis sought to determine "what controls the government can place on the military and the media to insure ethical behavior is followed by each group."⁴¹ As with Gabriel's thesis, Ondracek did not treat the press pool tests.

On October 23, 1986, a military-media relations panel was conducted at the Department of Defense Information School at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana. The purpose of the panel was to discuss the press pool tests. The panel members were Lieutenant Colonel Robert Taylor, a plans officer in the office of the assistant secretary of defense for public affairs; Elizabeth Colton, a reporter for National Public Radio; Gary Keefer, a photo-journalist for U.S. News & World Report; and Dirck Halstead, a contract photographer for Time magazine. All the panel members had participated in one or more of the four

⁴¹Timothy H. Ondracek, "The Changing Relationship Between the Military and the Media" (M.S. thesis, Air Force Institute of Technology, 1985), p. 16.

Pentagon press pool tests. They were candid in their comments about the tests and they offered substantive suggestions for improving future exercises of the press pool.

Among their many comments about press pool operations, there were three general observations about future press pool tests.

First, media organizations participating in the press pool continue to spend a great deal of money to support their participation in the pool, ranging from overtime salaries (pool participants must be on call 24 hours-a-day) to new, more portable, lightweight equipment.

Second, military planners need to do a better job of accommodating the specific requirements of the media. For example, a print journalist has story interests and support requirements different from those of a TV crew or photographer. The filing parameters for a TV reporter probably have tighter deadlines than those for a magazine writer.

Third, although one purpose of the tests is to exercise the mechanics of the pool system and the military and media participants, it is highly desirable that the exercise itself be capable of producing something that is newsworthy. If the media organizations are to continue to devote the same amount of money, people and equipment for participation in the pool, the military exercises for

which the pool is activated should be worthy of coverage.⁴²

Although the issue of access may not be the most important problem in the military-media relationship, the literature review did reveal it to be a continuing concern. It certainly was a crucial issue in the Grenada operation. Efforts to improve the military-media relationship must, at some point, address this problem.

The testing of the press pool concept was part of the Pentagon's plan to improve the military-media relationship. To date, no specific research has assessed the effectiveness of the press pool tests in determining whether pooling is a feasible way for the media to report news during the initial phases of a military operation. This study sought to answer that very question.

As already noted, the Sidle Panel and subsequent discussions in the media identified several issues related to press pools. Because of their relevance to press pools, this study included these issues as supplemental questions to answer during the analysis of the results of the press pool tests. That is, have the press pool tests to date been able to answer the following questions:

1. How large should the press pool be?

⁴²panel Discussion, Seminar, Defense Information School, Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, October 23, 1986.

2. What media organizations should make up the pool?
3. Who should select and approve the assignment of individual media representatives to the press pool?
4. At what point in a military operation should the press pool be activated?
5. At what point in a military operation should pool operations be terminated and the military operation opened up to full media coverage?
6. Once the pool is activated, how should media organizations treat the news embargo associated with that pool if they learn of the pool or the military operation from other sources?
7. What should the relationship be between the press pool and any other media that are already "on the scene" when the media arrive at their destination?

V. The Press Pool Tests

The Department of Defense Press Pool is currently composed of forty-four media organizations: twenty-six newspaper organizations, three news magazines, three wire services, eight radio organizations, and four television networks. The individual media representatives on the pool are rotated among the participating organizations on a three-month tour. As each organization rotates into the pool, it designates a point of contact for receiving notification from the Pentagon that the pool is being

activated. Each pool member must be on call 24 hours a day. That requirement alone represents considerable manpower and financial costs for each media organization in the pool.

Once the decision is made at the Pentagon to activate the pool, it normally takes 35-40 minutes to actually notify the media points of contact. After they are alerted by their respective points of contact, the pool members then assemble at the departure point, usually Andrews Air Force Base outside Washington, D.C.

Once assembled, a number of actions are accomplished -- a general orientation and safety briefing is conducted, travel orders are issued, immunization records and passports are checked, accreditation is confirmed, special equipment and/or clothing is issued, and "ground rules" are reviewed.

"Ground Rules" for the pool include the following points:

- ** Protect operational security and troop safety
- ** Do not discuss pool activation
- ** Comply with filing procedures
- ** Observe pooling policies
- ** Remain with escort officers

The ground rules include an acknowledgment that the senior military commander in the exercise area is the ultimate authority for the clearance and release of information.

The members of the pool do not know whether the pool has been activated as a test for deployment to observe a military exercise, or whether the pool has been activated for an actual deployment to a combat situation. For security reasons, the pool members do not learn of the geographical location to which the pool is being deployed until after the pool has left Washington, D.C., and is enroute to the destination. However, from a practical standpoint, any special clothing-equipment issued would serve as a strong indicator of the deployment destination. Moreover, in an actual situation, routine monitoring of world news would also help narrow the identity of the deployment location.

Once the pool has left for its destination, the pool members are informed of the specific destination and may be briefed on other details of the exercise as appropriate. After the pool has reached its destination, the bureau chiefs of the media organizations represented in the pool are advised of the pool's location and at what time they should expect to begin receiving "copy" from their pool representative. The time at which the

information can be released and the news embargo lifted also is confirmed.

After arrival at the exercise area, members of the pool are given the maximum flexibility possible to cover the exercise. Military escorts are provided to assist the media with transportation, and other logistical needs, and to facilitate their access to various areas of the exercise. At prearranged times, the members of the pool reassemble to write their stories and file their copy and film.

Military and civilian communications systems are employed to file print copy. Video and audio tapes, film and still photographs are transported to the nearest "secure" facility via air or ground transportation. Each media organization must arrange for any subsequent transportation of film or tape.⁴³

On April 20, 1985, the Pentagon conducted the first test of the press pool. As of December 31, 1986, there have been three other press pool tests, the last one taking place on August 1, 1986. Each of the four press pool tests included 10-13 journalists and photographers representing the mix of type news organizations described earlier. The tests have taken place in Honduras; Fort

⁴³Interview with Lieut. Col. Robert W. Taylor, Office of the assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), telephone, September 16, 1986.

Campbell, Kentucky; off the southern coast of California; and at Twenty Nine Palms, California.

The Department of Defense (DOD) issued an unclassified after-action report after each test.⁴⁴ Each report described objectives for the test, the scenario for the test, information about the military exercise observed by the pool, comments on strengths and weaknesses of the test and some of the lessons learned. Naturally, each test also generated media coverage of the test itself, as well as the exercise observed.

The following table is based on information contained in the DOD unclassified after-action reports. It lists the dates for each of the press pool tests, duration of the test and the major media organizations represented in the pool:

TABLE 1
PENTAGON PRESS POOL TESTS

<u>TEST NO.</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>DURATION</u>	<u>MEDIA</u>
1	Apr. 20, 1985	5 days	CNN Mutual Radio Wall Street Journal

⁴⁴The after-action reports were produced by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), Washington, D.C. 20301. The specific title of each after-action report is referenced in subsequent footnotes.

			New York Times Newsweek UPI AP Copley News Service
2	Sep. 19, 1985	1 day	CNN Mutual Radio Los Angeles Times Newsday Time UPI AP Newhouse News
3	Dec. 10, 1985	2 days	NBC TV United Stations Radio Milwaukee Journal U.S. News & World Report Scripps Howard News UPI AP
4	Aug. 1, 1986	2 days	CNN National Public Radio Time Christian Science Monitor Reuters UPI AP

VI. Method

The terse relationship between the military and the media has spanned the spectrum of interaction, from genuine cooperation to mutual distrust. Recognizing that media access to battlefields has been a crucial element of that relationship, the objective of this study was to evaluate the success of the Pentagon's press pool tests in determining whether pooling is a viable way for the media to gain access to and report news during the initial phases of a military operation.

The method used was qualitative research, which included analysis of unclassified government documents, media coverage of the press pool tests, and a panel discussion about press pools by several test participants.

Accomplishment of test objectives served as the criterion for determining whether the tests were an effective vehicle for resolving media access to military operations. The study identified three objectives that the military wanted to accomplish during the tests, as well as three objectives that the media wanted to accomplish during the tests.

The three military test objectives were: to maintain operational security (secrecy) of the press pool test; to implement procedures for organizing, activating and deploying a press pool; and to improve the proficiency of the military in supporting media operations in a combat situation. These objectives were identified through an analysis of the DOD after-action reports of the press pool tests, and through an interview with the Pentagon's project officer for the press pool tests.⁴⁵

This study defined operational security, or secrecy, as the protection of information about the activation and deployment of the press pool. The objective was to

⁴⁵ Interview with Lieut. Col. Robert W. Taylor, September 16, 1986.

prevent disclosure of the activation and deployment of the pool until after the Pentagon's official initial release about the press pool test.

The second objective, to implement pool procedures, was defined in the study as putting into practice all the administrative, transportation, logistical and communications procedures for operating and supporting a press pool.

The study defined the last military objective, to improve proficiency, as increasing the military's expertise in working with the media, and in planning for the support of media operations.

The media's objectives for the press pool tests were not as easy to ascertain. Because there was no single spokesman identified for the media, the media's objectives were determined by analyzing available research sources.

Although it was recognized that a primary concern was to gather and report news, specific goals had to be identified to accurately assess the results of the tests. A basic journalism text, Basic News Writing, presents three requirements for news: (1) timeliness, (2) thoroughness, and (3) accuracy. The study used these requirements as objectives for the media in the press pool tests.

The study defined timeliness as the currency of the coverage produced by the press pool. Thoroughness was

defined as the completeness of the coverage of the exercise and the test. Accuracy was defined as correct, error-free and factual coverage.

The study analyzed the results of each press pool test's success in accomplishing the six objectives. The results of each test were determined by reviewing the unclassified DOD after-action reports, news copy generated by pool participants and comments from the panel discussion.

Each test objective was assigned a numerical weight based on its relative importance to the overall success of the tests -- the larger the value assigned an objective, the greater its importance to the test. Each objective maintained the same assigned value for each test; e.g., timeliness was not considered to be more important to the success of Press Pool 1 than it was to the success of Press Pool 3.

All six objectives were considered together in assigning weighted values, rather than considering the military objectives separate from the media objectives.

In this study, the following weighted values were assigned to the test objectives:

<u>OBJECTIVE</u>		<u>WEIGHT</u>
Security (military)	30%
Timeliness (media)	25%

Procedures (military)	20%
Proficiency (military)	10%
Thoroughness (media)	10%
Accuracy (media)	<u>5%</u>
TOTAL	100%

The study weighted security the heaviest because it was the principal reason for even testing the pooling concept. Pooling was viewed as the most feasible way for providing the media with access to the initial phases of a military operation while, at the same time, ensuring the security of the operation and the safety of the troops involved. If the tests proved that press pools could not provide the requisite degree of operational security, then press pools could not be considered as a means for providing media access.

The media's objective of timeliness was considered the next most important objective. If the press pool could not afford to the media the means of providing timely news to their audience(s), then the press pool's value to the media would be questionable. In other words, the press pool had to provide the media with the opportunity to report the news, as well as gather it.

The study considered the military's implementation of pooling procedures as critical to the determination of whether the press pool could work. It was recognized that because each press pool test involved different

circumstances and had different requirements for supporting the media, there would necessarily be differences in procedures. Nonetheless, a systematic approach to identifying requirements and then implementing procedures to meet those requirements was necessary.

The objectives of proficiency and thoroughness were considered to have equal importance in judging the success of the press pool tests. The relatively brief duration of each test lessened the effect of unit proficiency on the actual success of each press pool test. Because different military units were involved in each of the four press pool tests, any increase in proficiency was directly proportional to the degree in which procedures were refined from one test to the next. The military's ability to capture the lessons learned from each test and then to transfer that information to the participants in succeeding tests was important.

The media's objective of thoroughness was considered to have the same relative importance as the military's objective of enhancing the proficiency of its units. The thoroughness with which the media in each press pool test were able to cover that particular exercise was a function of the type of exercise and how much of that exercise the pool observed.

The media's success in achieving accuracy was considered to be the least important objective in each of the press pool tests. Although accuracy is a cardinal

element of the news, it was not critical to the overall success of the press pool test. The performance of each individual journalist in the pool had more effect on accuracy than did the press pool itself.

The study evaluated the six objectives in each test using a numerical scale of 0 to 1 -- "0" meant that the objective was not achieved; "1/2" meant that the objective was only partially achieved; and "1" meant that the objective was achieved.

The ratings, as determined by the study, are displayed in a matrix format (see TABLE 6 on page 64), indicating the unweighted and weighted evaluation for each objective in each press pool test. The percentage of objectives accomplished in each test was also displayed, as well as an overall percent score for all four press pool tests as a whole.

The seven related but unresolved issues were addressed as supplemental questions. The study determined whether each question had been answered during the course of the tests, or whether the question remained as an outstanding issue at the end of the four tests.

The impact that test artificialities had on the success of the tests was also considered during the analysis of the test results. Several external factors also were reviewed for their influence on the quantity and quality of media coverage produced by each press pool test.

VII. Results of the Press Pool Tests

A. Press Pool 1

TABLE 2

ANALYSIS OF PRESS POOL 1

Security	Timeliness	Procedures	Proficiency	Accuracy	Thoroughness
0	0	1/2	1/2	1	1

Press Pool 1 was launched at 6 p.m. on Saturday, April 20, 1985, when ten Washington-based correspondents were alerted to assemble at Andrews Air Force Base by 4 the next morning. This began a five-day deployment of the press pool to observe a U.S. military exercise in Honduras. The exercise, called UNIVERSAL TREK 85, involved about 7,000 U.S. troops. The key events were an amphibious landing and a simulated strike against a small guerrilla force.

The most significant result of the first test of the press pool concerned the objective of maintaining operational security. Within hours after the pool was activated, word of the operation leaked. Finger-pointing for the blame for the leak immediately ensued. According to the Pentagon's after-action report, "A network TV correspondent indicated that information on activation of the pool reached him two days before bureau chiefs were

notified."⁴⁶ The report added that, according to network bureau chiefs, information of the impending deployment was widespread in Tegucigalpa (capital of Honduras) as a result of the advance work that had been done to arrange a waiver of the normal entry procedures into the country for the press pool.

A New York Times article revealed another possible source for the leak. After being notified that the pool was being formed, Bart Tessler, news director of the Mutual Radio Network, informed both the reporter who was to go and Ron Nessen, vice president for news. At 9 Sunday morning, Tessler began calling other radio networks, including ABC and NBC, advising them to arrange for special telephone lines in order to receive a voice transmission from Mutual's reporter later in the day. The other networks then began calling the Pentagon and were told that a practice procedure was underway.⁴⁷

However, according to the Times article, the Pentagon had learned of a security breach shortly after midnight Saturday when Jack Smith, bureau chief of CBS News in Washington, called the Pentagon and asked about the pool

⁴⁶Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), report, "Public Affairs: Media Pool - UNIVERSAL TREK 85," May 17, 1985.

⁴⁷Alex S. Jones, "Pentagon's Press Plan: Balancing the 2 Sides," New York Times, April 24, 1985, p. A2.

(CBS was not included in this pool.) Smith would not reveal the identity of his source or whether it was even a military or news source. But Smith "would also not rule out that his source was Deborah Potter, a CBS correspondent who is married to Robert Witten, Mutual's pool reporter."⁴⁸

Newsweek reported that "one network, warned by Mutual to clear radio connections, alerted its Managua reporter on an open telephone line -- which would have been a serious security breach if the mission had been a real operation."⁴⁹

Regardless of where the blame for the leak lay, the fact remained that security for the operation had been compromised. Recalling that the concern for operational security and the safety of soldiers was the primary reason for the media exclusion from the initial phases of the Grenada invasion, this failure of the primary test objective carried increased significance. Thus, the objective of secrecy was not accomplished in Press Pool 1 and was evaluated as a "0."

Secrecy was not the only test objective that encountered difficulties in Press Pool 1. The ability to transmit stories in a timely manner was hampered by a

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Jonathan Alter, Kim Willenson, Ann McDaniel, "The Pentagon Tests the Press," Newsweek, May 6, 1985, p. 29.

breakdown in the communications system.

The New York Times reported that news reports to Washington "were delayed because Navy technicians were unable to make the telephones work on the helicopter carrier USS NASSAU, and because a teletype machine was busy with routine military messages."⁵⁰

Benjamin Shore, national affairs correspondent for Copley News Service and a member of the pool, said, "The Pentagon failed miserably with the one thing we wanted to make this an effective exercise -- that is, the ability to file. I think we could have done a lot better with carrier pigeons."⁵¹

The TV side of the pool also experienced filing problems. Gene Randall of Cable News Network (CNN), the pool's TV representative, had to send his videotapes to the U.S. through a NBC reporter who was not associated with the pool, but was based in Tegucigalpa. The pictures were transmitted to other networks, which supplied their own narratives. However, Randall's narrative had been omitted in the transmission altogether, leaving CNN with

⁵⁰ Bill Keller, "Pentagon Test on News Coverage Hurt by Communications Lapse," New York Times, April 27, 1985, p. A29.

⁵¹ Ibid.

no commentary for its own man's shots of the exercise.⁵² Tapes from the pool's radio reporter were also sent out through Tegucigalpa. The pool's only news photographer, Barry Thum of the AP, couldn't transmit his pictures of an event until two days after it occurred. Even though he brought a portable developing kit and a special electronic photo transmitter, he lacked a workable telephone line. He was plagued by the same problem as the pool's print representatives.⁵³

Lt. Cmdr. John Woodhouse, the Navy officer who accompanied the pool, said, "We reached a place in the world where we couldn't achieve a radio telephone link."⁵⁴

This problem with the radio telephone lines resulted in delays of up to six hours between the time news copy was delivered to the ship's communication office until it was transmitted from the ship. Additional delays occurred in receiving the copy at the military communications center in the States, providing it to a commercial

⁵²John J. Fialka, "Effort to Coordinate Pentagon Press Pool for Mock Invasion in Honduras Flopped," Wall Street Journal, April 26, 1985, p. 5.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

carrier, and delivering it to the respective news agency. The net result was a delay of up to 21 hours from story filing until final receipt.⁵⁵

In its after-action report, the Pentagon acknowledged the significance of the problem, saying, "If the story arrives after deadline, it may be two days from the time the story is written until it appears. This was clearly unacceptable to the media."⁵⁶

Although the exercise "news," ranging from videotapes to print stories, was ultimately filed, transmitted and reported, it was certainly not accomplished in a timely fashion. Thus, the objective of timeliness was not achieved and was evaluated as a "0."

The objective of implementing procedures was only partially achieved, earning a "1/2" rating. The procedures that were present and were utilized were less than effective. As reflected in the failure to achieve the objective of secrecy, procedures for activating and assembling the pool were deficient. The after-action report and media accounts of the exercise indicated that perhaps bureau chiefs were notified of the pool's activation too much in advance of the pool's assembly and

⁵⁵Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), report, May 17, 1985.

⁵⁶Ibid.

deployment. This early notice increased the opportunity and risk of disclosing information, which, in fact, happened.

As indicated in the discussion on the failure to maintain secrecy, the procedures for obtaining host nation clearances when the pool is deployed to another country may have contributed to a premature awareness of an activation of the press pool.

Regarding logistics and transportation procedures, the after-action report said, "A typewriter was broken during handling and the mobility of the camera crew was hampered when they were required to follow the same procedures for moving gear and personnel in landing craft as were the marines."⁵⁷ This indicated that procedures for supporting the media did not adequately anticipate the media's equipment and mobility requirements.

The objective of improving the proficiency of the military in supporting the media was directly related to the effectiveness of the procedures used. Obviously, some of the procedures, as described above, were flawed. A New York Times article commented, "The military escorts did not seem to understand that getting the stories home was the most important requirement of (our) jobs."⁵⁸ This

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Keller, "Test Hurt by Communications Lapse," p. A29.

same observation was reflected in comments in a Washington Journalism Review article on Press Pool 1. Because advance planning did not adequately address media equipment requirements and the criticality of timely filing, the proficiency objective was evaluated as a "1/2."

The objectives of accuracy and thoroughness were achieved and both were rated as "1" by the study. Because Press Pool 1 was the first activation of the pooling concept, a considerable amount of media copy was produced. However, because the primary objective of maintaining secrecy was not achieved, the media coverage focused on that particular failure, as well as other problem areas that might normally be associated with the first test of anything. Only a small part of the coverage was devoted to facts about the military exercise which the pool observed. Discounting perceptions and speculation about the reasons for the failure to maintain secrecy, the information reported was accurate.

Although the amount of copy devoted to the actual exercise was minimal, a review of all the source material indicated that the pool was provided the opportunity to cover the exercise fully. A New York Times article said, "the military did a good job...providing access to troops and Honduran officials."⁵⁹ Another New York Times article

⁵⁹Ibid.

commented, "Confusion, conflicting military communications priorities and recurrent equipment breakdowns left much of the story untold, unphotographed and untelevised as the mock invasion was unfolding."⁶⁰ Nonetheless, it appeared that the media organizations decided that the "news" was the failure of the test itself rather than the military exercise that the pool observed.

B. Press Pool 2

TABLE 3
ANALYSIS OF PRESS POOL 2

Security	Timeliness	Procedures	Proficiency	Accuracy	Thoroughness
1	1	1	1	1	1

At 9 p.m. on September 18, 1985, Washington bureau chiefs were notified that they should alert their pool members to report to the Pentagon at 1 a.m. Thus began the second test of the press pool. Unlike the first test, this one did not deploy outside the United States, and it lasted only one day.

⁶⁰Fialka, Mock Invasion in Honduras Flopped," p. 5.

After a briefing at the Pentagon and a trip by van to Andrews Air Force Base, twelve members of the Washington news media were aboard an Air Force aircraft bound for Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Only eight hours after they had been alerted to assemble in the Pentagon's press parking lot, the reporters, photographers and TV crewmen found themselves sitting next to soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division in UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters zipping across the tree tops of the Kentucky countryside on a night mission to the exercise area.

The press pool observed one day of an 8-day exercise called DOUBLE EAGLE '85 -- a war game involving 4,000 Army soldiers, more than 100 helicopters and several armored units. Among the operations observed was a twenty three-minute artillery raid, during which two howitzers were flown in by helicopters, aimed by computer at an "enemy" supply dump, fired and were quickly airlifted out.

After observing the exercises in the field, the press pool members flew back to the Public Affairs Office at Fort Campbell, wrote and produced their material and filed it using commercial and military communications.⁶¹ The

⁶¹Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), report, "Public Affairs - Media Pool After Action Report," October 7, 1985.

videotape shot by the Cable News Network (CNN) was flown by military helicopter to the commercial airport at Nashville, Tennessee, where a charter plane picked it up and took it on to Atlanta.⁶² By 6:15 p.m. the press pool had departed Fort Campbell for Andrews Air Force Base.

The maintenance of operational security of this press pool was greatly improved over that of Press Pool 1 and was rated as "1." There were no leaks of the operation prior to the official announcement by the Pentagon, approximately twelve hours after the pool had been alerted. Once again, the pool was activated and deployed during the hours of darkness. However, notification procedures had been refined and there was greater awareness among the military and the media about preserving the secrecy of the pool's activation. No one wanted to be responsible for producing the type leaks experienced in Press Pool 1. Additionally, Press Pool 2 deployed four hours earlier after notification than did Press Pool 1, thereby reducing the time available to compromise the operation's security.

The study also rated timeliness as a "1." Immediate access to commercial phone systems, availability of

⁶²101st Airborne Division, report, "DOD Media Pool Report Number One," September 19, 1985.

military aircraft to transport film to a nearby commercial airport and an absence of the frustrations associated with overseas communications greatly facilitated the filing of copy produced from the exercise. In addition, a special 1,800-word media pool message format was devised to aid in quickly transmitting and handling pool material. By using this format, the pool was able to reduce the time between filing the material to receipt by their home bureaus from over twenty-four hours in Press Pool 1 to under four hours in this pool.⁶³

The 1,800-word format was divided into 600 words for each type of media (wire-magazine-newspaper). After these stories were formatted and turned over to the communications personnel for transmission to the Pentagon press room, the journalists filed the same stories to their home bureaus by commercial telephone.

The implementation of procedures was greatly improved over Press Pool 1. The study rated this test objective as "1" for Press Pool 2. As evidenced by the absence of leaks and the increased responsiveness of communications, considerable attention was devoted to procedures in the intervening five months between Press Pool 1 and 2. The

⁶³Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), report, October 7, 1985.

fact that Press Pool 2 was only one-fifth the duration of Press Pool 1, and the fact that it wasn't overseas certainly had an influence on the effectiveness of those procedures. As noted by the pool's Time correspondent Michael Duffy, "the operation went like clockwork."⁶⁴ Even Army Colonel Dante Camia, the Pentagon officer in charge of the press pool tests, said, "We are light years ahead of where we were in April, when the pool was first tested."⁶⁵

The objective of increasing the proficiency of military units to support media operations was evaluated during the study as "1." Although a function of the equipment itself, the four-hour time between filing and receipt of news copy reflected an increased responsiveness by the military to the media's need for timely reporting of news. One account of the exercise said, "...the military was far better prepared to transmit news copy and pictures from the field to bureaus in Washington, D.C."⁶⁶

The military's cooperation with the media is a significant portion of that proficiency. The pool's

⁶⁴ 101st Airborne Division, report, September 19, 1985.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ "Army Airlifts Media Into Mock Invasion," The News Media & The Law, n.d.

newspaper report filed by David Wood, Newhouse News Service; Roy Gutman, Newsday; and Michael Wines, Los Angeles Times included the following remark: "None of the officers in the field voiced objections about having reporters closely observe their military operations...participants on both sides suggested that the day's events had set a new tone of cooperation."⁶⁷ The Pentagon's after-action report said, "...support and cooperation (by the supporting units) were superb and contributed greatly to the positive response of the press to this exercise."⁶⁸

The objectives of thoroughness and accuracy both received a "1" evaluation for Press Pool 2. Besides observing the artillery raid, members of the pool were briefed by military commanders in the field, accompanied an infantry battalion in their conduct of a "movement-to-contact" exercise, and ate breakfast and lunch in the field with soldiers participating in the exercise.⁶⁹ From an access standpoint, it appeared the pool had the opportunity to observe about as much as it

⁶⁷ 101st Airborne Division, report, September 19, 1985.

⁶⁸ Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), report, October 7, 1985.

⁶⁹ Steve Zolvinski, "Exercise Becomes Media Test," Leaf-Chronicle, September 20, 1985, p. 1A.

could in the time it had at Fort Campbell. The information contained in all the coverage correlated with the events of the exercise.

C. Press Pool 3

TABLE 4
ANALYSIS OF PRESS POOL 3

Security	Timeliness	Procedures	Proficiency	Accuracy	Thoroughness
1	1	1	1	1	1

Press Pool 3 began at 2 a.m. on December 10, 1985. That's when Washington bureau chiefs were contacted and told to have their pool members at Andrews Air Force Base by 6 a.m. At approximately 7 a.m., twelve news representatives and their two military escorts left Washington, D.C. After landing at Marine Corps Air Station, El Toro, California, the pool boarded a helicopter and was flown to the flagship of a naval task force.

The pool received initial briefings from various commanders involved with exercise KERNAL USHER 86-1. The pool was then split to other ships and to the beachhead to observe a mock amphibious assault by more than 1,200 Marines. The pool reassembled aboard the flagship and wrote their initial releases.

The second day was devoted to producing and filing follow-up stories. At 3 p.m., the pool was flown to a press center at El Toro to refile materials using commercial telephones. The pool left El Toro at 5 p.m., arriving in Washington, D.C., two days after the pool had been activated.⁷⁰

All test participants were security conscious; the Pentagon's after-action report and all the media copy clearly noted that there were no leaks. The pool departed Andrews Air Force Base nearly five hours after the initial alert,⁷¹ compared to six hours for Press Pool 2 and ten hours for Press Pool 1. The reduced time required to deploy the pool appeared to also reduce the risk of possible compromise. Operational security was maintained for the planned amount of time (24 hours), twice that of Press Pool 2. This objective was accomplished and received a rating of "1."

The objective of timeliness was also rated "1." By the second day of the Pool's operation, newspapers were already carrying articles about the exercise based on copy produced by members of the pool. Pool video tapes, audio tapes and exposed photographic film were flown by a Navy

⁷⁰Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), report, "Media Pool No. 3 After Action Report-KERNAL USHER 86-1," January 2, 1986.

⁷¹Ibid.

helicopter to El Toro where they were picked up for dissemination through commercial channels.⁷²

Again, both civilian and military communications and transportation were employed to file copy. Coding the raw news copy in to formatted messages (1,8000 words) remained an effective procedure and reduced actual transmission time.

The total time from filing to receipt by news agency (three and a half hours) was enhanced by an increased "priority" assigned to the media messages. The Pentagon's after-action report noted, "Pool messages are now treated like those assigned immediate precedence and are coded for quick dissemination when received (by the Pentagon)."⁷³ In other words, the higher precedence meant quicker handling by the military communications system.

Because of the scenario for this exercise, the reporters were able to prepare their reports in advance and provide them to the military message center prior to the approved release time. "When it was time to release the press messages, the pre-punched tapes were already prepared and the press messages were quickly dispatched with minimal disruption."⁷⁴

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

The implementation of procedures was assessed a rating of "1" by the study. The reasons cited for the timeliness of filing reflect some of the effective procedures used in this test, such as assigning higher precedence to media messages and preparing messages in advance. One procedural problem was that the pool's "radio reporter was unable to record interviews aboard the ship due to electrical interference."⁷⁵

The only other procedural problem noted was transportation. After receiving their initial exercise briefing aboard the flagship, the members of the pool wanted to go to various locations to observe the amphibious assault. Plans developed before the pool arrived in California had already determined which types of media -- print, radio, TV, photographers -- would go where. This did not match with what the members of the pool wanted to do which caused adjustments in the schedule to transport the pool ashore and to other ships. In other words, the prior military planing was too structured, causing a delay in rearranging transportation, which ultimately caused further delays in covering parts of the exercise.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Panel Discussion, Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, October 23, 1986.

As noted in the after-action report and in much of the media copy produced, there was an attempt to inject more realism into the procedures. The exercise involved the "seizing" of three objectives. "Sensitive information" concerning the planned military operations to seize those objectives was given to reporters, but transmission of their stories was delayed until the task force commander determined it would not jeopardize his mission.⁷⁷

The proficiency of the military in supporting the media's transportation, communication and news gathering requirements was rated a "1" for Press Pool 3. Although the military planning for it was too structured, the media were offered different locations for viewing different aspects of the exercise: aboard the landing craft conducting the amphibious assault, flying in helicopters with the first heliborne waves or on the beach to observe the landing.⁷⁸ Key personnel were also made available for interviews with the radio reporter in the pool.

⁷⁷UPI Pool Copy, Media Pool No. 3, filed from aboard the USS NEW ORLEANS, December 11, 1985.

⁷⁸Kenneth B. Ross, "The DOD Press Pool," Direction (Spring/Summer 1986), p. 10.

The objectives of thoroughness and accuracy were both rated "1." Based on the length of time that the pool observed the exercise, the amount of coverage devoted to the exercise itself was considered appropriate. The information reported by the different types of media was much the same as the description of the test scenario contained in the Pentagon's after-action report. In addition to news about the exercise and the press pool test, it was interesting to note that all media accounts reported the presence of a Soviet spy ship that cruised nearby the exercise and at times ducked into the U.S. ship formations.⁷⁹

D. Press Pool 4

TABLE 5

ANALYSIS OF PRESS POOL 4

Security	Timeliness	Procedures	Proficiency	Accuracy	Thoroughness
1	1	1/2	1	1	1

⁷⁹UPI Pool Copy, December 11, 1985.

Press Pool 4 was a "first" in several respects. It was the first press pool test to be activated, assembled and deployed during daylight hours. It was also the first press pool test to include women. It was the largest press pool, deploying thirteen media representatives and three military escorts.

Washington bureau chiefs were alerted at 10 a.m., August 1, 1986. After a 45-minute delay due to the late arrival of some members of the pool, the pool left Andrews Air Force Base around 5 p.m., bound for March Air Force Base, California. Upon arrival, the pool received briefings on the scenario for exercise GALLANT EAGLE 86.

The next morning, the pool flew to Twenty Nine Palms, California to witness 35,000 troops participate in war games. Fighting dust and 120-degree heat, the press pool observed jets, tanks, troops and artillery going through maneuvers. The press pool members then returned to the press center at March Air Force Base, where they completed and filed their stories. Pool operations were completed by mid-afternoon. The press pool departed March

Air Force Base and arrived back in Washington around 11 p.m., officially ending the two-day test.⁸⁰

The primary objective in all the press pool tests -- maintaining operational security or secrecy -- was rated "1" for Press Pool 4. This objective was really put to the test in Press Pool 4. The fact that Press Pool 4 was the first test in which the pool was assembled and deployed during daylight hours meant that the risk of compromise was automatically greater than those experienced by the first three tests of the press pool. Cover stories to account for the absence of key media and military people associated with the press pool were put to a more rigid test because of the daylight deployment.

A problem with security did arise, but it also had a positive aspect to it. As the pool was leaving Andrews Air Force Base, a reporter not associated with the pool "contacted (the Pentagon) saying he had heard a rumor that the pool had deployed. The 'rumor' was dealt with, and no story appeared."⁸¹ Although the incident definitely reflected a security breach and a possible procedural flaw, the fact that the pool's activation was discovered,

⁸⁰Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), report, "Media Pool No. 4 After Action Report," August 14, 1986.

⁸¹Ibid.

but was not publicized, indicated the news organizations recognized the seriousness of pool operations and could maintain security.

Procedures for filing material produced by the pool were basically the same as those for Press Pools 2 and 3, resulting in timely coverage and a rating of "1" for accomplishment of that objective. The elapsed time from draft messages being handed into the (press center), retyped and transmitted to the Pentagon's press center was no longer than one hour and eleven minutes, which is less than half that of the previous tests.⁸²

Concerning the objective of procedures, there were several problems which resulted in the study's assessment of that objective as a "1/2." As already mentioned, the single security breach reflected a possible procedural error. However, the most significant procedural-related problem was that, by the time the press pool arrived in the exercise area, the only event to observe was a firepower demonstration. This was a disappointment to the photographers and the film crew in the pool because they were interested in filming people.

Dirck Halstead, a photographer in the pool, said:

When you're looking at something like that from four miles away, all you're seeing are little puffs of

⁸²Ibid.

smoke...I literally exposed only ten or fifteen frames of film from the time we left [Washington, D.C.] until the pool ended. And⁸³ those were of a colleague standing in the field.

That type of frustration was compounded by the fact that the local media were already there, and they had obtained excellent photographs the day before the pool arrived.⁸⁴

Peter Grier, a writer for The Christian Science Monitor, was one of the pool members who was late arriving at Andrews Air Force Base. Because he didn't know exactly where to go on the airfield, he had trouble convincing an Air Force gate guard he belonged in the press pool.⁸⁵ That seemed to indicate that assembly procedures did not adequately address arrival and assembly at the departure point. On the positive side, procedures for including women in the press pool were addressed for the first time. Also, according to the Pentagon's after-action report:

Planning time for the pool deployment was reduced by fifty percent over previous exercises, beginning only two weeks before the departure date. Although this significantly challenged the planners, it was realistic in⁸⁶ terms of real-world, contingency operations.

⁸³Panel Discussion, Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, October 23, 1986.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Peter Grier, "The Press Pool goes to War in a California Desert," Christian Science Monitor, August 5, 1986. p. 5.

⁸⁶Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), report, August 14, 1986.

The incorporation of new procedures reflected an increased proficiency for supporting media operations. Thus, the objective of proficiency was rated "1" by the study.

Appropriate access for the press pool resulted in accurate and thorough reporting of the exercise and the test. The study rated these objectives "1."

The following chart summarizes the numerical rating of each objective for each test. The raw and weighted grades for each objective in each test are indicated. The percentage of objectives accomplished for each test is shown, as well as the overall success (per cent) in objective accomplishment for all four tests as a whole.

TABLE 6
ANALYSIS OF PRESS POOL TESTS

OBJECTIVE	WT	POOL 1		POOL 2		POOL 3		POOL 4	
		Raw	Wt	Raw	Wt	Raw	Wt	Raw	Wt
Security	30%	0	0	1	.3	1	.3	1	.3
Timeliness	25%	0	0	1	.25	1	.25	1	.25
Procedures	20%	1/2	.1	1	.2	1	.2	1/2	.1
Proficiency	10%	1/2	.05	1	.1	1	.1	1	.1
Accuracy	5%	1	.05	1	.05	1	.05	1	.05
Thoroughness	10%	1	.1	1	.1	1	.1	1	.1
Percentage accomplished		30%		100%		100%		90%	
Overall accomplished		80%							

The study also sought to determine the tests' success in resolving seven supplemental questions that had been identified, but not resolved, by the Sidle Panel.

Those questions are:

1. How large should the press pool be?
2. What media organizations should make up the pool?
3. Who should select and approve the assignment of individual media representatives to the press pool?
4. At what point in a military operation should the press pool be activated?
5. At what point in a military operation should pool operations be terminated and the military operation opened up to full media coverage?
6. Once the pool is activated, how should media organizations treat the news embargo associated with that pool if they learn of the pool or the military operation from other sources?
7. What should the relationship be between the press pool and any other media that are already "on the scene" when the media arrive at their destination?

The conduct of the four tests determined that the size of the pool should be 9 to 11 media representatives and two to three military escorts. However, those figures could vary considerably, depending on the scope of the particular military operation, and the availability of logistics, transportation and communication assets to support the media. The desires of the government of the country to which the press pool would deploy could also influence the number and type of media represented in the pool.

The tests also showed that the following mix of media representatives could work:

TV Reporter and film-sound crew	- 3
AP, UPI, Reuters	- 2
News magazine reporter and photographer	- 2
Radio	- 1
Daily newspaper	- $\frac{1-3}{9-11}$

This mix of media could easily change from pool to pool for many of the same reasons that the total number of people in the pool could change.

The conduct of these four press pool tests made it clear that the Pentagon should identify the organizations to participate in the pool, and that the news organizations should select appropriately accredited correspondents to serve in the press pool.

Another issue concerned how the press pool should regard any media that were already on the scene when the pool arrived at its destination. The press pool was created with the sole intention of overseas deployment. It was also intended to apply to only U.S. media.

The concept for the press pools assumes that, in an actual situation, there will be no other U.S. media present in the area when the press pool arrives. However, during the tests, there were usually some other U.S. media present who were not associated with the press pool.

Press Pool 1 encountered a number of U.S. media already in Honduras. As it turned out, problems with the communications facilities intended for use by the press pool forced members of the pool to rely on fellow correspondents based in Honduras to file their copy.⁸⁶

For Press Pool 2, a Pentagon spokesman said, "local media were barred (from covering the exercise) under press pool guidelines, designed to ensure secrecy."⁸⁷

Although the subject of on-site media was not specifically addressed in documents related to Press Pool 3, the fact that it was an amphibious exercise made almost

⁸⁶Kim Willenson. "Frolic in Honduras," Washington Journalism Review (July, 1985), p. 19.

⁸⁷Zolvinski, "Exercise Becomes Media Test," p. 1A.

nil the probability of media being already on the scene when the press pool arrived.⁸⁸

Members of Press Pool 4 learned that the local media had been covering the exercise for a week before the press pool arrived.

Although this issue concerning media already on the scene surfaced during the press pool tests, the Pentagon treated it as another test artificiality; a situation that would not be encountered in an actual deployment of the press pool.

The remaining supplemental questions dealt with when a pool should be activated, at what point should pool operations cease and full media coverage be permitted, and how news organizations should treat embargoes about the pool. The press pool tests showed that each of these issues probably would have to be addressed and resolved on a case-by-case basis.

VIII. Analysis of Results of the Press Pool Tests

When viewed as a process, the Pentagon's testing of the pooling concept showed continuous improvement. Indeed, each test served as a building block for

⁸⁸Panel Discussion, Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, October 23, 1986.

subsequent tests. Despite their similarities, the tests were difficult to compare because there were too many variables.

For example, each press pool test was conducted at a different location and had its own peculiar scenario. Other than a handful of key Pentagon personnel who were in charge of planning, and several media representatives who participated in more than one test, all the other participants were different for each test. Each test involved different military units, different news organizations and different media representatives in the pool.

Operational security was not maintained during Press Pool 1 because (1) it was the first test (2) the test was conducted overseas (3) notification procedures were not fully understood by everyone involved with the test (4) and the military and the media were too cognizant of the fact that it was a test and not the "real thing." Concern for security was relaxed.

Not only was it the first test, but it was a very ambitious first test. Even the officer in charge of Press Pool 1 later said, "I think we probably tried to run too fast or bite off too big a chunk."⁸⁹ As reflected in the

⁸⁹ 101st Airborne Division," DOD Media Pool Report Number One," September 19, 1985.

table on objective accomplishment, Press Pool 1 only achieved thirty percent success on overall objective accomplishment. The fact that it was conducted overseas had a tremendous impact on its success. Procedures for obtaining the necessary host nation clearances for the media contributed to the premature awareness of the press pool's activation. The normal frustrations associated with operating in another country were compounded by an unresponsive military communications system. Thus, the pool was forced to watch timely news reports grow stale.

The fact that Press Pool 1 was the first test made it a very newsworthy item. As such, that may have overrode concern for maintaining operational security.

Also, there may have been early speculation that it was only an exercise. Based on that assumption, the bureau chiefs would not have to worry about the safety of their own pool representatives should there be early publicity of news of the press pool.

One other possibility, which is the most probable, is that it was simply a matter of a slip of the tongue; someone was told of the test who should not have known about it.

The press pool, as a concept, was viewed as the solution for correcting the media lockout at Grenada. The results of the first test seemed to signal that the pooling concept was doomed to failure. If secrecy could not be maintained, regardless of the reason, the military

would not allow the media to accompany it on any future Grenadas.

From the media's point of view, the filing problems experienced with Press Pool 1 because of poor communications meant the pool concept was not feasible because the military couldn't support the media's objective of timely reporting of news. Thus, it was not surprising that the majority of media coverage was devoted to the failures of Press Pool 1, rather than to the activities of the exercise itself.

Press Pool 1 should be viewed as just what it was, the first test of the Pentagon's press pool. Like any test, it was designed to identify weaknesses. In that respect, it was a complete success. It certainly made everyone who was involved with press pools, military and media alike, realize that it would take more than lip service to develop a workable press pool system.

The results of Press Pools 2 and 3 were significantly improved over those of Press Pool 1. In fact, according to Table 6, they achieved 100 percent of the desired objectives. To be sure, procedures were refined, and the military were better prepared to work with each other. But, it should be emphasized that both tests were considerably scaled down from Press Pool 1 -- the durations were shorter and both pools deployed to locations within the United States.

Although Press Pool 4 accomplished ninety percent of the test objectives, comments about Press Pool 4 by the panel participants at Ft. Benjamin Harrison, Indiana reflect a fact about media organizations which is easy to overlook -- they are businesses whose profits ultimately hinge on the quality of their product, and that product is news.

One reason that media organizations participate in the Pentagon's press pool tests is to refine their own procedures for gathering and reporting news in a wartime situation. Because of that, they have invested considerable assets in their participation in the press pools: manhour and salary costs to keep someone on call for the pool; money for state-of-the-art camping and hiking equipment; money for lightweight, portable cameras; and money for small, but sophisticated, telecommunications devices.

Each time the press pool is activated and deployed, members of that pool must be capable of producing a product that is newsworthy. As the tests become more frequent, they also become more routine and they tend to lose their newsworthiness. If the tests themselves lose their newsworthiness, then the exercise for which the pool deploys must be capable of generating newsworthy material. Press Pool 4 failed in that regard by arriving late in the exercise area. Not only did it miss some of the more

significant news and photo opportunities, but it had also been "scooped" by the local media.

One of the military's objectives in the press pool tests is to develop and implement procedures that can be used to deploy a press pool during wartime.

Accomplishment of that objective obviously requires the media's participation in the press pool tests. For the cost reasons cited above, media organizations may not continue to be as enthusiastic about their participation if the pools are not able to produce newsworthy material.

The study's analysis of the results of the press pool tests also considered the effect of test artificialities and external factors. Test artificialities included: priority of transmission of pool material over military communication circuits; dedication of military aircraft to transport video material produced by the pool; availability of civilian commercial telephones to supplement/replace military telephones; virtually unlimited briefing and interview access to key commanders; excellent administrative facilities in which to write and file stories. These conditions are not likely to exist in an actual combat situation.

Perhaps the most significant environmental artificiality of the press pool tests is the absence of the "fog and din of battle." In an actual combat situation where bullets are flying and people are dying, the above luxuries would almost certainly disappear. One

could only speculate if the same degree of cooperation and the same degree of success enjoyed during Press Pools 2, 3 and 4 would still exist in an actual combat situation.

The Pentagon made a related observation in its after-action report of Press Pool 2. Commenting on the tremendous improvement from Press Pool 1, the Pentagon said, "Due to the limited duration and scope of the exercise (Press Pool 2), the extent of improvement and whether similar improvement would be evident in an austere exercise area is uncertain."⁹⁰

The study's analysis of the quantity and quality of the media coverage produced by the press pool tests included consideration of two external factors. The devastating earthquake that struck Mexico City, and the airplane that crashed at Gander while bringing home soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division from peace-keeping duties in the Sinai were two events that occurred during the same news cycles as Press Pools 2 and 3, respectively. These disasters quite naturally overshadowed the press's reporting of the pool tests.

IX. Conclusions

The Pentagon's press pool tests have made great strides toward the overall effort of improving the

⁹⁰Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), report, October 7, 1985.

military-media relationships. With each succeeding test, the military and the media discovered better ways to work with each other. Each test promoted refinement and fine tuned the procedures for conducting media operations in a combat situation.

Although a general dissatisfaction exists towards the concept of pooling, most media organizations acknowledge that pooling is the most feasible way for the media to obtain access to the early phases of a military operation. The press pool tests have demonstrated their ability to serve as a vehicle for the examination and resolution of problems in conducting media operations in a combat situation. During the tests, both the military and the media have displayed a genuine commitment to making the concept of pooling work. Both seem to realize that the alternative to press pool access is no access at all.

The Pentagon's press pool tests prove that it is possible to provide media access to a military operation and still maintain the operational security of that operation. The tests also prove that pooling can provide the timely news gathering and reporting that the media needs to do their job.

However, these comments need qualification. Although the first deployment of the press pool to Honduras may have been overly ambitious, it came the closest to

approximating the conditions that are likely to be encountered in an actual deployment of the press pool. Press Pools 2, 3 and 4 saw the implementation of procedures that were absent in Press Pool 1. Future tests of the press pool should venture back into the more realistic conditions encountered in an overseas environment. Only through such deployments can procedures be thoroughly tested.

Maximum effort should continue to be directed at reducing as much as possible test artificialities. The pool's access to civilian communications to file copy should be limited. That would force the realistic use of the military's communication circuits, a use which would more closely approach the communications environment that would be encountered in the early phases of a combat situation overseas. Dedicating military aircraft to transport only the members of the pool, as well as their video products, should be reduced. In other words, the military's communication and transportation systems need to be taxed to meet the media's requirements in light of the demands that would be placed upon them in an actual combat situation.

The study also showed that, to ensure the continued level of involvement by media organizations, future deployments of the press pool should emphasize the production of newsworthy coverage. That includes the timing of the deployment and the type of exercise covered.

The Pentagon's tests of the press pool are still in a relative stage of infancy. Each test involves different circumstances with different requirements. Procedures must be constantly modified and adapted to meet those changing requirements. More importantly, with each succeeding test, more new "players" are being added to the roster. Collectively, this expanding roster of media and military players is an untapped source of recommendations for changes in procedures for operating a press pool. Further study could be done through a comprehensive survey of press pool test participants. The press pool tests are a source for a wide range of study topics about the military and the media.

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