FUTURE WAR PAPER

AN OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE UPON THE U.S. MILITARY-MEDIA RELATIONSHIP: INSTITUTIONALIZING EMBEDDED MEDIA INTO THE MAINSTREAM MILITARY

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Following nearly each U.S. conflict abroad, the U.S. military-media relationship has been dramatically altered. Each alteration was an attempt to "fix" what was perceived to have gone wrong with the U.S. military-media relationship in the previous conflict rather than to optimize it for a future conflict. The U.S. can no longer afford to experiment with the military-media relationship now that the character of warfare has changed as a result of the rapid and broad dissemination of information on and away from the battlefield. Embedded media are a critical capability for the U.S. military within this new character of warfare where our news-oriented culture has an expectation for immediate access to the latest information. Institutionalizing embedded media into the mainstream military, by consistently integrating them throughout the planning, training and execution of U.S. Military operations, will help to narrow the cultural gap between the U.S. Armed Forces and the American public and will also work with and not against significant advances in communication technologies. Institutionalizing embedded media into the mainstream military will help to better serve the future interests of the American public and the goals of the United States.

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DISCLAIMER

Executive Summary

Title: An Opportunity to Improve Upon the U.S. Military-Media Relationship: Institutionalizing Embedded Media into the Mainstream Military.

Author: Major M. J. Callanan, USMC

Thesis: Institutionalizing embedded media into the mainstream military, by consistently integrating them throughout the planning, training and execution of U.S. military operations, will help to narrow the cultural gap between the U.S. Armed Forces and the American public and will also work with and not against significant advances in communication technologies.

Discussion: Since the founding of our nation, there has been a constant tension between three core constituencies of American society; the press, the military and the public when it comes to the conduct of American foreign policy. This tension has developed over time with the changing character of warfare where a rapid and broad dissemination of information, regardless of accuracy, source, or content, is an expectation of our news-oriented culture. Embedded media are a critical capability for the U.S. military within this new character of warfare. Throughout the last century, the pendulum of censorship and access has swung from one extreme to the other; sometimes within and nearly always following the conclusion of each American conflict. This paper calls attention to an opportunity, for both the U.S. military and the American media, to get out in front of the next pendulum swing in order to better serve the interests of the American public and the goals of the United States.

This paper examines the use of information as a weapon of war, examines the roles and responsibilities of the U.S. military and the American media and highlights a cultural gap that exists between the two groups. Following a discussion on the impact of advances in communication technologies in a competitive media environment, specific recommendations are made for both the U.S. military and the American media.

Conclusion: If the United States is to be successful in future wars, it must adapt to the changing character of war where real-time events immediately shape American and World public opinion. The mainstream military needs to recognize that the character of war has changed and that there exists greater strategic risk on the battlefield without the presence of embedded media, especially when things go wrong, than with them. The presence of embedded media, on a battlefield where sunlight is the best disinfectant, will lessen the cultural gap between the U.S. military and public, ensure that the military's moral compass remains pointed in the right direction, and will further the future interests of the American public and the goals of the United States.

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Preface

This paper examines the use of information as a weapon of war, examines the roles and responsibilities of the U.S. military and the American media, reviews a century of tension in the U.S. military-media relationship, and highlights a cultural gap that exists between the two groups. Following a discussion on the impact of advances in communication technologies in a competitive media environment, specific recommendations are made for both the U.S. military and the American media.

Utilizing the current Embedded Media Program as a point of departure, this paper attempts to get out in front of the next pendulum swing in the U.S. military-media relationship following the conclusion of the current conflict. By providing recommendations to both the U.S. military and American media for future conflicts, the interests of the American public and the goals of the United States have the potential to be better served.

The primary audience for this paper is the mainstream military; namely each individual American Soldier, Sailor, Airman and Marine of all ranks.

"The first essential in military operations is that no information of value shall be given to the enemy. The first essential in newspaper work and broadcasting is wide-open publicity. It is your job and mine to try to reconcile those sometimes diverse considerations." -General Dwight D. Eisenhower, USA [1]

Introduction

To embed is to cause an entity to be "an integral part of a surrounding whole".[2] For the purpose of this monograph, "embedded" media are "news reporters attached to military units in an armed conflict".[3] On today's modern battlefield, embedded media play an increasingly integral role in translating the realities of U.S. foreign policy on the battlefield to the surrounding whole of the American public. Information is now employed as a weapon, by both friend and foe, more effectively than ever. The rapid and broad dissemination of information, regardless of accuracy, source, or content has changed the character of warfare in the twenty-first century. Embedded media are a critical capability for the U.S. military within this new character of warfare. Although the term "embedded" reporter is a recent characterization, the concept dates back to Thucydides who, as the author of the *Peloponnesian War*, was an observer, recorder and reporter of the war between Sparta and Athens in the 5TH century B.C.[4] In our own nation's history, the concept of embedded media appeared early when Thomas Jefferson reported on his observations after he had embedded himself into the middle of the storming of the Bastille in France in 1789.[5]

During the twentieth century in America, a constant "tension developed between three core constituencies of American society in reporting the news: the American press, military and public"[6]. Two latter twentieth century developments have dramatically altered the role and

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[1] Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1944, quoted in "Reporters on the Battlefield; The Embedded Press System in Historical Context", Santa Monica, CA: National Security Research Division, Rand Corporation, 2004, 1.

[2] "Embed", The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition, Online at http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/embed.

[3] "Embedded Media", The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition, Online at http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/embed.

[4] "Peloponnesian War", Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia, Online at http://en.wikipedia.org/ wiki/Thucydides.

[5] "Jefferson on the Bastille", U.S. News and World Report, Online at http://www.usnews.com/usnews/ news/articles/060716/16jefferson_eye.htm.

[6] Christopher Paul and James J. Kim, Reporters on the Battlefield; The Embedded Press System in Historical Context (Santa Monica, CA: National Security Research Division, Rand Corporation, 2004) xiii.

influence of embedded media on today's modern battlefield. First, a wide cultural gap arose

between the American public, its media, and the military following the Vietnam War and the end

of conscription. Second, rapid advances in communication technologies have now allowed for

real-time, censor-free reporting directly from the battlefield to both an American and a global

audience. The expectation for broad media coverage, on the part of our news-oriented culture, is

now nearly insatiable. Events, now communicated in near real-time, immediately shape

American and world public opinion and influence key decision makers at all levels. If the

United States is to be successful in future wars it must accept and, most importantly, adapt to this

change in the character of war. Failure to adjust to this rapid and broad dissemination of

information can have strategic implications. Although recent progress has been made in

advancing the U.S. military-media relationship, much more remains to be accomplished.

Institutionalizing embedded media into the mainstream military, by consistently integrating them

throughout the planning, training and execution of U.S. military operations, will help to narrow

the cultural gap between the U.S. Armed Forces and the American public and will also work

with and not against significant advances in communication technologies.

Information as a Weapon of War

As viewed by our most recent foes, most notably the North Vietnamese, Somali

Warlords, Al Qaeda, and Iraqi insurgents, both the center of gravity and the critical vulnerability

of the United States is the will of the American public. "Public opinion wins wars" [7] and our

foes are constantly attempting to target our critical vulnerability and undermine our center of

gravity through the use of a sustained propaganda campaign of disinformation. By fighting to

control the information cycle, the enemy is better able to offset their own disadvantages on the

battlefield and create a more level playing field for themselves. The media and the collapsed

information dissemination cycle have become a more powerful tool of war than virtually any

combination of weapons on the battlefield. Consequently, the will of the American public is a

[7] Reporting America at War, DVD, dir. Stephen Ives, Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) Home Video, 2004 (180 min.).

priority target for both the U.S. Armed Forces and their adversary. Eventual American

withdrawals from Vietnam and Somalia, when the respective U.S. administration no longer

considered that the conflict was sustainable on the home-front, have reinforced this perception

amongst today's jihadists and likely future adversaries. Our "enemies have skillfully adapted" to

the media age [8] where American foreign policy can be directly influenced by means of a

prolonged war of attrition or through a single or series of high profile casualty-producing attacks.

Today's jihadists and future adversaries will make every effort to ensure that the American

public is exposed to daily setbacks and casualty statistics. The net impact on the American

public to consistent exposure to perceived setbacks, regardless of strategic, operational or tactical

significance, can be decisive. Instead of railing against this rational strategy by the jihadists and

potential future adversaries, we must paint a clearer picture of the ground truth for the American

public whose will is also our greatest strength. With the national will in support of a war its

chances for success, if established and sustained, are extremely favorable. However, without the

national will for a war to commence and to continue through setbacks, the likelihood of its

success is limited. A highly effective means of protecting our critical vulnerability and

expanding access to our greatest strength are through the use of embedded media. They provide

a direct link across the cultural gap to those directly involved in and seeking information about

the struggle. Over time the mainstream military, namely the individual American Soldier, Sailor,

Airman and Marine of all ranks, can communicate reality to the American public with far more

credibility than any politician could hope for. Although not all of these voices will speak in

favor of a particular American foreign policy, such communication through embedded media

will provide transparency, accuracy, and legitimacy to the military's efforts. The most effective

means for America to counter this information threat is to allow as much sunlight as possible, in

the form of broad-based and uncensored news coverage onto the situation. For future wars, we

must build upon the current embedded media framework and utilize it as a point of departure.

[8] "U.S. Losing Media War to al Qaeda", BBC News, Online at http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/americas/4725992.stm.

U.S. Military and Media: Roles and Responsibilities

The wide disparity of understanding and cooperation with the media by the mainstream military needs to be improved. To do so, it is first necessary to examine the roles, responsibilities of, and tensions between the military and the media. While the military is charged with defending the United States, the primary responsibility of the media is to inform its citizens. On the foundation of the First Amendment, America's free press has developed into a powerful "Fourth Estate" [9] that has and will continue to shape the opinions of the American public. The media needs to balance numerous factors when they approach their reporting of the news; truthfulness, maintaining their credibility, objectivity and staying employed with the possibility of advancing in their field. Embedded media serve as the eyes and ears of a larger "press" which is composed of news organization owners, boards, executives, producers, editors, and anchors. The roles and responsibilities of journalists in a free society in war and in peace are; "to work in concert with, but independent of government officials; to serve as watchdogs for society in a system of checks and balances in the public's interest; and serve democracy by contributing to a free and responsible news report".[10] Washington Post embedded reporter and author Tom Ricks adds that the "media is not a profession; it is an intensely competitive cottage industry".[11] The media's profit motive is a reality of capitalism where media outlets will continue to compete for viewers, subscribers, and readers. This competition continues to grow and is taking place against the backdrop of surging cable television networks, a general decline in newspaper circulation and the rapidly growing internet culture.

Just as the U.S. Armed Forces are a cross-section of our society, there are a myriad of reporters on and away from the battlefield. "We are like members of Congress, a representation of society".[12] Recognizing the distinguishing characteristics of one reporter from the other can

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[9] Paul and Kim 9.

[10] Karen B. Dunlap, "The Troops and the Media", <u>Poynteronline</u>, Everything You Need to be a Better Journalist, Online at http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=28412.

[11] Thomas E. Ricks, personal interview, 17 Nov. 2006.

[12] Ricks, personal interview, 17 Nov. 2006.

be of great assistance when U.S. military personnel and media meet on the battlefield. They are generally divided into two groups; embedded reporters and free-lance or unilateral reporters. An embedded reporter can be an American reporter, an allied or coalition reporter, or a foreign reporter assigned to a U.S. military organization for a set period of time. Within the limits of operational security and with time permitting, the U.S. military has a duty to support this reporter regardless of his or her role as an American, ally, coalition partner, or foreign reporter. These reporters have an audience that wants to know what American foreign policy is translating to within a certain area of operations. The free-lance or unilateral reporter can also be an American reporter, an allied or coalition reporter or a foreign reporter. Unlike their embedded counterparts, they are not assigned to a U.S. military organization and are apt to generally roam the battlefield. News outlet budget constraints might prevent them from joining the embed program or they might be present only for a quick and sensational story. They might also be practicing a form of "advocacy" journalism where they are attempting to validate a specific and pre-conceived belief or they could have previously been embedded with a unit whose story was no longer as sensational as the one that they hope to obtain from a unit closer to the action. The relationship between the embedded and the free-lance or unilateral reporters may not always be amicable as the latter often only converge on the military and their embedded reporters as a story culminates or as the security situation deteriorates. Although certain studies have shown that embedded reporters are generally more objective than their unilateral counter-parts[13], the presence of a unilateral reporter is still constructive and contributes to a wider range of coverage.

Tension in the American Military-Media Relationship

Since the founding of our nation, there has been a constant "tension between three core constituencies of American society; the press, the military and the public" when it comes to the conduct of American foreign policy. This tension has developed over time with the

[13] Justin Lewis, "Mixed Verdict on Iraq "Embedded" Reporters", Cardiff University, Online at http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/ newsevents/media/mediarel/mr1103 /mr031106.html ; "IU Study Finds that News Reports by Embedded War Correspondents in Iraq were Objective", Indiana University, Online at http://newsinfo.iu.edu/news/page/normal/3486.html.

changing character of warfare. As a result, the historical military-media relationship of the

United States has been one of empirical learning and relearning through trial and error. Today's

real-time news cycle, now a reality of modern war, has made an understanding of the military-

media relationship essential to both the military and the media. The best option for a U.S.

military commander on the battlefield is to understand how to most effectively optimize this

relationship.[14] Consequently, to determine how best to optimize the military-media relationship

for the future, we must first understand the historical journey that preceded our current situation.

A Century of Trial and Error

Throughout the 20TH century, the relationship between the U.S. military and the

American media experienced numerous changes when it came to conflicts abroad. In many

ways, it was viewed as a zero-sum game; either the government or the military restrained and

constrained the media or the media was essentially unencumbered and left free to report the news

as they saw fit. The pendulum of censorship and access swung from one extreme to the other;

sometimes within and nearly always following the conclusion of each conflict.

The U.S. government enacted strict censorship rules on those reporters covering the First

and Second World Wars from abroad. In order to enforce this mandate, only those reporters who

had been accredited by the U.S. government were typically authorized in the war zone. By

controlling access to the battlefield, the U.S. government was effectively able to "enlist the press

in a campaign to mobilize public opinion behind the war".[15] In the First World War, the public

at large learned the true horrors of trench warfare largely after the war following the

publication of written novels. During the Second World War, a significant portion of the U.S.

media's coverage focused on the daily challenges and tedium of the soldier on the battlefield.[16]

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[14] A notable distinction must be made between information operations and public affairs under which embedded media fall within the military. Although both efforts can and must be synchronized, the audience for public affairs is the American public and the world while the audience for information operations is the enemy.
[15] Reporting America at War, DVD (PBS), 2004.
[16] This coverage was personified by the efforts of the one hundred and four pound Ernie Pyle who directly connected with the American public from both the European and the Pacific Theaters, via newsprint, prior to his death at the hands of a Japanese machine gunner in April 1945.

By mid century, media coverage of the United Nations police action in Korea was different from the two World Wars in two ways. First, for the United States it was a war of ideology against communism and not a war of national survival. Second, although the initial stages of the conflict were marked by voluntary censorship, all too accurate reports of early setbacks resulted in the imposition of mandatory censorship.[17]

The most profound changes in the American military-media relationship in the 20TH century occurred as a result of the undeclared War in Vietnam. During that conflict, two key elements were missing from the typical American experience in reporting on the war; a reasonably speedy conclusion and any media censorship. Partially constrained only by a set of voluntary ground rules that would restrict access to the battlefield if certain procedures were not followed, the media with their new portable video cameras brought the horrors of war into the living rooms of America's families through the advent of television. The media gradually transformed from primarily a propaganda tool of the government to a self-perceived role of "impartial observer" [18, 19] with full access to the battlefield. As reports showed greater realism, American public sentiment towards the war turned sour. Following the Vietnam War, many in the U.S. military felt that the negative news reporting of the media harmed the war effort while the media blamed the military and the government for what it perceived as a lack of truthfulness in its conduct of the war. These powerful perceptions polarized the U.S. military, an organization with a strong institutional memory, in their relationship with the media for more than a generation.

The U.S. intervention in Grenada in 1983 was characterized by a lack of any media participation in the first two days. A media pool of sixteen journalists was selected from a

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[17] Reporting America at War, DVD (PBS), 2004.
[18] "Embedded Reporters", The Grapesvine.blogspot.com, Online at http://thegrapesvine.blogspot.com/2005_12_01_ thegrapesvine_archive.html.
[19] The PBS DVD Reporting America at War comments that the most influential American journalist to cover the Vietnam War was Walter Cronkite. It states that "his ability to communicate the chaotic nature of the conflict to the American public was immensely powerful". Following Cronkite's personal on-air commentary to the nation on February 27, 1968, President Johnson is said to have remarked "if I have lost Cronkite, then I have lost the country".

group of over 600 reporters assembled and anxiously waiting on the nearby island of Barbados. This small media pool, roughly 3% of the total reporters present, arrived in Grenada after the fighting had ended.[20] The most significant military-media feature of the Grenada intervention came after the fighting had ceased. Following hostilities, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Vessey, who thought that the exclusion of the media in Grenada had been a "huge mistake at the national level"[21], sponsored the Sidle Panel that led to the establishment of a standing National Media Pool [22] that was prepared and expected to cover any future conflict.

As a first test of the implementations of the Sidle Panel, Operation JUST CAUSE in Panama in 1989 fell far short. The media were initially kept in the dark for security reasons, grouped in media pools and then stymied by a lack of transportation support within the country.[23] Associated Press Pentagon correspondent Fred S. Hoffman chaired a panel following the conflict that called for "future operations to provide a more careful and adequate implementation of the National Media Pool".[24] Despite these obstacles for the media, "the Panama story showed CNN just how alluring live coverage of a crisis could be".[25] Following Panama, the media would strive to become less dependent on the U.S. military for support on the battlefield. General Colin Powell, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the time, remarked that "this was a new tough age for the military, fighting a war as it was being reported and that we could not, in a country pledged to free expression, simply turn off the press".[26]

Following on the heels of Panama and with General Colin Powell still in place as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a more comprehensive U.S. military-media experiment was put to the test during Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM in 1990-1991.

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[20] Paul and Kim 39.
[21] Margaret H. Belknap, "The CNN Effect: Strategic Enabler or Operational Risk"?, Parameters US Army War College Quarterly, Autumn 2002, Online at http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/ Parameters/02autumn/belknap.htm.
[22] Belknap 104.
[23] Belknap 104.
[24] Paul and Kim 41.
[25] Belknap 105.
[26] Belknap 105.

"After months of negotiations, both the major media executives and the Pentagon agreed to a system of accreditation, press pools in the initial stages and military escorts".[27] The U.S. military also maintained the ability to potentially censor all printed media material prior to it being sent back to the U.S. for consumption. This restrictive model where only 186 of the over 1,600 reporters in theater [28], or roughly 12% of the total reporters present, were accredited and accepted into the media pool resulted in a general dissatisfaction on the part of the media. Following the First Gulf War, a series of charges were filed by the media against the Department of Defense (DoD) and the perceived restrictions on the First Amendment rights of the American public and its press. The findings supported the concept "that the press had at least some minimal right of access".[29] DoD then established a new media policy in its formal Principles for News Media Coverage of DoD Operations which limited the use of pools to the first 24-36 hours, provided access to all military units, forbade censorship of stories, and removed the requirement for escort officers.[30]

At the outset of Operation RESTORE HOPE in Somalia in 1992, DoD did not implement any media plan. The media, attempting to take the initiative in this pre-advertised humanitarian effort, established reporters on the ground in Somalia prior to the arrival of U.S. Armed Forces. At the operations' conclusion, the Vietnam-era perceptions between the military and the media had returned when realistic but negative news reporting from Somalia played a significant role in America's disengagement.

America's 1994 intervention in Haiti was similar to that of Somalia in that some media were on the ground prior to the arrival of the U.S. military. However, some reporters were also embedded within U.S. military units and "willingly complied with most of the military's operational security concerns and were given sufficient latitude to write stories as they saw fit".[31]

[27] Paul and Kim 42.
[28] Paul and Kim 43.
[29] Paul and Kim 45.
[30] Paul Kim 45.
[31] Paul Kim 47.

In the Balkans, Operation JOINT FORGE in Bosnia improved upon the maturing military-media relationship with the term "embedded" press being used for the first time in 1995.[32] During Operation ALLIED FORCE in Kosovo, primarily an air campaign, the military-media relationship was more challenging for two reasons. First, air campaigns are difficult to cover if no reporters are on the ground with access. Second, it suffered under General Wesley Clarks' "Gag" Order.[33] As a result, the only coverage of the battlefield itself was either censored or controlled by the enemy who highlighted only the negative effects of the NATO bombing.

In the initial stages of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in Afghanistan, the military-media relationship was challenged on two accounts. First, this was the first modern American conflict against a non-state actor (Al Qaeda). Second, the fighting itself was characterized by small, mobile and covert special operations elements that operated covertly and were difficult for the media to cover.

In the prelude to Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF), DoD took a proactive approach in the planning for media involvement in Iraq for three reasons. First, they realized that they had not enjoyed the benefits of extensive favorable news coverage that had accompanied their early successes in Afghanistan and prior conflicts. Second, the scale of pending operations in Iraq, accompanied by the growing expectations of broad media coverage, demanded a coordinated effort with the media. Third, they realized that technological communication advances meant that the media would play a significant role with or without their consent.

On January 21st, 2003, the Office of Global Communications (OGC) was established by Executive Order with the primary role of "sustaining the will of the American public and keeping the international community abreast of America's pursuit to win the war on terrorism".[34] Shortly thereafter, this office established and deployed a Strategic Communication Team

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[32] Paul and Kim 48.
[33] Terry R. Ferrell, "Information Operations and the New Threat", U.S. Army War College, March 19, 2004, Online at http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usacsl/publications/ EmbeddedMedia3.pdf.
[34] Ferrell 4.

(SCT) to Central Command (CENTCOM). In February 2003, DoD published policies regarding the embedding of media with military units. At the height of major combat operations during OIF in 2003, there were over 600 embedded reporters in Iraq.[35] Unlike previous conflicts, there was no significant in-theater group of media excluded from covering the war. The initial feedback from the American public, military and media was generally enthusiastic. Pentagon Spokesman Kenneth Bacon stated that "you couldn't hire actors to do as good a job as the press has done".[36] The embedded media did a first rate job of reporting on the daily conditions of America's sons and daughters, and also in countering the misinformation efforts of Mr. al-Sahaf, the Iraqi Information Minister also known as "Baghdad Bob". Another positive side effect of the embedded reporting was that "hours of cable television coverage were filled with actual eyewitness reporting, hours that would otherwise have been consumed by the repetitive analysis of pundits and experts in news studios thousands of miles from the action".[37]

Once Baghdad fell, a majority of both the embedded and unilateral reporters rapidly departed Iraq. Despite the embed program continuing, there was a dramatic and immediate 75% drop in the number of reporters in the three weeks following the fall of Baghdad.[38] Many of the embedded reporters felt that the big news story was over and their continued presence overseas was cost prohibitive. Their withdrawal at such a decisive point provides a partial explanation for a lack of current and future positive reporting. Their departure created a vacuum of media coverage that has yet to be overcome. To further confound matters, CENTCOM's SCT also redeployed.[39] Although the media continue to embed with military units in Iraq, it is often infrequent and largely of short duration. Today's news from Iraq is generally characterized

[35] Liz Marlantes, "The Other Boots on the Ground: Embedded Press", Christian Science Monitor, Online at http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0423/p01s01-woiq.html.
[36] "Embedded From SourceWatch", A Project of the Center for Media and Democracy, Online at http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Embedded.
[37] Brent Baker, "Grading TV's War News", Media Research Center, Online at http://www.mediaresearch.org/specialreports/2003/warnews4.asp.
[38] Joe Strupp, "Newspapers Pull Reporters From Embed Slots", Editor and Publisher, Online at http://editorandpublisher.com/eandp/news/article_display. jsp?vnu_content_id=1875080.
[39] Ferrell 12.

by reporting from within the confines of the "Green Zone" where the Multi-National Coalition Headquarters is located. Most of the reporting from the "Green" Zone, where reporters compete to have the exclusive on the latest setback, is often sensational, extreme in nature and largely negative. Positive stories outside of the "Green Zone" are difficult to cover in the current security situation where coverage of stability and success are higher risk and less attractive in the competitive media environment. Tom Ricks is now "struck by the level of bitterness in DoD with the media" but thinks that "it is Iraq specific".[40]

As one looks to the future, the challenge will be to prevent an entire generation of U.S. military leaders and media from being poisoned with the misperceptions that characterized military-media relations following the conclusion of the Vietnam War. If the military's mental-model of the media following Iraq is as poisoned as it was following Vietnam, then we have failed to serve the American public and will have squandered a unique opportunity that presented itself when the proactive embedded media program was created in 2003. How to meet that unique challenge will require a consistency in U.S. military-media planning and training. This must include the active involvement of embedded reporters, throughout the planning and execution process of U.S. military operations. The embedding of foreign journalists with the U.S. Military, as long as they follow the same ground rules as the American media, is also highly desirable.

The Cultural Gap Between the U.S. Military and the American Public

Today, a cultural gap exists between the U.S. military and the American public. The media can expand, foster, or help to close this gap with or without the military's participation. "A gap between the media and the military has in recent years become a chasm".[41] This gap emerged during the Vietnam War. Since the end of conscription and the creation of an all volunteer military, American citizens are less able to relate to life in and the operations of the

[40] Thomas E. Ricks, personal interview by author, 17 Nov. 2006.
[41] Robert Jensen, "Embedded Reporters' Viewpoint Misses the Main Point of War", University of Texas, Online at http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~rjensen/freelance /attack61.htm.

military. "In the early 1970s as many as three out of four members of Congress were veterans.

Today, only 35 of 100 senators have served in America's Armed Forces. In the House, it's 119

out of 435, down from 140 members four years ago".[42] This cultural gap is exponentially larger

when world opinion is considered.

Impact of Advances in Communication Technologies

The impact of technology on the ability of the media to influence the cultural gap has

been tremendous. Today's reporter is armed with "rugged, sophisticated and portable satellite

transmission equipment that wasn't available to correspondents in previous wars".[43] "The

advent of new technologies, such as satellites and video phones, meant that reporters would

likely find ways to cover the conflict on their own, regardless of approval".[44] According to

Washington Post reporter Tom Ricks, "it is impossible to censor these days. My internet was

better in Najaf than it was in Washington, D.C.".[45] Communication technologies have advanced

so far that the only prudent decision, on the part of DoD, is to meet the challenge of working to

integrate the media throughout the planning process and execution of operations (see Figure 1).
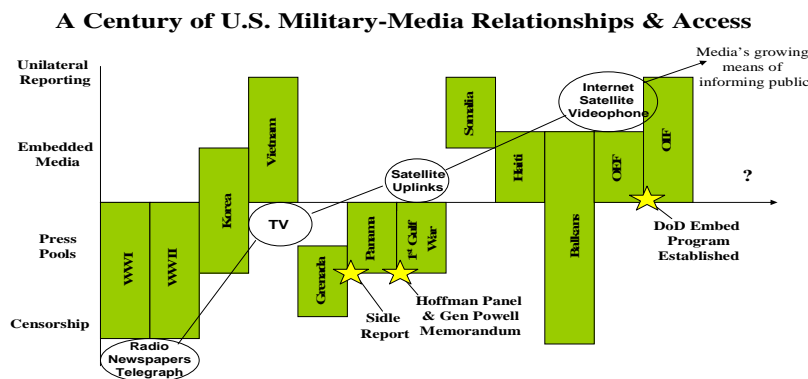
A Century of U.S. Military-Media Relationships & Access

Figure 1. The growing means for the media to inform the public
is driving an ever-increasing level of access to the battlefield.

[42] Gil Klein, "Fewer Veterans in Today's Congress than in the Past", PostNuke, Online at
http://www.vaiw.org/vet/modules.php?op =modload&name= News&file=article&sid=43.
[43] Walt Zwirko, "Embedded Journalists' Reporting Questioned", The Freedom of Information Center, Online at
http://foi.missouri.edu/jourwarcoverage/ embeddedj.html.
[44] Liz Marlantes, "The Other Boots on the Ground: Embedded Press", Online at http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0423/p01s01-woiq.html.
[45] Ricks, personal interview by author, 17 Nov. 2006.

The DoD must also ensure that it can counter enemy propaganda, through broad-based access with embedded as well as unilateral reporting, as the enemy continues to strike at our center of gravity and critical vulnerability; the will of the American public.

Recommendations

To fight the next war with the same military-media relationship that we fought OIF with would be a mistake. The historical alternative following OIF is also unacceptable; namely, another pendulum swing in the reduced access, censorship direction. In order to institutionalize and streamline embedded media into the mainstream military, the following is recommended: U.S. military:

1- Validate the embedded media program and strengthen the military-media relationship by developing and participating in training at all levels during times of peace and war.

2- Provide a clear and consistent message to the American public through the media.

3- Overcome institutional reluctance to engage with the media and form habitual relationships early with media organizations that cover your military installation. Sports teams and police departments do this regularly.[46] Insist on obtaining embedded reporter support and have them deploy with you.

4- Set aside space within your Time Phased Force Deployment Data (TPFDD) plan for embedded media. Provide them with a small number of seats in your command post, a power source, transportation, and sustainment on the battlefield.

5- Ensure that basic military survival training is provided, both in peacetime and in time of war, to prospective embedded and unilateral media to ensure that an enlarged National Media Pool exists that is prepared to deploy on short notice.[47]

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[46] Michael Pasquarett, "Reporters on the Ground: The Military and the Media's Joint Experience During Operation Iraqi Freedom", Center for Strategic Leadership, U.S. Army War College, Volume 08-03, October 2003: 3.
[47] Pasquarett 3.

6- Establish brief and concise ground rules for the conduct of embedded media.[48]

7- Follow General Schwarzkopf's media ground rules from the First Gulf War.[49]

        - Don't let the media intimidate you
        - There's no law that says you have to answer all their questions
        - Don't answer any question that in your judgment would help the enemy
        - Don't ever lie to the American people

8- Provide credentials to both unilateral reporters as well as to embedded reporters. This will result in multiple reporting channels back to the American public.

9- Prohibit censorship of your embedded media and never issue a "blackout" of reporting unless operational security is at risk.

10- Establish the Corps or Force level as the point where "de-bedding" decisions are made. "De-bedding" involves the mandatory removal of embedded media from the battlefield and must be consistency applied with transparency throughout the force.

11- Do not blacklist certain legitimate reporters or news organizations unless they have had their credentials pulled for previous documented violations.

12- Additional changes need to be implemented in U.S. military doctrine to update, standardize and further leverage the military-media partnership.[50]

American Media:

1- Validate the embedded media program and strengthen the military-media relationship by developing and participating in training at all levels during times of peace and war.

2- Develop an institutional memory with the military by embedding reporters who have participated in the program in the past or have successfully completed their standardized pre-deployment embedded media training.

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[48] Pasquarett 3. For OIF 1, these ground rules consisted of eight pages. Instead, it can be reduced to only one page in the future by consisting of the following: be honest, truthful, objective, balanced without any personal ideology, respect casualty reporting, don't allow yourself to become the story, and never compromise operational security.

[49] Paul and Kim 44.

[50] For an assessment of the new U.S. Army FM 3-24, (USMC MCWP 3-33.5) "Counterinsurgency", read retired Army officer and author Ralph Peters' "Progress and Peril" (Armed Forces Journal, February 2007) where he states that the document's "gravest omission is the failure to analyze the combatant role of the global media which can determine the outcome of battles, campaigns and entire wars in the post-modern era". Although the recent re-print of the Marine Corps' Small Wars Manual (1940) draws attention to a quality document for its time, with regard to contemporary military-media operations it falls far short. Additionally, there is no specific Marine Corps Institute (MCI) course available that covers interaction with embedded reporters.

3- Make embeds available to a wide range and level of military units in order to avoid unbalanced reporting.

4- Fund consistent embed coverage on the battlefield commensurate to the amount of related reporting being produced.

5- Synthesize the news to mitigate the "soda-straw" effect. "Fault lies less with journalists than with their news organizations for failing to put reporting into a broader context".[51]

Conclusion

In conclusion and in the words of LtGen Boomer, USMC (ret), "the media are like the rain, don't complain about them. It is legitimate to use them to your advantage but you need to deal with your environment".[52] Their presence should be expected and demanded despite their potential to be helpful at one moment to your efforts and harmful the next. The mainstream military needs to recognize that the character of war has changed and that there exists greater strategic risk on the battlefield without the presence of embedded media, especially when things go wrong, than with them. With this framework established, when one asks "quis custodiet ipsos custodes", or who will guard the guards, the answer should be one's own professionalism and embedded media [53]. The presence of embedded media, on a battlefield where sunlight is the best disinfectant, will lessen the cultural gap between the American military and public, ensure that the military's moral compass remains pointed in the right direction, and will further the future interests of the American public and the goals of the United States.

[51] Liz Marlantes, "The Other Boots on the Ground: Embedded Press", Online at http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0423/p01s01-woiq.html.
[52] Ricks, personal interview by author, 17 Nov. 2006.
[53] Sukman, Dan, "Soldier's Diary", Online at http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,217799,00.html.

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