

December 1988

# STARS AND STRIPES

## Inherent Conflicts Lead to Allegations of Military Censorship





United States  
General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

---

Comptroller General  
of the United States

B-222768

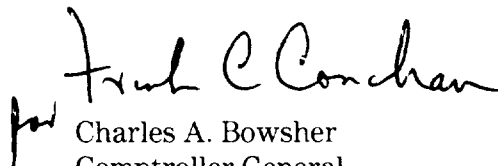
December 14, 1988

To the President of the Senate and the  
Speaker of the House of Representatives

This report discusses the issues of censorship, news management, and command influence at Stars and Stripes newspapers. We made our investigation into allegations of censorship pursuant to a requirement in the Defense Authorization Act for fiscal years 1988 and 1989.

We are sending copies of this report to the Director, Office of Management and Budget, and the Secretary of Defense.

This report was prepared under the direction of Martin M Ferber, Senior Associate Director. Other major contributors are listed in appendix V.

  
for Charles A. Bowsher  
Comptroller General  
of the United States

---

# Executive Summary

---

## Purpose

Allegations of censorship and news management by military commanders of the Stars and Stripes newspapers led to a requirement in the Defense Authorization Act for fiscal years 1988 and 1989 that GAO investigate the validity of these allegations. GAO investigated over 200 allegations dating back to 1984 and performed an analysis of how the news reported in the Stars and Stripes compared to the wire services. GAO also worked with the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi, to make distinctions between routine editorial judgments and censorship.

---

## Background

The Stars and Stripes newspapers, published in the Pacific and in Europe, are authorized publications of the Department of Defense (DOD), whose policy is that a free flow of news and information shall be provided to all military personnel without censorship or news management. These newspapers are different from unit or installation newspapers whose contents are under the complete control of the commander. Occasionally, commanders have been reminded of this difference by their superiors.

The papers have a dual mission. The first mission is to provide stateside news to help DOD personnel intelligently exercise their citizenship responsibilities and to improve their morale and readiness. According to the Director of the American Forces Information Service, for this mission Stars and Stripes should be like a newspaper protected by the First Amendment. The second mission is to provide applicable news and information, including local news, that improve individual capability for mission accomplishment. According to the Director, for this mission Stars and Stripes is like a publication providing company news.

In the late 1940s, Stars and Stripes began hiring civilian journalists to operate the papers. These journalists were hired from commercial newspapers in the United States, which enjoy First Amendment protection from government censorship.

---

## Results in Brief

No clear legal standard exists for determining whether censorship has occurred at Stars and Stripes because they are government newspapers. Also, even though news editing is an acceptable daily practice on all newspapers, if it is used in the Stars and Stripes to bias news towards the military, then such editing becomes news management and raises concern about whether the papers are adequately accomplishing their first mission. According to a panel formed by the Society of Professional

---

Journalists, evidence of censorship and inappropriate news management was conclusive at Stars and Stripes in the Pacific but inconclusive for the European paper. However, by DOD's standard, the European paper has been censored a few times. Military commanders and their representatives in both theaters have repeatedly attempted to influence the reporting of news.

DOD, through its instructions, intended to provide Stars and Stripes with protection against censorship and command influence, but it has not accomplished this objective. Trying to simultaneously accomplish the Stars and Stripes dual mission creates an inherent cultural conflict between civilian journalists who must execute the First Amendment mission and commanders who must execute the military mission. Different expectations by these groups are the primary reason allegations of censorship exist.

---

## GAO's Analysis

---

### Censorship Issues

To develop a concept of censorship appropriate for the Stars and Stripes situation, GAO searched for court decisions that would be relevant, consulted with professional journalists, and analyzed the logic used in several prior DOD investigations of allegations of censorship in the Pacific. No court decisions exist that are directly relevant to the situation in which the government is alleged to be censoring one of its own publications. Professional journalists view censorship as any effort, such as news management, to suppress publication of news for other than national security reasons. The concept of censorship embodied in DOD investigations of this matter is one of external pressure on Stars and Stripes in the selection and presentation of news.

---

### Built-In Conflicts

A number of built-in conflicts exist between the military and the media. These conflicts are institutional and cultural in nature and result partly from the military's emphasis on control and respect for authority and the media's emphasis on skepticism and competition in breaking a story. The DOD instruction governing newspapers was revised in 1984, partly to be more favorable to journalists in this conflict. Despite the intent of the revision, the instruction allows for a stronger military influence. For example, the instruction now states that editorial policies of DOD newspapers should be designed to improve the ability of personnel to execute



---

the DOD mission, while the previous instruction stated that these policies should be designed to enhance the knowledge of personnel about subjects of interest to them. In addition, the revised instruction added a provision widely interpreted as prohibiting investigative reporting, although such reporting is common on U.S. newspapers from which civilian journalists have been hired. The instruction also requires an advisory board for each newspaper to be chaired by the unified command's public affairs officer and to be responsible for evaluating compliance with DOD and command editorial policies.

---

## Command Influence

Through interviews with current and former employees of the papers, GAO identified a relatively small number of allegations about command influence at Stars and Stripes in Europe and a much larger number in the Pacific. Most of the allegations in Europe involved external influence on specific stories by commanders and their public affairs officers who allegedly caused stories to be withheld or who were untimely and unresponsive to reporters' inquiries. Similar allegations were made in the Pacific, as well as allegations that command influence was exerted in managing personnel at Stars and Stripes and that public affairs officials have attempted to influence reporting on subjects sensitive to host nations.

---

## Society of Professional Journalists' Views

An advisory panel formed by the Society of Professional Journalists reviewed 45 allegations of censorship and news management involving the Pacific paper and 12 allegations involving the European paper. The panel also reviewed explanations for actions taken, directives on Stars and Stripes, and a draft of this report. The panel concluded that evidence of censorship and news management was inconclusive for the European paper, but was conclusive for the Pacific paper.

A majority of the panel disagreed with the editorial actions taken at the Pacific paper in 19 instances and agreed with those actions in 8 instances. In 12 instances at least one panel member was unable to make a decision based on the materials provided. The panelists were evenly split on whether appropriate actions were taken in the remaining 6 instances.

The panel reported that it did not base its findings of censorship and news management on one or two or three examples, nor did it make the assertion lightly. The panel viewed the editor of the Pacific paper as a loyal public servant struggling to resolve conflicting duties as a military

---

officer and editor. The panel noted that in too many instances the editorial duties lost and added that, as an agent of the government, the editor in chief has a formal responsibility to uphold the principles of a free press because the DOD policy states that he is specifically forbidden to engage in censorship or news management. The panel recommended, among other things, that policies should be clarified and the editor in chief should be required to have solid journalism credentials and be a civilian.

---

## News Content Suggests Allegations Are Valid

GAO's analysis of the stories carried by both newspapers and the major wire services during March 1987 identified differences in coverage between the newspapers that were consistent with the allegations of censorship and news management. Both newspapers ran a lower proportion of stories that presented a negative image of DOD than the wire services had carried. The Pacific paper ran a lower proportion of these negative image stories than the European paper. Of the wire service stories on DOD, 47 percent portrayed a negative image of the military. In comparison, 35 percent of the wire services' military stories published in Europe were negative as compared to 27 percent in the Pacific.

Both papers ran a small percentage of stories on politically sensitive topics identified in the allegations, but the Pacific paper ran fewer of these stories than did the European paper. In comparison to the European paper, the Pacific paper carried about half as many stories on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome and strategic subjects, such as the Strategic Defense Initiative, 27 percent fewer stories on the Iran-Contra affair, and about one-third as many stories on the 1988 election campaign.

---

## Recommendations

GAO recognizes that both DOD missions for Stars and Stripes newspapers individually are worthy pursuits, but when commingled they create an inherent conflict. The conflict exists because while one mission is to provide company news, the other mission is to provide news like a newspaper protected by the First Amendment. Because of the allegations, GAO focused on the First Amendment mission and believes the execution of this mission can be improved. Therefore, GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct guidance be issued stating that Stars and Stripes

- shall have a civilian editor in chief whose term of office shall be fixed for a period of 3 to 5 years and

- 
- shall have editorial and news policy provisions that emphasize subjects of interest to the readership.

In addition, the guidance should state that

- military officers shall not interfere with or attempt to influence news content;
- investigative reporting is allowed; and
- a content analysis, similar to the one GAO performed, shall be done on a periodic basis to ensure that U.S. troops in the two different parts of the world are exposed to approximately the same news from back home.

Also, the new guidance should either abolish the advisory board or change its mission to help Stars and Stripes to report on news of interest to the readership.

---

## Agency Comments

DOD agrees in part with GAO's findings and recommendations. It disagreed with (1) GAO's conclusion that the commingling of the two Stars and Stripes missions creates an inherent conflict, (2) the value and validity of the content analysis, and (3) GAO's recommendations that investigative reporting be allowed and content analyses be performed.

Although DOD agreed that misunderstandings have led to charges of censorship, it did not agree that the DOD policy instruction was the cause of the misunderstandings. DOD maintained that misunderstandings of the mission definitions by civilian employees of Stars and Stripes were the cause of the conflict. However, DOD stated it intends to begin a year-long review of its policy instruction in December 1988. During this review, DOD stated it would reevaluate the two mission statements and evaluate the unified commands' positions on the recommendation for a civilian editor in chief.

DOD stated that its primary goal, as always, is to provide DOD personnel and their families overseas the right to a free press under the provisions of the First Amendment. DOD's written comments are summarized and evaluated in chapter 7 and are presented in full in appendix IV.



---

# Contents

---

Executive Summary		2
<hr/>		
Chapter 1		10
Introduction	DOD Guidance on News, Editorial Policies, and <u>Stars and Stripes</u> Missions	11
	Allegations of Censorship	12
	Objective, Scope, and Methodology	14
<hr/>		
Chapter 2		15
Legal, Journalistic, and Military Views on Censorship Issues	Legal Views	15
	Journalists' Views	16
	DOD Views	17
<hr/>		
Chapter 3		18
DOD Instruction Fails to Resolve Built-In Conflicts	Cultural and Institutional Differences	18
	DOD Governing Instruction	19
	Comments by the Society of Professional Journalists	24
<hr/>		
Chapter 4		26
Military Officers Influence <u>Stars and Stripes</u> Operations	Command Influence in Europe	26
	Command Influence in the Pacific	29
<hr/>		
Chapter 5		39
Pattern of News Content at <u>Pacific Stars and Stripes</u> Suggests Allegations Have Merit	Content Analysis Supports Differences Between European, <u>Pacific Stars and Stripes</u> and Wire Services	40
	Balance and Accuracy Criteria Applied to Sensitive Stories Is the Basis for Changed or Omitted Stories	45
	Society of Professional Journalists	50
<hr/>		
Chapter 6		51
Conclusions and Recommendations	Recommendations	52

---

## Contents

---

Chapter 7	53
Agency Comments and Our Evaluation	

---

Appendixes	
Appendix I: Content Analysis Methodology and Selected Findings	58
Appendix II: Case Descriptions and Panel Judgments	65
Appendix III: Comments From the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi	94
Appendix IV: Comments From the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs)	101
Appendix V: Major Contributors to This Report	121

---

Tables	
Table 5.1: Sources of <u>Stars and Stripes</u> News Stories	40
Table 5.2: Sources of DOD and Military Stories in <u>Stars and Stripes</u>	41
Table 5.3: Frequency of AP and UPI Stories on Selected Issues in <u>Stars and Stripes</u>	41
Table I.1: Examples of American Dateline AP/UPI Military Stories Omitted by One Paper but Run in the Other	61

---

## Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AP	Associated Press
DOD	Department of Defense
GAO	General Accounting Office
UPI	United Press International

# Introduction

---

The Defense Authorization Act for fiscal years 1988 and 1989 required us to study allegations of censorship by military commanders of the Department of Defense (DOD) Stars and Stripes newspapers. DOD has two such newspapers, one published in Europe and another in the Pacific. They are "authorized, unofficial" overseas unified command<sup>1</sup> newspapers that carry stateside news and are financed primarily through nonappropriated funds. They differ from unit or installation newspapers that are management tools for the commander and are paid for through appropriated funds or contracts with commercial publishers.

After World War II, Stars and Stripes became nonappropriated fund agencies, which meant they had to pay their own operating costs. At this time, they began to hire civilians to operate the newspaper. As of May 1988, the total staffing to produce the newspaper in Europe was 206 and 105 in the Pacific. The European paper has a larger staff because it produces four editions for its theater, while the Pacific paper produces only one edition. Half of the editorial staff in the Pacific are military, while only a quarter of the European editorial staff are military. The difference in the military ratio reflects past financial problems in the Pacific, which were dealt with, in part, by increasing the number of military personnel who were paid from appropriated funds.

Over the years, the number of pages has increased, and circulation has fluctuated. During World War II Stars and Stripes in Europe was a 12-page paper with a daily circulation of over a million copies. It grew to the current size of 28 pages in 1969. The current daily circulation is about 134,000 copies.

The first edition of Stars and Stripes in the Pacific was published on October 3, 1945. It was initially a 4-page newspaper, but increased to its current size of 28 pages in 1983. The current daily circulation is about 39,000 copies.

---

<sup>1</sup>A unified command has broad, continuing missions and is composed of forces from two or more military departments. These forces are referred to as component commands. The unified commanders in chief in each theater are the publishers of the newspapers. They are required by regulation to appoint military officers to act as editors in chief and deputy or assistant editors in chief.

---

## DOD Guidance on News, Editorial Policies, and Stars and Stripes' Missions

DOD Instruction 5120.4, "DOD Newspapers and Civilian Enterprise Publications," provides overall guidance on DOD newspapers. According to the instruction, DOD policy is that a free flow of news and information shall be provided to all military personnel without censorship or news management. The instruction prohibits the calculated withholding of unfavorable news. Until it was revised in 1984, the instruction stated that editorial policies should be designed to increase the knowledge and understanding of subjects of concern to military personnel. It currently states that these policies should be designed to improve the ability of personnel to execute DOD missions.

According to the instruction, the Stars and Stripes has two specific missions.

1. To bring DOD personnel and their dependents the same international, national, and regional news and opinion from commercial sources available to newspapers throughout the United States. This news makes possible the continued intelligent exercise of the responsibilities of citizenship by DOD personnel while they serve away from home. It helps their morale and readiness by dispelling rumor and by keeping them in touch with aspects of life in the United States while they live in unfamiliar surroundings.
2. To provide applicable U.S. government, DOD, command, and local news and information, which improves individual capability for mission accomplishment and brings a sense of joint mission purpose to the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps personnel operating together to carry out the U.S. defense mission overseas.

To accomplish the first part of their mission, both papers buy their international, U.S., and regional news from commercial sources, such as the Associated Press (AP) and United Press International (UPI) wire services. The DOD instruction requires the newspapers to maintain balance in presentation of commercial news and opinion and prohibits the newspapers from taking editorial positions.

To accomplish the second part of the mission, both papers print articles provided by DOD news sources and local news gathered by Stars and Stripes reporters. Although the European paper publishes a few articles of this type each day, most of this news is carried in its weekly magazine supplement. The Pacific paper devotes about four pages a day to this type of news.



---

## Allegations of Censorship

Even though the legislation that required our study was prompted by recent allegations of censorship and command influence, Stars and Stripes has had similar problems in the past. According to the managing editor of Stars and Stripes during World War II, it was a challenge to publish, under military jurisdiction, a newspaper that would be representative of the American free press. He said the staff used wit and wile to provide a clean, honest, and accurate paper that was free from propaganda and headquarters pressure. This was the kind of paper General Dwight D. Eisenhower, then the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Forces, wanted and for which he issued a firm "hands off" policy to his subordinate commanders.

In late 1986, staff members at the Pacific Stars and Stripes began circulating an extensive package of documents supporting their allegations of censorship, news management, and command influence at the paper. These documents alleged that command influence occurred through external pressures by general and flag officers and their public affairs representatives to withhold stories on such sensitive topics as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). They also alleged that command influence resulted in replacing the editor in chief because he published stories that embarrassed a senior commander and failed to suppress a story on military dependents working as bar hostesses on Okinawa (see ch. 4).

The documents alleged that news management occurred through a complicated process of eliminating three copy editing and page design positions occupied by college trained, civilian journalists and replacing them with military reporters from the local news bureaus who had neither advanced training nor copy editing and page design experience. The alleged motivation was to reduce the bureaus' ability to gather news, especially to develop stories that were politically sensitive to local commands.

The current editor in chief allegedly censored bureau copy and wire service reports routinely by deleting information related to AIDS, South Korean politics, adverse military news, and stories that presented the Reagan administration in a negative light.

About the time that the previous editor in chief in the Pacific was relieved of command, his European counterpart took early retirement because of frustration with command influence attempts. In a Columbia Journalism Review article, the former European editor wrote the following to explain his resignation: "The degree of command influence

---

became intolerable to me. It was getting progressively worse. . . It got to the point where I was getting calls on the weekends from underlings speaking for generals and admirals. . . I just got sick of it."

---

## DOD Investigations of Recent Allegations

DOD conducted three separate investigations of the allegations by Pacific Stars and Stripes staff members and concluded the allegations were not valid. The first investigation was done by the offices of the inspector general and staff judge advocate of Headquarters, U.S. Army Japan. It consisted of an examination of documents submitted by staff members. The December 16, 1986, report on the investigation concluded that there was no basis to substantiate the allegations because no instances were observed of excessive or undue pressure by the paper's military management of the news staff, nor was there any evidence that personnel outside the newspaper attempted in any way to regulate its content.

The second investigation was conducted by a command information officer for U.S. Army Japan. This investigation consisted of interviews with senior management officials of the paper and an analysis of the DOD instruction governing military newspapers. The February 6, 1987, report on the investigation concluded that some of the editorial staff had a continuing strong perception of news management. The report stated that some of the staff, primarily civilians, either did not understand or disagreed with editorial policies established in the DOD instruction, particularly as they related to the treatment of military information.

The third investigation was conducted by a professor of journalism who is a reservist and would become director of the American Forces Press and Publication Service, if mobilized. This investigation was conducted for the Director of the American Forces Information Service, who is responsible for establishing and overseeing implementation of overall policy on DOD newspapers. This investigation consisted of interviews with seven senior management and editorial personnel and observations of the newspaper's operations. The September 7, 1987, report concluded that there was no definitive evidence of censorship at the paper since the current editor in chief's arrival in September 1986. The report did note that the current editor was a decisive commander without newspaper experience who had to learn on the job. The report further noted that some of the civilian journalists who had previous commercial newspaper experience did not seem to accept the differences between Stars and Stripes and other American newspapers.

---

## Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to determine the validity of the allegations of censorship by military commanders of the Stars and Stripes newspapers. To meet this objective, we used three approaches.

First, we used audit and investigative techniques to document the allegations and the events surrounding them to determine whether command influence existed and what editorial practices were and are in force.

Second, we performed a content analysis of the coverage of news in Stars and Stripes. The purposes of this analysis were to determine if (1) patterns of news coverage in Stars and Stripes were consistent with the news coverage on the wire services and (2) patterns existed that indicate anti-DOD and anti-administration views were being censored.

Third, the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi, established an advisory panel, as directed by the conference report on the legislation requiring this study, to (1) assist us in understanding the distinctions between editorial judgment and censorship, (2) provide the Society's view on specific allegations of censorship based on documents we provided, and (3) review and comment on our draft report. Although this report contains views of the Society of Professional Journalists, the presentation, content, and findings of the report are those of GAO.

Our review was conducted from November 1987 through May 1988 in Germany, Japan, Hawaii, and Washington, D.C., in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Appendix I to this report provides a summary of the methodology used to conduct our content analysis and details of selected findings from that analysis. Appendix II provides a summary of 57 allegations of censorship and explanations given by Stars and Stripes officials for actions leading to the allegations. Appendix III is a report from the Society of Professional Journalists based on its review of those allegations and explanations, Stars and Stripes implementing instructions, and a draft of this report. Appendix IV contains DOD's written comments on a draft of this report. These comments are summarized and evaluated in chapter 7.

# Legal, Journalistic, and Military Views on Censorship Issues

Courts have rarely permitted the government to impose a restraint on information prior to its publication. Journalists refer to government attempts to impose such restraint as censorship and challenge these attempts as constituting a denial of the First Amendment's protection of freedom of the press. Because *Stars and Stripes* are "authorized" DOD newspapers, the question arises whether the federal government could ever be considered, in a legal sense, to censor one of its own publications. No legal decisions are directly relevant to this question. Professional journalists with whom we spoke about censorship viewed it as any effort to suppress the publication of news for other than national security reasons.

During two DOD investigations, a key factor in judging the validity of censorship allegations was whether the content of *Stars and Stripes* had been influenced by pressures from outside the newspaper organization itself.

## Legal Views

We found no legal decisions involving censorship of a newspaper published by the federal government. The few related decisions on government sponsored or supported newspapers have concerned student newspapers at state universities and public high schools. Lower courts in these cases have held that student newspapers are entitled to First Amendment protection because the state has created a public forum for the expression of ideas in chartering such newspapers. Although the state may provide funding and facilities for the newspaper in these cases, lower courts have held that the paper is still entitled to the First Amendment's protection against censorship, if it was established as a vehicle for student expression.<sup>1</sup>

However, the Supreme Court, in its recent *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier* decision, slip op. (Jan. 13, 1988), held that the Hazelwood district high school newspaper was not a public forum because publication of the newspaper was a part of the educational curriculum and was completely under a journalism teacher's control.

In *Hazelwood*, the Supreme Court expressed a standard for determining when high school facilities may be considered a public forum. It said

<sup>1</sup>See, e.g., *Panarella v. Birenbaum*, 327 N.Y.S. 2d 755 (1971); *Antonelli v. Hammond*, 308 F. Supp. 1329 (1970); *Gambino v. Fairfax Cty. Sch. Bd.*, 429 F. Supp. 731 (1977).

that the public schools may be deemed a public forum

“only if school authorities have by policy . . . or by practice opened those facilities for indiscriminate use by the general public or by some segment of the public, such as student organizations . . . . If the facilities have instead been reserved for other purposes, then no public forum has been created, and school officials may impose reasonable restrictions on the speech of students, teachers, and other members of the community.”

It is difficult to predict whether a court would apply this standard, developed in the context of student newspapers, to a DOD “authorized, unofficial” newspaper.

Lawyers specializing in First Amendment cases have suggested that a newspaper’s readers may be able to assert a First Amendment right to receive uncensored information. This view is based on a Supreme Court decision in Pico v. Island Trees, 457 U.S. 853 (1981). In that decision, the Supreme Court found that the removal of certain books from the shelves of junior and senior high school libraries violated the First Amendment. No subsequent decisions have extended this finding to newspapers, much less to government sponsored newspapers.

---

## Journalists’ Views

According to the publisher of a metropolitan daily newspaper with whom we spoke, censorship is a gray area for the newspaper industry because reporters, editors, and publishers constantly make judgments about what stories will run on which page of the paper and with what type of play. Because no pervasive guidance on censorship exists, the publisher believes it is important to hire the best people and let them exercise their judgment in deciding what stories to run. The publisher suggested that in investigating the allegations of censorship at Stars and Stripes, we determine whether editorial decisions are made logically and collaboratively.

A member of the Society of Professional Journalists’ advisory panel told us that the line between news judgment and censorship is crossed when one person decides against running stories because he or she believes the readers cannot handle the stories. The member said that if our content analysis established a pattern of information deleted from Stars and Stripes, he would consider the pattern to be evidence of censorship. He further added that indications of censorship would consist of evidence that the editor in chief’s normal practice—as determined by a pattern, directive, or editorial staff perceptions—is to not print information

because of fear of the unified commander's reaction. On the other hand, he would not consider it censorship if the editor, using his own judgment, does not print information and is able to defend, rationalize, and explain those decisions.

The Society's panel reviewed 57 allegations of censorship at Stars and Stripes on which we had collected information (see app. II). For its review, the panel adopted the following working definitions of censorship and news management:

"Censorship:" Not selecting stories, killing stories or removing parts of stories for reasons other than the protection of national security. For example, "to protect the troops."

"News management:" Changing a news story to obscure or eliminate information considered damaging to the military or otherwise unpopular with the editor. For example, killing or delaying a "negative" story until a more positive or innocuous one can be substituted. "The calculated withholding of unfavorable news."

---

## DOD Views

The concept of censorship contained in two DOD reports on allegations by Pacific Stars and Stripes staff members emphasized outside influences on the newspaper's content. The report by the Inspector General of U.S. Army Japan noted that an editorial judgment made by the paper's management in accordance with its policies was "not the same as a denial of journalistic freedom by pressures and influences from outside" the paper. The report also noted that the editor in chief was responsible for these policies and that they "will reflect the fact that the paper is a DOD instrumentality and as such is seen as somewhat representative of the view of the U.S. military and the U.S. Government."

In discussing his findings, the journalism professor who conducted one of the DOD investigations (see ch. 1) cited what he labeled "notorious" examples of censorship: one involving a wire service story on the dismissal of a German general from a key North Atlantic Treaty Organization post and the other involving a reporter's story on an American admiral's heart attack (see ch. 4). Both stories were subject to command influence from outside Stars and Stripes—the story on the German general was withheld as the result of a direct order by the "publisher," the Deputy Commander in Chief of the unified command, and the story on the American admiral was delayed by the publisher's representative, his public affairs office.

# DOD Instruction Fails to Resolve Built-In Conflicts

A number of built-in conflicts result from cultural and institutional differences between the military and the media, which causes allegations of censorship to continue to arise at Stars and Stripes. These differences have been characterized in terms of the military accentuating conformity, control, group loyalty, and respect for authority; and the media accentuating diversity, competition, skepticism, and access to information.

The DOD instruction governing the Stars and Stripes was revised in 1984, partly to provide the newspapers greater protection in the inevitable conflict between the military and the media. A means of providing this additional protection, according to the senior DOD official responsible for newspaper policy, was a clearer distinction between (1) unit or installation newspapers, which exist solely to facilitate accomplishment of the command mission, and (2) Stars and Stripes, which exist to bring news from the United States, as well as to facilitate mission accomplishment.

Commanders are ultimately responsible for mission accomplishment. As part of this, they are used to controlling the news in unit newspapers they publish, and therefore expect to influence the news that appears in Stars and Stripes. On the other hand, civilian reporters and editors, hired for their journalism expertise and their U.S. newspaper experience, do not expect commanders to exercise influence on news selection and presentation for Stars and Stripes. Rather, these civilians expect their professional judgment to be the key consideration in news selection and presentation.

The governing DOD instruction contributes to these conflicting expectations by allowing an environment to exist that is conducive to allegations of censorship, news management, and command influence.

## Cultural and Institutional Differences

In a report by the Twentieth Century Fund's Task Force on the Military and the Media,<sup>1</sup> the editor of the Wilson Quarterly—a journal published by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars containing articles on such areas as politics, international relations, law, and the economy—points out differences between the military and the media that he believes create built-in conflicts between the two groups.

<sup>1</sup>Peter Braestrup, Battle Lines: Report of the Twentieth Century Fund Task Force on the Military and the Media (New York: Priority Press, 1985).

---

The editor describes military officers as members of a hierarchy, with a clear ranking order, who must be team players. Particularly in peacetime, he continues, an officer must avoid embarrassment to succeed. As a result, most senior military officers do not view the media as an ally, given the media's focus on conflict and melodrama. The editor writes the following about the media experiences of senior officers who have served in Washington:

"... [they] must pay heed to the mood of Congress, the predilections of the White House and the secretary of defense, and stories in the press and television that may affect the service's image. Not surprisingly, the 'negative' stories (of scandal, misdeeds, mismanagement, waste) not only loom largest in the minds of Washington newsmen (they are more exciting to read) but also in the memories of the senior military (accurate or not, such stories may damage a man's career); such stories may be exploited by rival services or by critics of the military on Capital Hill, and they always tend to cause distress within the Pentagon."

On the other hand, the editor characterizes journalists as viewing their professional responsibilities to include seeking out the facts, acting as a "watchdog" over government, and providing the truth so that citizens can make intelligent decisions about different issues. He writes that these responsibilities are discharged in an environment where news organizations are relatively small, competing enterprises, operating under economic constraints, and heavily dependent on attracting and retaining sufficiently large audiences to draw needed advertising revenues. Journalists, unlike military personnel, have no rank, and are not team players, but competitors, determined to keep up with or beat other news organizations.

---

## DOD Governing Instruction

Policies, procedures, and responsibilities for DOD newspapers are contained in DOD Instruction 5120.4. The current version of the instruction was put into effect on November 14, 1984, and was an extensive revision of the previous edition, which had been in effect since March 15, 1973. The Director of the American Forces Information Service, who is responsible for developing policies on DOD newspapers, told us that one purpose of revising the instruction was to limit the military commanders' flexibility in managing or censoring the Stars and Stripes newspapers. According to the Director, the unified commander's flexibility was limited by removing authority granted in the earlier instruction to withhold news the commander felt might harm troop morale and by more clearly distinguishing Stars and Stripes from command newspapers.



The sole purpose of a command newspaper is to facilitate accomplishment of the command or installation mission. It provides the commander a primary means of communicating mission-essential information and provides feedback through such forums as letters to the editor. Normally, the news and editorial content is prepared by the command's public affairs staff. According to the DOD instruction, "Good journalistic practices are vital, but are not an end unto themselves. They are the primary means to enhance receptivity of command communication through the newspaper." A command newspaper is distributed free on a base or installation. The cost of publishing is paid either totally through appropriated funds (for "funded" newspapers) or by contractors (for "civilian enterprise" newspapers) who layout and print the papers without cost to the government in return for the right to solicit advertising.

According to a former Pacific Stars and Stripes editor in chief, every military base has a newspaper that is in reality a "house organ" for base commanders. Commanders are accustomed to being able to control these papers and believe that any government newspaper distributed on their base should be under their control. However, the former editor continued, civilian journalists are accustomed to no governmental interference. Civilian journalists are hired from U.S. commercial newspapers where they enjoy First Amendment protection. According to the former editor, these two cultures create great opportunity for distrust.

Two different Commanders in Chief of the U.S. Pacific Command have reminded their subordinate commanders about the newspaper's uniqueness. The messages were sent in June 1983 and May 1986. In part, both said the following:

"[Pacific Stars and Stripes'] popularity among our people is based on their confidence that the publication offers an unbiased view of world and regional events. Although Pacific Stars and Stripes is funded and subsidized by official funds, it is not a base newspaper. The Pacific and European Stars and Stripes are unique. They function similarly to U.S. daily newspapers, recognizing the interests of their readers and with the responsibility to report news and events accurately."

The May 1986 message also stated that the newspapers readers "should have confidence that they are not being propagandized and are not being subject to selected journalism or censorship. This is an important principle."

Base commanders apparently continued to feel they could control the content of Stars and Stripes, even after the new instruction was put into

---

effect, because it (1) assigns the papers a dual mission, (2) has been interpreted as prohibiting investigative reporting, and (3) provides a formal mechanism for commanders to influence the papers.

---

## Stars and Stripes Has a Dual Mission

The first part of the Stars and Stripes mission is to bring DOD personnel and their dependents the same international, national, and regional news and opinion from commercial sources that are available to newspapers throughout the United States. The purpose of this part of the mission is to enable the continued intelligent exercise of citizenship responsibilities and to build morale and readiness by dispelling rumor and keeping DOD personnel and their dependents in touch with aspects of life in the United States. The second part of the mission is to provide U.S. government, DOD, command, and local news and information, which improves individual capability for mission accomplishment.

According to the Director of the American Forces Information Service, the first part of the mission means providing the same information, or misinformation, as a U.S. newspaper. The Director said the government should not put itself in the position of judging the accuracy of the information, nor should only the news and information be reported that the government sees as the truth. The news should come as close as possible to the same news that is available back home. By publishing the same information available to commercial papers, according to the Director, the Stars and Stripes is like a newspaper protected by the First Amendment.

The second part of the mission, according to the Director, relates to command and military news that should be motivational and essentially positive in nature. He characterized this portion of the mission as providing "company news" and said that 90 percent of this news should come from the public affairs offices at the bases and commands. The remainder should be off-base features. The "Policy Guidelines" book for the Pacific Stars and Stripes refers to the second part of the mission as the military mission, which sets the papers apart from commercial newspapers.

After analyzing a questionnaire returned late last year by over half the members of his editorial staff, the editor in chief of the European Stars and Stripes concluded, among other things, that the character of the newspaper needed to be clearly defined in terms similar to those applied to the civilian press. The editor was led to this conclusion because he felt that existing regulations did not adequately define Stars and Stripes as

being similar to commercial publications. He felt that wording in the regulations, such as "command news and unified command newspaper" and "a review of the chain of command under which the newspaper works," could easily lead public affairs officers and their commanders to view Stars and Stripes like a unit or installation newspaper over which they have complete control.

---

## Prohibition on Investigative Reporting

The DOD instruction states that Stars and Stripes "is not an investigative function within the military community; it is a reporting function." This provision has been widely interpreted as prohibiting investigative reporting by Stars and Stripes. However, the instruction does not define investigative function or investigative reporting, nor does it distinguish either one from "special projects reporting teams." These teams are authorized, for example, to conduct in-depth reporting on operations, actions, or achievements within the unified command area.

Neither the unified commander in chief's instructions in Europe nor the Pacific define investigative reporting. Policy guidelines in the Pacific interpret investigative reporting to mean reporting on a subject involving "dubious or even illegal behavior." Determining what constitutes investigative reporting, because of unclear guidance, has been an ongoing problem. Staff members in the Pacific say they tend not to pursue certain stories that might be considered investigative. One news editor told us that the investigative reporting policy has a "chilling" effect on the newspaper's ability to cover the news.

Officials in Europe have different views on investigative reporting. The Deputy Commander in Chief believes Stars and Stripes should not do investigative reporting. Public affairs officials believe that since Stars and Stripes is not an investigative agency, the paper is precluded from doing investigative reporting. However, the editor in chief believes this prohibition does not apply to Stars and Stripes. Both the Deputy Commander and the editor agree that no definition of investigative reporting exists and that DOD needs to clarify its guidance concerning this issue. U.S. European Command officials believe that parameters for investigative reporting should be established.

Early in our work we asked the Director of the American Forces Information Services about an incident in the U.S. European Command in which a reporter was denied information on the grounds of investigative reporting. The incident involved questions about the construction of an ornate portico in front of the Command headquarters building. The

reporter's queries concerned such issues as construction costs, source of funds, and which projects were deferred to build the portico. The Command refused to answer the questions because it felt they constituted investigative reporting. The Director said he had been asked about this incident by the editor in chief and agreed that the reporter's queries constituted investigative reporting because they seemed to question military judgment. However, the General Counsel for the American Forces Information Services said there was no operative definition of investigative reporting because it is an elusive concept and difficult to define.

The Director told us that the statement that Stars and Stripes is not an investigative function was included in the DOD instruction for two reasons. First, Stars and Stripes reporters cannot grant the same confidentiality privilege as commercial newspaper reporters because they are government employees and, as such, must immediately report any suspected wrongdoing—whether criminal or just bad management—to their superiors. Second, the purpose of Stars and Stripes reporters is to provide command news, not to create barriers between themselves and the commands.

Subsequently, the Director told us that the investigative function statement meant that Stars and Stripes reporters are not government investigators to whom lying is a violation of 18 U.S.C. 1001. However, he noted that investigative reporting is allowed and that a statement to this effect needs to be added to that section of the DOD instruction.

The ambiguity of this prohibition is a serious concern to reporters and editors, both military and civilian, at the newspapers. The Society of Professional Journalists reported that this limitation on reporting raises legitimate journalistic concerns because it allows military personnel to bring a story to a halt simply by accusing the reporter of engaging in investigative reporting. In addition, it makes reporters an arm of military law enforcement and military justice. Such a perception on the part of news sources and readers greatly curtails reporters' ability to do their job, according to the Society.

---

## Formal Mechanism for Influencing the News

DOD Instruction 5120.4 requires the Commanders in Chief of the U.S. European and Pacific Commands to establish a Stars and Stripes advisory board in their theaters. The board is to be chaired by the unified command's director of public affairs and is to be composed of one voting representative from each of the component commands, as well as the editor in chief and the managing editor. Among the board's functions are

to evaluate compliance with DOD and unified command editorial policies, including those requiring the free flow of information to DOD personnel, and to provide counsel on topics selected for the special project reporting teams and on the planned treatment of these topics.

In addition to Stars and Stripes personnel, the board in both theaters is composed of public affairs officers. According to Navy instructions, one responsibility of these officers is to minimize the impact of unfavorable or adverse information on their commands. Advisory board minutes in the Pacific indicate these officers were frequently concerned with how to control reporting on topics sensitive to host nations or DOD (see ch. 4).

In his analysis of responses to the questionnaire he circulated late last year, the European editor in chief pointed out that no existing regulations clearly outline the responsibilities and limitations of public affairs officers and their commanders in terms of when and how they deal with Stars and Stripes. This lack of clear guidance, combined with the failure to clearly define the papers in terms similar to the civilian press, the editor stated, has frequently led to attempts by commanders and their public affairs officers to manage news by delaying it, withholding it, or applying undue pressure to influence news judgment.

The European editor believes that DOD's requirement for the free flow of news and information is impeded because of the restrictions on news gathering procedures and content found in existing regulations. The lack of clearly articulated responsibilities for public affairs officers and their commanders to respond fully to reporters' inquiries and their bias toward treating Stars and Stripes like a unit or installation newspaper also hinder the free flow of news.

---

## Comments by the Society of Professional Journalists

We asked the Society of Professional Journalists to comment on guidance that each Stars and Stripes is to follow. We provided them DOD Instruction 5120.4, European Command Directive 15-8, and Pacific Command Instruction 5720.15F.

The Society stated that the intent of DOD's instruction—to provide for the free flow of news and information without censorship or news management—was clear, although the implementing instructions were unclear. In addition, the Society said that some provisions in the instructions raise "legitimate journalistic concerns" and can be used by the editor to justify news management or censorship. For example, a stricture against polls and surveys related to political campaigns is inconsistent

with the Stars and Stripes' mission to remind military personnel of their responsibilities as citizens.

The Society also observed that all reporting involves some investigation, even though investigative reporting is prohibited. One panelist stated that although in-depth and special project reporting can partially compensate for the lack of investigative reporting, it still has to be reviewed by the advisory board, and this delay can often be detrimental to a story.

The Society concluded that a European Command directive prohibiting independent political or diplomatic reporting<sup>2</sup> denies Stars and Stripes readers the type of information that is available to readers in the United States.

---

<sup>2</sup>Stars and Stripes in Europe can report diplomatic or political news carried by the wire services. The directive prohibits the paper from sending its own reporters out to gather such news. No similar prohibition is contained in the Pacific Command directive.

---

# Military Officers Influence Stars and Stripes Operations

---

Through interviews with current and former employees, we identified 20 allegations of censorship or news management at the European Stars and Stripes and over 200 allegations at the Pacific Stars and Stripes. Most of the allegations in Europe involved external influence on specific stories by commanders and their public affairs officers who caused stories to be withheld or delayed. In the Pacific, public affairs officials have attempted to influence reporting on special projects and sensitive subjects, and as in Europe, some have been unresponsive to reporters' inquiries. Of the more than 200 allegations we identified in the Pacific, at least 37 involved external command influence or public affairs officials' lack of responsiveness. In addition, commanders and public affairs officers in the Pacific have attempted to influence personnel actions taken at the paper.

The inherent conflict between commanders and civilian journalists is shown by the differing views of the Stars and Stripes policies requiring official comments on military related stories. When stories are time sensitive, editors, according to the Society of Professional Journalists, will typically print a story with the information available and then try to follow up with later articles. Stars and Stripes typically does not do this on military-related stories because of its policies to obtain official DoD comments and to ensure accuracy of military information. The Society noted that delaying a news story is often the same as killing it. Civilian journalists at Stars and Stripes view such policies as inappropriate news management and further, if a story is not promptly printed because of them, as the cause of censorship. Commanders and their public affairs officers can use these policies to manage the news by delaying comments.

---

## Command Influence in Europe

We followed up on the 20 allegations of censorship and news management through interviews at Stars and Stripes and found 12 that merited reporting. Eight allegations did not merit reporting because of a lack of documentation or because they were not valid. Of the 12 that merited reporting, 8 involved external command influence ranging from a commander who ordered a story withheld to untimely responses from public affairs officials, which delayed stories. The other 4 allegations involved internal decisions by the managing editor and the features editor. Each of the 12 allegations is described in appendix II.

After we had followed up on the 20 allegations, we received an additional allegation that a reporter was denied access to Air Force officials.

---

## Reporter Denied Access

In May 1988, the Commander, U.S. Air Force Europe, told his subordinates not to talk to a Stars and Stripes reporter because of two articles he had written. The first article incorrectly stated that budget cuts had resulted in reducing the flying time for the Air Force in Europe by nearly 50 percent. The paper printed a front-page correction the next day. The other article upset the Commander because he felt that a story the reporter wrote about F-16 crashes in Germany did not adequately portray the Commander's concern with the safety of the civilian population.

Initially, the Commander barred his subordinates from ever talking again to the reporter. After the editor in chief and the managing editor intervened, the Commander said he would lift the ban on July 1, 1988. Eventually, the Commander told his subordinates they could talk to the reporter but they could not give him any information—i.e., they were to stonewall the reporter.

Soon after being notified of the situation, the Director, American Forces Information Service, sent a message to the European and Pacific Commanders in Chief stating that Stars and Stripes reporters “shall be granted access and the same treatment as that afforded reporters from commercial media,” and that they may not be specially banned from military bases. U.S. Air Force Europe continued to stonewall the reporter until July 1, 1988. The Director, American Forces Information Service, told us that stonewalling the reporter was legal and in accordance with his message because reporters from the commercial media are also occasionally stonewalled.

---

## Stories Not Printed

We identified four stories that were not published because of external command influence. First, the Deputy Commander in Chief, U.S. European Command, directly ordered the paper to withhold a January 1984 wire service story about the removal of a German general from a key position in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization because of alleged homosexuality. Second, the Deputy Commander decided which letters to the editor about his decision to withhold the above story would be printed and deleted the one that editorial staff considered most critical of his decision.

In 1986 and 1987, two stories could not be developed because the U.S. European Command denied reporters access to information. First, the Deputy Commander decided that a reporter's questions about a portico under construction at the command building were investigative and



would not be answered. Second, a reporter was unable to obtain a report needed to develop a story on theater medical care and the removal of the Command Surgeon.

Stars and Stripes reported on March 14, 1986, that an investigation had been initiated on medical care in the command and that the Surgeon had publicly criticized DOD statements and proposals on medical care. The paper quoted a command spokesman on July 31, 1986, as saying the investigation had been completed in March, the results had been reviewed, but a final decision had not been made, so further comment was inappropriate. The reporter was told unofficially that the report would never be provided. The deputy editor in chief believes access to the report was denied because of sensitivities that could have involved the Surgeon's career.

---

## Stories Delayed

Public affairs officials at the U.S. European Command were involved in delaying two stories by questioning the accuracy of the stories. In two other cases, reporters received untimely or incomplete responses to their queries, but eventually developed stories. These events occurred in 1986 and 1987. One was a wire service story and the other three were by Stars and Stripes reporters.

The two stories that were delayed due to questions of accuracy were published a day later. One story was about the retirement of the Commander in Chief. The other was about a senior admiral who had a heart attack. In both instances, public affairs officials requested the paper to withhold the stories but did not initially provide specific rationales. Both instances occurred in November 1986, shortly after the current editor in chief began his tour. The editor told us he had not anticipated the negative effect on the staff's morale of holding the stories, and now would not hold similar stories.

In the two remaining cases, reporters felt the public affairs officials were not responsive to their queries. The first case involved a fatal accident with an explosive device that creates craters in roads and airfield runways. The reporters covering this story made numerous attempts to obtain information about the results of an investigation concerning the accident. They believe the investigation was completed at least a month before they were provided information and that the information was provided only after they submitted a Freedom of Information Act request to U.S. Army Europe. The U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs Officer told us the investigation was actually completed 2 months before

the information was provided, but the intervening time was needed for the U.S. Army Europe commander to review the report and for a press release to be prepared. The editor in chief, however, believes that the Freedom of Information Act request and his own discussions with the European Command Public Affairs Officer were instrumental in obtaining the information.

The second case of nonresponsiveness involved a story about the closing of the skeet range at Bitburg Air Force Base after allegations of lead contamination in surrounding farmland. The local German media began running stories about the possibility of contamination in mid-August 1987. On October 8, a Stars and Stripes reporter filed 11 questions with the Bitburg public affairs office to obtain such information as when and why the range was closed, who ordered the closing, how long it would be closed, and the location of the nearest range that could be used while it was closed.

The base public affairs office had answers to all but 1 of the 11 questions within 2 days of receiving them. However, the 17th Air Force's public affairs office authorized the base to provide only a two sentence statement which said that the range had been closed as a result of local complaints about contamination, and it would remain closed until the complaints were evaluated.

On October 20, 1987, the reporter refiled four of his original questions, three of which were answered on October 26, 1987. He wrote a story based partly on these answers and translations of articles that appeared in local German papers. The story ran on November 8, 1987—1 month and 6 days after the range closed.

---

## Command Influence in the Pacific

In the Pacific, commanders and public affairs officials exerted pressure to influence two personnel actions taken against Stars and Stripes staff and to reduce bureau staffing and dismiss civilians in Tokyo.

---

## Removal of the Former Editor in Chief

Several current and former employees alleged that the former editor in chief was removed by the Commander in Chief after a disagreement over the publication of a series on the Philippine-American War and several other sensitive stories prompted complaints from commanders in the theater.

The series of stories on the Philippine-American War was published in the June 16-19, 1986, editions of the paper. The first installment was followed by a number of complaints from military officials to the paper and the Commander in Chief, Pacific. The Pacific Commander wrote to the editor on June 25, 1986, that the Philippine series was not news, was inflammatory to our neighbors in the Pacific, and was biased. He characterized the series as, at best, an historical piece of questionable quality. He felt that printing the series showed a distinct lack of sensitivity to U.S.-Philippine relations. He believed that the editor had made a serious error in judgment.

The editor responded to the Commander's letter on July 2, 1986, explaining that the Philippine-American War series was written to shed light on the observance of a major Philippine holiday. The series described the establishment of the first Philippine republic on June 12, 1898, and the American involvement in the insurrection that followed the founding of the republic. The editor further explained that the series was designed to inform the readership about past U.S.-Philippine relations.

Concerns regarding other sensitive stories contributed to the Pacific Commander's loss of confidence in the editor. In an April 1986 letter to the Pacific Commander, the Commander, U.S. Forces Japan, complained about persistent, unsatisfactory dealings with the paper and asked that the editor be replaced if he "cannot be convinced to operate (the paper) in a professional and responsible manner." The Japan Commander was particularly upset because the paper breached an embargo on photo coverage of the Secretary of Defense taken during an unofficial stopover at Yokota Air Base, which had not been announced to the Japanese government. He also complained about the paper's coverage of stories sensitive to the Japanese government. The Pacific Commander agreed that the breach of the photo embargo was inexcusable and asked his deputy to caution the editor about reporting that could be perceived as sensational or irresponsible.

Two additional controversial stories appeared in the June 23, 1986, edition of the paper. The first involved an article in which an admiral was quoted as confirming Japanese newspaper reports of a planned port call of the battleship New Jersey to Japan. This story was controversial because the admiral was misquoted as confirming the port call and Navy policy does not allow confirmation of ship movements.

The second story concerned interviews with two dependents working as bar hostesses in Okinawa. The story was controversial because it ran alongside an article on the results of the unified command inspector general investigation. The inspector general story was prepared from information provided by a U.S. Forces Japan public affairs official who said that the situation was not widespread enough to warrant a full-scale investigation. The interview story, however, quoted dependents who disputed the results of the inspector general investigation and affirmed that dependents were, in fact, working as bar hostesses for economic reasons. We found that the U.S. Forces Japan Public Affairs Officer attended a briefing given by the inspector general's team during which it was reported that the team found 700-800 U.S. military members and dependents working as hostesses, with some working as prostitutes.

The unified command's Public Affairs Officer told us that stories of concern to commanders contributed to the Pacific Commander's loss of confidence in the former editor and the decision to remove him in August 1986.<sup>1</sup> According to the Public Affairs Officer, other factors contributing to the Pacific Commander's loss of confidence included financial and personnel management problems at the newspaper. In an official statement, the Pacific Commander said that the change in leadership at the newspaper was a purposeful management decision rather than a result of complaints from commanders in the field who may have objected to stories the paper published.

---

## Reporter's Orders Denied

According to a former Deputy Commander of Pacific Stars and Stripes, the Philippine-American War series affected the proposed transfer of an Army reporter to the Philippines bureau. This reporter was the author of the series. He had extended his enlistment 5 months for the proposed transfer to be effected.

The Deputy Commander told us that on the day of the first installment of the series, a general at Clark Air Force Base questioned the Deputy Commander's patriotism and said the article seriously damaged U.S.-Philippine relations. In conversations with public affairs officials in the Philippines and at the unified command, the Deputy Commander learned that the commanders in the Philippines did not want the Army

---

<sup>1</sup>Although the normal tour of duty in Tokyo for a military member accompanied by his family is 3 years, the Pacific Commander removed the former editor in August 1986, approximately 1 year after he started his tour. The Commander's decision to remove the editor may have been made shortly after July 2. The Commander penciled the note "he has to go" on the editor's letter of that date explaining why the Philippine-American War series was printed.

reporter there. According to the Deputy Commander, the paper also received telephone calls from almost every commander in the Pacific complaining about the series.

The Deputy Commander later withdrew the reporter's transfer orders stating that he understood from the unified command's Public Affairs Officer and others that the reporter could not be assigned to the Philippines bureau. The Public Affairs Officer said that although he recalled discussions with the Deputy Commander about sending the reporter to the Philippines bureau and may have "raised an eyebrow," he would never tell a commander what to do because he was not in the command chain. The Deputy Commander told us that the official reason for denying the orders was that the reporter had been found overweight on his physical readiness test.<sup>2</sup>

---

## Reporter's Medal Nomination Withheld

According to several allegations, the reaction to the Philippine-American War series also resulted in the withholding of a medal for which the same reporter was nominated in June 1986. The Philippines bureau chief nominated the reporter for the medal because of his timely and extensive reporting during the March 1986 labor strikes at Clark Air Base and Subic Naval Station. The editor in chief wrote to the unified command on June 9, 1986, recommending that the correspondent be awarded the medal. However, according to officials in the command's awards section, they never received the paperwork.

The paperwork was withheld by the command's public affairs office. The public affairs official who was responsible for handling awards told us that the command's Public Affairs Officer concurred with his suggestion that the newspaper hold the award recommendation and resubmit it after the furor over the Philippine-American War series subsided. This official told us that he had discussed resubmitting the award nomination with the former Deputy Commander, and personally mailed the nomination back to him. The Deputy Commander, however, maintains that he received neither the nomination nor any feedback on the unified command's decision.

---

<sup>2</sup>By regulation, overweight can be used as a reason for refusing to take a favorable personnel action, such as approving a reassignment request. The reporter was 8 pounds overweight.

---

## Reduction of Bureau Staff

We received allegations that a reduction of the size of the local bureaus was meant to limit the news-gathering ability of the newspaper, in reaction to the sensitive stories printed during the former editor in chief's tenure. According to a former staff member, the former Deputy Commander, who was the acting editor in chief in August 1986, announced a plan to dismiss junior civilian employees in the Tokyo office and reassign military reporters from the bureaus to fill their positions.

Correspondence between the paper and the unified command's public affairs office linked the reduction to the bureaus' production of negative news. A memorandum from the Deputy Commander noted that the focus of many of the paper's editorial problems over the past year had been articles generated by the bureaus. The unified command's Public Affairs Officer told us these editorial problems included the bar hostess and Philippine-American War stories, which had created problems for the former editor in chief. The memorandum concedes that reduced bureau staffs would result in reduced coverage of some news events, and this would force reporters to focus their contacts on the public affairs offices.

The Director of the unified command's Government and Public Affairs Division, for whom the Public Affairs Officer works, told us he does not believe the paper needs the bureaus. He believes the wire services sufficiently cover the news, and that the paper cannot compete with them. In his opinion, the bureaus are not financially advantageous. However, the current editor in chief's initial speech to bureau chiefs indicated another motivation. He said that "there was a strong body of opinion" among all the people he talked with that the bureaus should be eliminated since they do not help make the commanders' jobs easier. He was told that the bureaus were isolated and undisciplined. The public affairs office confirmed that military commanders were concerned about the stories produced by the bureaus.

The former Deputy Commander told us that he decided to reduce bureau staffing for financial reasons and because he did not want to lose the bureaus entirely. He said his decision was in response to other commanders' hopes that the bureaus be eliminated altogether. He said that in a discussion involving the Director of Public and Governmental Affairs, the Public Affairs Officer, and the former editor in chief, the Director said he wanted the bureaus to be eliminated. The former Deputy Commander told us that the Director wanted to eliminate the bureaus because of criticisms about stories on the New Jersey port call, Philippine-American War, and bar hostesses.

---

## Management Sensitized to Command Concerns

Before the current editor in chief was selected, unified command officials briefed the civilian managing editor about concerns commanders had with the paper. The briefing was partially the result of an April 1986 U.S. Forces Japan complaint to the Commander in Chief about the paper. Concerns discussed in this briefing included the negative impact certain stories had on the credibility of the paper with component and subunified commanders in the theater and the need for the paper's staff to be made aware of the sensitivities in the region. According to command officials, the briefing included discussions about stories that would concern any publisher. These stories included the Philippine-American War series, the New Jersey port call article, and the Okinawa bar hostess issue.

The current editor in chief believes that relations with various public affairs offices were poor prior to his arrival, and he wanted to rebuild these relationships. Commanders' concerns over the previous editor's story selection and presentation were communicated to the current editor by their public affairs officers in a meeting at the unified command headquarters before he arrived at the paper. The officers' were concerned because they believed the paper was publishing stories they felt were imbalanced, inaccurate, and irresponsible. Later, in a conference with his bureau chiefs, the editor referred to the commanders' concerns and stated that if the paper was to continue to exist, it had to demonstrate that it was filling a need to the servicemen in the Pacific, and this required the active support of the commanders. The editor also stated that the paper needs to have good working relationships with public affairs officers.

According to the current editor, he also met with the Pacific Commander in Chief prior to his arrival at the paper. At that meeting, the Commander told him that some newspaper employees, particularly the civilians, did not have a good understanding of Stars and Stripes missions.

Shortly after he arrived at the paper, the editor spoke with his staff about the purpose of Stars and Stripes. He said there were three reasons why his remarks were necessary:

1. The DOD instruction establishing operational policy for Stars and Stripes requires him to ensure that editorial personnel are taught editorial policy and fully understand the missions and status of the newspaper as a U.S. government instrumentality.

2. The Commander in Chief instructed him to address as a priority matter the editorial staff's perception of what Stars and Stripes is all about.

3. The editorial staff showed such remarks were necessary because of their allegations of mismanagement and censorship made to the inspector general and others.

The editor told his staff that the paper is not exactly like other newspapers, and spoke of DOD and unified command guidance, as well as his interpretation of that guidance. He told the staff that when reviewing stories for publication, editors should ask themselves not only if the story is important and interesting to the reader, but also what effect printing it may have on U.S. national security policy and whether printing the story would make the job of the President, ambassadors, commanders, and military personnel harder. The editor also affirmed his intention to exercise editorial judgment.

---

## Public Affairs Officials' Concern With Host Nation Sensitivities

We found that public affairs officials who make up the advisory board have conflicting responsibilities between representing their commands and evaluating the paper's editorial policy. According to the unified command Public Affairs Officer, these officials are concerned about how their commands are perceived. Military services' instructions indicate that public affairs officials are responsible for minimizing the impact of unfavorable or adverse information.

In their role as advisory board members, however, public affairs officials are responsible for evaluating compliance with editorial policies, including the policy of free flow of information to DOD personnel. Comments recorded in advisory board minutes show the dilemma of evaluating editorial policy while minimizing the adverse impact of unfavorable or adverse information about DOD. These comments relate to minimizing news critical of DOD, dealing with host nation sensitivities, and increasing news about the members' commands. For example, the June 1985 board minutes indicate a public affairs official felt there was too much news critical of DOD on the front page.

Although specifically prohibited from using the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service's sensitive subjects list,<sup>3</sup> the advisory board members have considered using this list or a similar one developed especially

---

<sup>3</sup>Sensitive subject lists are used in foreign countries for radio and television because such signals can be received by the citizens of the foreign country.



for the newspaper. In an April 1986 letter to the Pacific Commander's public affairs office, the U.S. Forces Japan Public Affairs Officer referred to a conversation in which they discussed a command sensitivity list. The U.S. Forces Japan Public Affairs Officer also wrote that he and his Commander believed such a list offered the protection for certain subjects sensitive to the Japanese government.

The minutes of the June 1986 advisory board meeting showed that the Chairman spoke of the potential value of bringing together public affairs officials, embassy personnel, and commanders to discuss host nation sensitivities and how to deal with them. However, in the meeting in November 1986, when the Pacific Fleet public affairs official suggested a sensitive subjects list be developed for the paper, the discussion showed that the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service sensitive subjects list approach is not permitted for Stars and Stripes. Although the list is not authorized, this does not preclude public affairs officials from meeting with commanders, editors, and others to discuss sensitive subjects.

---

### Increased Public Affairs Officials' Influence Under Current Editor

According to a senior editor with commercial newspaper experience, both civilian newspapers and Stars and Stripes try to obtain official comments from public affairs officials on military-related articles. He also noted that, although civilian newspapers may develop and print a military-related story without public affairs office cooperation, Stars and Stripes may not. According to senior editorial staff, the current editor's emphasis on maintaining good relationships with the public affairs officers has created an environment that provides them with more opportunity to influence the gathering and reporting of news by Stars and Stripes than by commercial papers.

The editor believes that improved newspaper relationships with public affairs officials resulted from his efforts to seek their responses to articles prior to publication. He also believes the public affairs officials do their best to get requested information to reporters. According to the editor, he allows the paper to hold stories, depending on how time sensitive a story is, to compensate for the public affairs officials' limitations in dealing with the military bureaucracy.

According to the editor, he contacts the public affairs officials if he believes issues or stories might be sensitive. However, according to the editor, he has never had an incident of a public affairs official trying to

---

keep a story out of the paper. Similarly, public affairs officials can contact the paper, and in fact are encouraged to do so, regarding ideas for future stories.

---

## Public Affairs Officials' Nonresponsiveness

In the Pacific, we investigated 17 allegations of nonresponsiveness. We reviewed the overall issue of public affairs officials' responsiveness and their relationship with the paper, but, due to time constraints, we were unable to follow up on each of the specific allegations.

One specific allegation we did follow up on involved reporters' queries about the results of an investigation into alleged rent fixing at Misawa Air Force Base in Japan. The reporter at Misawa discovered in November 1986 that area landlords were charging U.S. military personnel significantly higher rental fees than their Japanese neighbors. The landlords claimed that base housing officials advised them to raise the rents for American tenants to match the maximum limit on rental subsidies paid by the government.

Sometime shortly after December 24, 1986, at the request of the Misawa base commander and an agent of the Office of Special Investigations, the reporter agreed to drop his story until an investigation was completed. During 1987, reporters asked several times about the progress of that investigation. The Misawa Public Affairs Officer did not respond to the initial query on the status of the investigation, took 2 months to respond to a second query and another 2-1/2 weeks to respond to a third query, and then only after the intervention of the editor.

The Office of Special Investigations began its investigation in January 1987 and closed it in June 1987. The investigation revealed that the supervisory housing manager advised over 100 landowners on how much rent to charge. It also revealed that he owned housing units that he rented exclusively to U.S. Forces Japan personnel, and that he and the housing manager were conducting a private business while on duty and using Housing Referral Office employees to type correspondence and deliver and sell the product during official duty hours.

According to the Japan bureau chief, a reporter inquired during July 1987, a month after the investigation was closed, but was told by the Misawa Public Affairs Officer that the investigation was still in progress.

On November 13, 1987, the Japan bureau chief inquired again about the status of the investigation. After 10 days without a reply, he requested the editor's help to obtain an answer. On December 1, 1987, the Media Liaison Office for U.S. Forces Japan replied that the investigation had been completed. Responses to queries regarding the specific findings of the investigation were provided on December 16, 1987, over 5 months after the investigation was closed. A story on the rent fixing investigation appeared in the December 30, 1987, issue of the paper.

On December 30, 1987, the bureau chief submitted a query to the Media Liaison Office asking why responses to earlier queries on the investigation were delayed for 5 months. On January 7, 1988, the Office informed him that no response to that query would be forthcoming, as agreed by the editor and the Public Affairs Officer for U.S. Forces Japan. According to the Officer, he took the query out of media channels because it questioned the public affairs office's operating procedures.

## Pattern of News Content at Pacific Stars and Stripes Suggests Allegations Have Merit

Many of the allegations involving the current administration at the Pacific Stars and Stripes concern the treatment of stories that present an unfavorable image of DOD and the administration or that are sensitive to host nations. Our analysis of the content of both newspapers and the major wire services for March 1987 showed that, although both newspapers carried approximately the same number of stories, the Pacific paper had fewer stories on sensitive subjects than did the European paper. In addition, the Pacific paper provided substantially less political campaign news. We believe this news is critically important to fulfilling the newspapers' first mission to encourage "the continued intelligent exercise of citizenship responsibilities," as presented by DOD Instruction 5120.4. Readers of the Pacific paper were exposed to 51 percent fewer wire service stories on DOD than the readers in Europe, which ran 73 more wire service stories about DOD. A similar pattern exists with the other subjects we reviewed, such as the Iran-Contra affair and AIDS.

We examined 45 cases where the editor in chief had allegedly changed, delayed, or omitted sensitive stories. These cases were drawn from the period September 1986 through January 1988. The editor confirmed the alleged actions in 29 cases, thought some action other than that alleged occurred for 7 cases, and could not recall taking any actions on the specific stories for the other 9 cases. A panel of journalists from the Society of Professional Journalists reviewed the allegations and the editor's explanation for his actions for all 45 cases. The panel members concluded that there was evidence of censorship and news management.

Allegations regarding specific stories concerned changes, delays, or omissions. The editor in chief in the Pacific, unlike his European counterpart,<sup>1</sup> personally reads and edits news stories, and approves and releases news pages. The editor primarily uses balance and accuracy as criteria to edit sensitive stories and such criteria is based on his own experiences, knowledge, and beliefs about editing.<sup>2</sup> However, these criteria were not always consistently applied.

<sup>1</sup>The editor in chief in Europe does not edit or approve stories, but rather holds civilian editors responsible for the daily content of the paper based on their news judgement and experience. He stated he does not read and approve each page before it is printed, but added that this could be done within the editor in chief's role. However, he believes if it is done on a routine basis, it harms the integrity of the paper.

<sup>2</sup>The current editor in the Pacific is a graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy, has a masters degree in international relations, and was trained as a fighter pilot. He is also a distinguished graduate of the Naval War College, and has served in the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The European editor has a masters degree in journalism, and his career field has been public affairs. His most recent tour before the Stars and Stripes was in the Department of the Army's Inspector General's Office.

Content Analysis  
Supports Differences  
Between European,  
Pacific Stars and  
Stripes and Wire  
Services

A content analysis of the news stories and coverage of both newspapers and the Associated Press (AP) and the United Press International (UPI) wire services for March 1987 confirms that there are differences in coverage and content among these news sources. These differences are consistent with the allegations. Specifically, our analysis showed that (1) the Pacific paper ran fewer stories than the European paper on selected topics that former and current employees had said were sensitive, (2) it ran fewer DOD stories in total than the European paper, (3) it ran a lower proportion of stories that presented a negative image of DOD than the European paper, and (4) both papers ran a lower proportion of stories that presented a negative image of DOD than the AP and UPI wire services had offered.

Sources of Stars and  
Stripes News Stories

During March 1987, both papers ran about the same number of stories: 1,312 stories ran in the major news sections in the Pacific and 1,328 ran on comparable news pages in Europe. Stories for both papers came primarily from the AP and UPI wire services: 1,059 stories, or 81 percent, for the Pacific and 1,132 stories, or 85 percent, for Europe. A slightly higher percent of the Pacific stories were from Stars and Stripes civilian and military reporters than were the European paper's stories (14 percent and 9 percent, respectively). Table 5.1 summarizes the sources of both papers' news stories.

Table 5.1: Sources of Stars and Stripes News Stories

News Source	Pacific (percent)	Number of stories	European (percent)	Number of stories
AP	50	650	66	879
UPI	31	409	19	253
Staff reporters	14	188	9	120
Other wire services	5	65	6	76
Total	100	1,312	100	1,328

The majority of DOD/U.S. military stories in the Pacific, over 56 percent, were written by Stars and Stripes reporters, compared to only 35 percent in Europe. Conversely, 65 percent of Europe's military stories were from AP, UPI, or other wires, but only 44 percent of the Pacific's military stories were from the wire services. Table 5.2 summarizes the sources of both papers' DOD and military stories.

**Chapter 5**  
**Pattern of News Content at Pacific Stars and**  
**Stripes Suggests Allegations Have Merit**

**Table 5.2: Sources of DOD and Military Stories in Stars and Stripes**

News Source	Pacific (percent)	Number of stories	Europe (percent)	Number of stories
Staff reporters	56	109	35	105
AP	25	48	38	115
UPI	12	23	10	29
Other wire services	7	13	17	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>299</b>

**Pacific Stars and Stripes**  
**Carries Fewer Stories on**  
**Topics Cited in the**  
**Allegations**

The Pacific paper carried fewer AP and UPI stories on some of the sensitive topics cited in the allegations of censorship than did the European paper. In comparison to Europe, the Pacific paper carried about half as many stories on AIDS (17 stories compared to 33), half as many stories on strategic issues, such as the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces treaty and Strategic Defense Initiative (10 stories compared to 20), 27 percent fewer stories on the Iran-Contra affair (33 stories compared to 45), and about one-third as many stories on the 1988 election campaign (5 stories compared to 18). While both papers carried about the same number of stories in their major news sections, the Pacific paper carried a smaller proportion of stories on each selected topic than did the European paper. Table 5.3 displays the frequency that both Stars and Stripes newspapers ran AP and UPI stories on five specific issues cited in the allegations.

**Table 5.3: Frequency of AP and UPI Stories on Selected Issues in Stars and Stripes**

News Source	Pacific (percent)	Number of stories	European (percent)	Number of stories
DOD/U.S. military	6.7	71	12.7	144
Iran/Contra	3.1	33	4.0	45
AIDS	1.6	17	2.9	33
Strategic treaty	0.9	10	1.8	20
Presidential campaign	0.5	5	1.4	16
Other <sup>a</sup>	87.2	923	77.2	874
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,059</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,132</b>

<sup>a</sup>The "Other" category contained stories on such issues as international events, natural disasters, accidents, human interest, and the Washington political scene. Although allegations were made about stories on several issues in this category, we analyzed and are reporting on the five specific issues for simplicity purposes.

Both Stars and Stripes carried fewer AP and UPI stories about topics cited in the allegations, as well as smaller proportions of them than AP or UPI.

However, the Pacific paper covered a noticeably smaller proportion of stories on each of these topics than the European paper, AP, and UPI. For example, it carried 5 stories on the 1988 presidential election campaign, or 0.5 percent of the total articles, while the European paper carried 16 stories, or 1.4 percent of the total articles. AP carried 193 stories and UPI carried 123 stories, representing 2.6 percent and 1.9 percent of their content, respectively.

---

### Pacific Stars and Stripes Carries Fewer Negative Image DOD Stories

The Pacific paper ran fewer negative image DOD stories and a smaller percentage of them than did its European counterpart. This is consistent with allegations that unfavorable DOD news is omitted from the Pacific paper.

The Pacific paper carried about one-third as many stories portraying a negative image of DOD as did the European paper, 22 and 61, respectively. Eleven percent of the Pacific's DOD stories conveyed a negative image of the U.S. military, compared to 20 percent of Europe's DOD stories.

A higher proportion and a greater number of positive image DOD stories were run in the Pacific than in Europe. Twenty of the Pacific's military stories (10 percent) conveyed a positive image of the Department of Defense (DOD), compared to 16 of Europe's stories (5 percent).

Each paper has the same mission to provide the same news available in the United States. As such, each paper receives the same AP and UPI wire services that provide American dateline military stories. Therefore, we would expect the image of the military in the AP and UPI stories run by each paper to be representative of the image portrayed in all AP and UPI military stories. However, we found that even though both newspapers' coverage of AP and UPI military stories under-represented negative image military stories, the Pacific paper's coverage did so to a greater extent. Forty-seven percent of the DOD stories in AP and UPI combined portrayed a negative image of the U.S. military. In comparison, 35 percent of the AP and UPI military stories in Europe were negative and 27 percent of Pacific's were negative.

We also compared the coverage of neutral image DOD stories by both papers and the wire services. For the wire services, 47 percent of military stories were neutral, while 55 percent of the European paper's AP and UPI stories were neutral, and 66 percent of the Pacific paper's AP and UPI stories were neutral.

Each paper ran over 100 stories written by Stars and Stripes civilian and military reporters. Only 1 of 109 of these stories in the Pacific paper portrayed a negative image of the military, whereas 7 of 105 reporter stories in the European paper were negative. Conversely, 17 of these stories in the Pacific were positive image stories, compared to only 4 in Europe.

---

### Omissions of AP and UPI Stories Account for Fewer Negative Image Stories in the Pacific

Both the Pacific and European Stars and Stripes carried AP and UPI stories that were not run by the other paper. However, the Pacific paper omitted many more AP and UPI stories that portrayed a negative image of the U.S. military. Their omission accounts for the paper's carrying fewer negative image AP and UPI stories than were carried in Europe. We identified all AP and UPI DOD stories that were carried by one paper but not the other. We considered only American dateline stories to eliminate those that would be of geographic interest to only one paper.

The Pacific paper omitted 86 American dateline AP and UPI stories about DOD that were run in the European paper; 32 of these omissions portrayed a negative image of the military. The European paper omitted 20 fewer American dateline stories about DOD, and only 6 of these stories conveyed a negative military image. Most of the DOD stories run by one paper but omitted by the other, however, were neutral—about 70 percent in Europe and 50 percent in the Pacific (see app. II).

Two examples of the negative image stories omitted from the European paper but run in the Pacific paper are (1) a story accusing a former Secretary of the Navy of dissolving a promotion board because of favoritism and (2) a story alleging that Kelly Air Force Base personnel wasted millions of dollars.

Examples of stories omitted from the Pacific paper but run in the European paper are (1) a story about General Bernard Rogers being forced to retire from the Army and mentioning his opposition to the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces treaty, (2) problems with a Sikorsky aircraft, (3) an administrative law judge finding that the Army had illegally pressured DOD civilians to vote for the Teamsters, and (4) a critical report on the B-1B bomber.



---

## Case Studies Show the Pacific's Coverage of DOD News Is Less Detailed

We examined 38 cases where both Stars and Stripes either used the same wire service story to report on a DOD event or used different wire service stories to cover the same DOD event. The Pacific paper generally provided less detail about the event than the European paper and provided fewer stories to describe the situation. In five cases this led to the Pacific paper's portraying a neutral or mixed image of the military, while the European paper portrayed a negative image.

Both newspapers ran the same wire story about Air Force Lt. Col. James Burton, who was allegedly forced to retire because he was critical of the Bradley fighting vehicle. Both papers reported that an inspector general's report cleared the service of forcing Burton out but Senator Pryor and Representative Levine conducted their own study. The Pacific story concluded that DOD would not comment until they saw the Congressmen's report, but the following text that appeared in the European paper was eliminated:

" 'In clearing the service for its handling of the Burton case,' said Levine and Pryor in a letter, 'the report by the inspector general's office was incomplete and misleading. Significant episodes and evidence are omitted; important aspects are seriously understated.' "

When we checked the actual AP source article, we found that the European paper carried the text as it came over the wire, while the Pacific paper edited out selected comments.

Even when both papers conveyed the same image of the military when reporting on the same event, we detected subtle differences in the presentation of the stories by the two papers. For example, in a story about the closing of Calumet Air Force Base, the Pacific paper simply reported that the Air Force intended to close the 37-year-old base where 98 people were employed. The European paper included this information, but further explained that a member of the House Committee on Armed Services was trying to reverse the decision and that the closing would cost the local economy \$3 million to \$4 million.

---

## Balance and Accuracy Criteria Applied to Sensitive Stories Is the Basis for Changed or Omitted Stories

The number of allegations of censorship at the Pacific paper was substantially greater than the European paper. This difference is mainly the result of the editorial practices established by the current editor in chief. The editor in chief in the Pacific more tightly controls the news than the European editor who relies more on the judgment of his editorial staff. We believe the high number of allegations in the Pacific resulted because civilian editors and reporters, hired from U.S. commercial newspapers for their experience and expertise, were not allowed to exercise as much journalistic judgment as their European colleagues.

The editor in the Pacific does not read every story in the paper each day. However, he does read stories he considers sensitive; that is, stories involving (1) host nation sensitivities, (2) DOD or the military, and (3) the Reagan administration. He applies balance and accuracy criteria to edit these stories in accordance with his interpretation of DOD guidance.

---

## Host Nation Sensitivities

The Pacific editor pays particular attention to stories he considers sensitive to host countries. According to DOD Instruction 5120.4, Stars and Stripes is an unofficial publication, and foreign government representatives who ask about the official status of its stories must be informed that articles do not represent the official U.S. government position. Yet, policy in the Pacific notes that despite the written disclaimer, the Stars and Stripes is subject to being perceived as the voice of the government.

In 1986 and again in 1988, the Commander in Chief, Pacific, encouraged military representatives in the Pacific to provide the paper's editor in chief with regular updates of host nation concerns and sensitivities so that he could make appropriate editorial judgments. As early as 1981, the Commander in Chief stated that he wanted the paper's management to ensure that no stories, cartoons, or editorials are published in such a way that they could adversely affect host country relationships or prejudice morale, good order, or discipline. DOD Instruction 5120.4 prohibits Stars and Stripes from using the sensitive subjects list issued by the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service. However, senior military officials in the Pacific still feel a sensitive subjects list is desirable to achieve consistency between the papers and the commands concerning host nation sensitivities.

The panel of journalists commented that newspaper policies in the Pacific reflect a preoccupation with host country sensitivities. The panel further commented that the Pacific command, which covers more than

---

50 percent of the globe, could develop a long list of sensitive topics to avoid or downplay.

---

---

**Military and  
Administration  
Sensitivities**

The editor also views any stories that may not favorably depict the military or the administration as sensitive. He did not recommend withholding these stories, but he advised the staff to ask themselves

"... is printing this story going to make the job of our President, our ambassadors, our commanders, and individual servicemen and women here harder? If the answer is 'yes,' that does not mean that we 'spike'<sup>3</sup> the story—but it does mean that we have an extra burden to ensure that what we print is absolutely accurate, balanced, and nonsensational. It is not just what we say; it becomes terribly important how we say it."

---

**Balance and Accuracy  
Criteria**

We believe the editor's emphasis on applying the balance and accuracy criteria to sensitive stories takes precedence over other news worthiness and timeliness judgments, resulting in such stories being delayed, watered-down, or ultimately, omitted from the newspaper. He said that he may hold or delay stories to ensure that missing perspectives are included. In the May 1987 advisory board meeting, the editor stated that all stories containing news sensitive to Pacific area commands or host countries or coming from a communist nation are checked to ensure complete balance. He also said that public affairs officials and/or American embassies in the areas are called for comments. If an immediate comment is not available to balance the story, it is generally held until the missing perspective is available.

Six news stories written by reporters were not printed because the editor believed they lacked balance (see app. II, cases P23, P25, P30/31, P32, P36, and P42). In five of these cases, he appears to have asked for additional information, which, it appears, was not provided by the reporter.

One case involved a May 1987 story about local land claims against the U.S. government and some military installations in Guam. The editor thought that the story was unbalanced because the reporter quoted three attorneys representing claimants, but only one attorney representing the U.S. Department of Justice. (The three attorneys each represented different groups of claimants.) The reporter told us that she

---

<sup>3</sup>"Spiking" a story means not publishing it.

attempted to pursue the story further with the Department of Justice for over 2 months, but was unsuccessful. The story was neither rewritten nor printed. The reporter and the news editor felt that the original contacts reported in the story were sufficient and that the editor in chief requested additional information because the story was sensitive to the military.

In another case involving an April 1987 story on military medicine malpractice, the editor in chief remembered making changes to the story and thought he may have asked the reporter to rewrite the story for reasons of balance. The reporter incorporated the editor's comments in a subsequent article that also was not printed.

According to the editor, he also applies this balance requirement to sensitive wire service stories. He stated that he sometimes has a bureau cover a sensitive subject first reported by a wire service. If the wire story is time sensitive, he stated that he might print the wire story and follow up with the bureau story. However, if it is a feature story, he stated that he is more likely to hold or not run the wire story and wait for the bureau story.

---

### Inconsistent Application of Balance and Accuracy Criteria

Several examples show the editor has inconsistently applied the balance and accuracy criteria. He responded to a public affairs official's criticisms about carrying more negative than positive editorial cartoons on the Marine security guards and espionage at our Moscow embassy by claiming that (1) Stars and Stripes is supposed to provide the same news to its readership that is being reported in the United States and (2) the particular subject involved servicemen acting to the detriment of the U.S. military. However, in responding to criticisms that he eliminated quotes of several Democrats criticizing administration actions to exceed the ceilings in the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT II) treaty, he said that the article was not balanced because it presented only one person's support of the actions, and six persons' criticisms.

The editor has emphasized accurately quoting people and has established a policy to ensure accuracy and proper context when directly quoting officials. The policy encourages recontacting the individual being quoted in complex stories. However, in three cases he said that quotes were changed at his direction because he felt the person was not making an accurate statement. For example, in one story he changed quotes with the word "charges" in them to the word "allegations"

because he believed the person meant to use allegations rather than the stronger sounding "charges."

Additionally, in the case of a December 1987 wire story about the law requiring us to investigate allegations of censorship at Stars and Stripes, the editor added quotes of himself responding to criticisms raised in the story. In doing so, some of Senator Proxmire's criticisms were deleted, including a statement about a policy, which was subsequently retracted, allowing senior officers to review articles before they were published.

The editor said that he deleted several lines in a "reporter's notebook"<sup>4</sup> column about what he considered a sensitive subject because the comments represented an "editorial position," which the paper is prohibited from taking. However, after Senator Proxmire called for an investigation of censorship at Stars and Stripes, the editor wrote a column as commander and editor in chief saying that the paper was not censored. This column was signed by him and ran on the front page. He said that unified command officials had approved running his column.

---

## Examples of Omitted and Partially Omitted Stories

To understand how the editor's interpretation of instructions and his editorial philosophy affect the outcome of the news, we examined 45 cases where he had allegedly changed, delayed, or omitted a story. Of the 45 cases examined, we categorized 23 as partial omissions—news stories that were changed or delayed—and 22 as omissions—news stories that were not published.

Of the 23 cases classified as partial omissions, the editor did not recall making the alleged changes in 4 cases and believed someone else made the alleged change in one case. In the remaining 18 partial omission cases, he remembered making the alleged changes. The changes usually involved cutting or changing text of both wire service and bureau stories. The general reasons he gave for making these changes included accuracy, length, balance, host nation sensitivities, and newsworthiness. For example, the editor believed one case is a perfect example of what he thinks is insensitivity. He substituted art work for a bureau-produced story about the popular Japanese comic books called Manga. The bureau chose art work from the comic book depicting the bombing of Hiroshima to accompany the article. In its place, the editor selected another Manga

---

<sup>4</sup>A reporter's notebook is a story that does not readily lend itself to straight news or feature treatment. A reporter's notebook may be written in a relaxed or conversational style. It may be humorous, cover almost any subject, and be written in the first or third person. It must also be informative and accurate.

comic book excerpt that dealt with a fictional topic (see app. II, case P12).

Of the 22 cases classified as omissions, the editor did not recall the circumstances surrounding 5 cases. In 11 cases, he agreed that he had omitted the story and gave reasons that included a lack of newsworthiness and balance, inaccuracy, and sensationalism. For example, the editor omitted a wire service story on the life of a female communist guerilla in the Philippines because he felt it offered a communist viewpoint (see app. II, case P24). In the remaining 6 cases, he stated that he had recalled the story, but could not recall actually omitting the story. In 5 of these cases, he said he did not kill the stories, but rather asked the reporter for a more "balanced" story.

---

### Changes Based on His Own Experiences, Knowledge, or Beliefs

The editor said he omitted a December 28, 1986, New York Times wire story about AIDS in the Philippines because he knew the article was imbalanced. According to him, the article was imbalanced because it stated that all the women found carrying AIDS were in the vicinity of Clark and Subic military bases. He said the article gave the appearance that military servicemen were the only source. He further stated that other papers had reported that women with AIDS were found around the bases because that was where the tests were conducted. He stated that he did not have to check with the wire services to ensure the tests were not conducted elsewhere because he already knew this was true. In place of the New York Times story, he had the Philippines bureau chief write an in-depth story on AIDS in the Philippines. This story appeared in the January 20, 1987, issue of the paper, a month after the New York Times story.

The editor changed another New York Times wire story that discussed nuclear options that could be used to defend Iran against a Soviet invasion. The original story stated that these options were analyzed under the Reagan administration. He deleted the references to the administration. He stated that, based on his experience working within the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he knew the nuclear studies mentioned had been started prior to the Reagan administration. He said that he did not check with the parties mentioned in the story to make sure his changes were accurate because the paper does not follow up on "small issues or changes such as these."

The editor held a wire story about war veterans, including one medal of honor winner, burning their medals to protest aid to the Contras. He

held the story because he did not believe war veterans would burn what he considered was a large number of medals, nor did he believe that a medal of honor winner would have taken such action. The next day, another story came in with the names of two veterans, so the editor ran the story.

---

## Society of Professional Journalists

We asked the Society of Professional Journalists to advise us on the actions taken in 45 cases that we either discussed with the editor in chief of the Pacific paper or had him formally comment upon. We also asked the Society to advise us on 12 cases from the European paper. The Society, based on the materials provided, concluded that evidence of censorship or news management in Europe was inconclusive, but that there was convincing evidence of censorship and news management in the Pacific.

Appendix II contains the panelists' decisions as to whether they agreed or disagreed with the action alleged to have been taken by the editor in chief of the Pacific paper. In 19 of the 45 cases, a majority of the panel members disagreed with the actions taken, but in 8 cases a majority agreed that actions taken were appropriate. In 12 of the other 18 cases at least one panel member was unable to make a decision based on the materials provided. The panelists were evenly divided in their opinion on the remaining 6 cases.

The panel reported that it did not base its findings of censorship and news management on one or two or three examples, nor did it make the assertion lightly. The panel viewed the role of the commander/editor in chief as being difficult if not impossible since DOD's basic policy presents a dilemma for a military officer.

The Society viewed the editor as a loyal public servant struggling to resolve his conflicting duties as an officer and editor. They noted that an editor of a civilian newspaper may engage in such practices without being accused of censorship and news management, but that the commander/editor in chief of Stars and Stripes may not because he is (1) an agent of the government and (2) specifically forbidden to engage in censorship or news management by DOD policy. The Society recommended, among other things, that policies should be clarified, the editor in chief should be required to have solid journalism credentials, and be a civilian.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Readers of the Pacific Stars and Stripes are provided a somewhat different perspective on international, national, and regional news than is provided by the European Stars and Stripes or by commercial sources available to U.S. newspapers. We recognize that no two U.S. papers will present exactly the same perspective on the news. In fact, diversity in news reporting may be an important indicator of the health of a free press in society. However, the Stars and Stripes papers have a special obligation on the reporting of the news. One of their missions is to bring DOD personnel and their dependents the same news and opinion from commercial sources available to newspapers throughout the United States.

The other mission of these newspapers is military in nature: to provide government, DOD, command, and local news and information that improves individual capability for mission accomplishment. Commanders are ultimately responsible for mission accomplishment, and so are concerned about what and how news is reported. Consequently, commanders believe they have an obligation to review and provide guidance as to what information is printed. Many of the reporters and their editors are civilians who came from U.S. newspapers and are accustomed to the protection afforded by the First Amendment. This is the underlying basis for most of the allegations we investigated.

In our opinion, the DOD instruction covering Stars and Stripes allows for the differences we noted in news coverage. The instruction allows the papers news content to be editorially controlled on a day-to-day basis by either a military commander, as is the case in the Pacific, or by civilian journalists, as is the case in Europe. Additionally, the provision in the instruction on editorial and news policy emphasizes executing DOD missions, which conflicts with providing readership with increased knowledge and understanding of subjects of interest to DOD personnel, as had been the emphasis prior to 1984. Moreover, the instruction states that the papers are not investigative functions, which has been widely interpreted as prohibiting the type of investigative reporting that is commonly done by U.S. newspapers. The instruction also provides a formal mechanism for command influence through the advisory board, and does not adequately distinguish Stars and Stripes from command-type, unit or installation, newspapers.

The Pacific Stars and Stripes changed more to a command-type newspaper when senior leadership changed in 1986. The current editor in chief was concerned about how other commanders and their public affairs officers in the Pacific theater viewed the newspaper, so he sensitized the



---

staff to how he believed news should be reported. We believe his actions were allowed by DOD's instructions, but have resulted in readers of the paper not receiving a balanced view of news available in the United States, and the civilian journalists not being able to report news in accordance with journalistic practices that govern U.S. commercial newspapers.

We conclude that both DOD missions individually are worthy pursuits, but when commingled they create an inherent conflict. The conflict exists because while one mission is to provide company news, the other mission is to provide news protected by the First Amendment. Because of the allegations we focused on the First Amendment mission and believe that execution of this mission can be improved.

The Director of the American Forces Information Service told us that to strengthen the papers' ability to execute their missions he is considering the feasibility of limiting the employment terms of the top civilian editors to 3 years. Even though we believe this would be an appropriate action, we do not believe it goes far enough. Additional actions are needed.

---

## Recommendations

We recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct that guidance be issued stating that Stars and Stripes

- shall have a civilian editor in chief whose term of office shall be fixed for a period of 3 to 5 years and
- shall have editorial and news policy provisions that emphasize subjects of interest to the readership.

In addition, the guidance should state that

- military officers shall not interfere with or attempt to influence news content;
- investigative reporting is allowed; and
- content analyses, similar to the one we performed, shall be done on a periodic basis to ensure that U.S. troops in the two different parts of the world are exposed to approximately the same news from back home.

Also, the new guidance should either abolish the advisory board or change its mission to help Stars and Stripes to report on news of interest to the readership.

## Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

DOD agreed in part with our findings and recommendations, noting that our review had provided the opportunity for it to evaluate procedures and policies concerning Stars and Stripes. It also said that the Society of Professional Journalists and we had provided valuable third-party observations regarding the organization and functions of Stars and Stripes.

DOD stated it intends to thoroughly evaluate its instruction and regulations on the newspapers in light of our recommendations. That evaluation will begin in December 1988 and should be completed by December 1989 and will include consideration of our recommendations that DOD either concurred or partially concurred with. Those recommendations are the following: the papers (1) have a civilian editor in chief with a fixed term of office, (2) have editorial and news policy provisions that emphasize subjects of interest to the readership, (3) have guidance that prohibits military officers from interfering with, or attempting to influence, news content, and (4) have guidance that either abolishes the advisory board or adds an additional mission to help the newspapers report on news of interest to the readership.

DOD disagreed with our conclusion that the commingling of the two Stars and Stripes missions creates an inherent conflict. It believes that conflicts have resulted, instead, from misunderstandings of the missions by the papers' employees. We believe the employees do understand the missions. They expect military theater news to be reported without censorship or news management just as they expect stateside commercial news to be reported the same way. Military commanders who are used to controlling base newspapers have different expectations. They expect theater news to be positive and upbeat, similar to "company news." As long as these groups hold differing expectations and Stars and Stripes has the two missions, we believe the conflict will continue. DOD did note that it will ask the unified Commanders in Chief responsible for the newspapers to reevaluate the two missions as part of its year-long review.

DOD stated that we incorrectly concluded that its policy allows the papers to be controlled on a day-to-day basis by a military commander, as is the case in the Pacific, or by civilian journalists, as in the case in Europe. DOD further stated that its instruction makes senior military officers responsible for all newspaper operations and that the individual management styles have had a greater effect on the decision-making process in the newsroom than any chain of command. We agree that the Pacific editor in chief's management style resulted in the day-to-day editing, which is authorized by the DOD instruction. The European editor

in chief's management style allowed civilian editors to be responsible for the daily content of the paper. However, these differences were permissible because the instruction is silent on who is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the newsroom—the military editor in chief or the civilian managing editor.

Traditionally, Stars and Stripes has been perceived as a free press-type newspaper because of (1) the "hands-off" policy issued during World War II and (2) the practice of a civilian editor running the newsroom. DOD wants the Stars and Stripes newspapers to continue to be perceived as free press-type newspapers. DOD stated that its primary goal, as always, is to provide DOD personnel and their families overseas the right to a free press under the provisions of the First Amendment. It was for this reason that we recommended civilian journalists be put in charge of the Stars and Stripes newsrooms. DOD partially concurred with our recommendation. At the same time, it concurred with the unified Commanders in Chief that the papers must be under military leadership during a combat situation and must have an experienced officer to deal with the complexities of the military-unique aspects of Stars and Stripes management. We agree that military officers should be in command of the papers to handle these aspects of their operations. However, civilian journalists should be responsible for their news content. DOD will be discussing the issue with the unified commands and evaluating their theater positions for further action beginning in December 1988.

DOD did not concur with our conclusion that differences in the news contents of the papers and the wire services were consistent with allegations of censorship and news management. It also did not concur with our recommendation that content analyses be done periodically to ensure that U.S. troops overseas are exposed to similar news from back home, wherever they are stationed.

DOD noted the evident care and diligence used in our content analysis; however, it felt the analysis was of limited value because a number of critical factors were absent. According to DOD, (1) the length and relevance of articles to each theater, (2) the placement of the stories in each paper, (3) the timeliness of the material, and (4) differences in formats of the two papers were missing from our analysis. In addition, DOD stated that a more realistic comparison would have been between a variety of stateside newspapers and the Stars and Stripes.

We did examine the length and placement of the DOD stories run by each paper and found differences that were consistent with our overall findings. For example, the average length of DOD negative image AP/UPI stories in Europe was 1,490 words and in the Pacific paper it was 689 words. Also, we found 10 negative image DOD stories placed on page one of the European paper and only one such story on page one of the Pacific paper. Format differences did not affect the results of our analysis because we identified the news sections of both papers and then analyzed only the stories that appeared in those sections. Timeliness of the material did not affect our analysis because we examined the content of the papers and the wire services for the same month.

We recognize that the size, composition, and interests of the audiences in each theater may be different. For that reason each newspaper has its own bureaus and obtains special wire copy. However, our analysis did not focus on this type of news. It focused on news that should have been of interest to readers of both papers. The primary readership of the papers have one thing in common—they are American troops and their dependents overseas. Therefore, our analysis examined American dateline stories about the military and DOD, which should be of interest to the readership of both papers.

We chose to compare the content of the newspapers with the wire services, rather than with a variety of stateside newspapers, because the DOD instruction states the mission of the papers is “to bring DOD personnel and their dependents the same international, national and regional news and opinion from commercial sources available to newspapers throughout the United States” (emphasis added). Therefore, according to DOD’s own instruction, the only valid external comparison was the wire services; the two that we used were the ones from which the papers drew 94 percent of their wire service stories.

The validity of our finding that coverage differences between the two papers are consistent with allegations of censorship and news management is not based on any individual piece of evidence. Rather, it is based on a pattern of evidence developed from the content analysis itself, our investigation of circumstances surrounding the allegations, and judgments provided by the Society of Professional Journalists.

DOD did not concur with our recommendation that content analyses be performed on a periodic basis because it felt that such analyses do not provide a complete and valid picture and could be interpreted or used to indicate news management. We agree that such analyses performed at

---

the American Forces Information Service level might be interpreted or used this way. However, such analyses could be performed by staff of the two newspapers themselves to determine whether our troops and their dependents overseas are exposed to approximately the same news and opinion from commercial sources available to newspapers throughout the United States.

DOD also did not concur with our recommendation that investigative reporting be allowed. DOD stated that its instruction prohibits Stars and Stripes from being an investigative organization and that reporters investigating a story may have conflicts because they are required by the DOD standards of conduct directive to report any suspected criminal activities discovered during their work to an appropriate official. According to DOD, these reporters are government employees first, then reporters. However, DOD stated that it believes the investigation procedures in the unified commands need to be clarified for Stars and Stripes reporters.

We agree that Stars and Stripes reporters have a special obligation as government employees to report any criminal activities found during their work. However, the concept of investigation is included, but not defined, in the DOD instruction and commanders or editors in chief can cite the instruction as justification for news management or censorship. Therefore, we agree with the Society of Professional Journalists that its inclusion raises a legitimate journalistic concern. Many of a reporter's everyday activities involve some investigation. Consequently, we also agree with U.S. European Command officials that parameters for allowable investigative reporting should be established. These parameters might best be communicated to reporters in a pamphlet that analyzes real-life cases similar to those in our report. The pamphlet should highlight a fundamental difference in investigative reporting when it might involve questioning management decisions, as in the European Command portico case (see ch. 3) and when it might involve a violation of criminal statutes, as in the rent-fixing case at Misawa Air Base in Japan (see ch. 4).

---

---

---

# Content Analysis Methodology and Selected Findings

---

Stars and Stripes, an authorized, unofficial publication of the Department of Defense (DOD), is instructed to provide DOD personnel with a free flow of news and information without censorship or news management. Former and current employees of the paper in the Pacific, however, have alleged that the editor in chief selectively edits and omits two types of stories: those on certain politically sensitive issues, and those that are critical about DOD and the U.S. military.

To examine the allegations that certain stories are selectively edited or omitted from the paper, we systematically compared the coverage of news stories in the Pacific Stars and Stripes during March 1987 with the coverage in the European Stars and Stripes. We also compared the DOD/U.S. military stories run in both newspapers with those carried in March 1987 by the Associated Press (AP) and the United Press International (UPI), the two wire services that provide the papers with the bulk of their news items.

---

## Methodology

To conduct the content analysis, two GAO staff members served as coders. One coder analyzed all stories in the news sections of the Pacific Stars and Stripes and the other coder analyzed all stories in the news section of European Stars and Stripes for March 1987. We also identified all AP and UPI stories during the same month that dealt with DOD and the U.S. military and sensitive topics cited in the allegations. We selected March 1987 because this was 6 months after the editor in chief of the Pacific paper was appointed, giving him time to institute his editorial system. It was also before May 1987 when the Congress began an inquiry into censorship at the paper. Therefore, our results pertain to March 1987 and cannot be projected beyond this time period.

---

## Coder Consistency

A vital element in content analysis is the consistency with which different coders record information in the same way and make similar judgments about the text. Since we evaluated different stories, a high degree of consistency in each coder's judgment was critical. To ensure uniformity in coding the stories, we developed 17 single-spaced pages of instructions and a standardized coding sheet. Two GAO staff members went through a 1-month training session during which they learned the instructions, practiced coding on non-March 1987 Stars and Stripes papers, and conducted several pilot tests. Both staff members then read and rated stories in each issue of the newspapers published in March 1987.

We checked coder consistency by having each evaluator code the same stories in five issues of both newspapers. A total of 449 of the 2,640 Stars and Stripes stories for that month were duplicate coded. We calculated both the simple percent agreement between coders on the test coding and a reliability statistic (Krippendorff's alpha) measuring the extent of coder consistency that was greater than chance. The coders achieved a 99 percent simple agreement rating in coding the topics of the stories (444 of 449 stories were coded identically). They achieved a reliability of .98 or a consistency that was 98 percent greater than if they randomly assigned the topics to the stories. In evaluating the military image of the stories, the coders attained a simple agreement rating of 99 percent (446 of 449 consistent judgments) and a reliability adjusting for chance of .93.

---

## Identifying News Story Topics

To determine the proportion of coverage that the Stars and Stripes papers, AP, and UPI provided on sensitive issues, we selected four topics: (1) Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), (2) the Iran-Contra affair, (3) strategic issues, such as Intermediate Nuclear Forces and the Strategic Defense Initiative, and (4) the 1988 presidential campaign. We selected the first three topics because they were mentioned in the allegations as sensitive stories that were deleted from the Pacific paper. We selected the 1988 presidential campaign because we felt that both papers should have about equal coverage.

We categorized all stories in both editions of Stars and Stripes according to these topics. To identify the AP and UPI stories that discussed sensitive issues and DOD and the U.S. military, we computer matched all AP and UPI stories in the DIALOG data file for March 1987 with key words and phrases, such as Iran-Contra, Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome, AIDS, INF treaty, Department of Defense, U.S. military, Pentagon, and U.S. Army.

---

## Coding the Image of the U.S. Military

In addition to categorizing all stories, we also evaluated the image of the U.S. military that was portrayed in the stories. Image refers to the positive or negative impression that the story gives the reader about the U.S. military. The following explanations of our categories of image will describe our evaluation process.

Neutral image U.S. military stories are informational or descriptive stories that do not contain critical statements about the military or portray the military itself in a negative or positive way. For example, neutral



image stories include announcements about DOD drug testing orders, a base closing, or a story about the military budget having to be cut. Stories about training accidents are neutral unless the story conveys an image of military negligence or incompetence. Similarly, military personnel committing off-base crimes are acts of individuals and are neutral unless the crime involves military property or is done while on duty.

Negative image DOD stories convey an unfavorable or critical image of the U.S. military. If two-thirds or more of the analyzed text about the military were negative, we coded the stories as negative image. For example, negative image stories include congressmen charging the Air Force with deception in mismanaging the B-1B bomber, the head of military clothing procurement running a DOD kickback scandal, or a report of an entire fleet of helicopters being grounded for mechanical problems the Navy refused to correct. They are directly critical of DOD policy or actions and portray the U.S. military as negligent, criminal, or incompetent.

Positive image DOD stories portray the U.S. military in a favorable way. If two-thirds of the analyzed text about the military were positive, we coded the story as positive. Examples of positive image DOD stories include a congressional agency supporting an Army decision and commending the Army for making the best choice in procuring a new class of helmets, an Air Force unit voluntarily working long hours to help civilian victims of a storm, and the Naval Investigative Service acting quickly to arrest 23 drug dealers.

Mixed image DOD stories contained both positive and negative images about the U.S. military. If we determined that less than two-thirds of the analyzed text about the military was positive or negative, we coded the story as mixed image.

---

## Selected Findings

The selection of stories appearing in a newspaper requires editorial judgment. Table I.1 provides some indication of how these judgments were made at the Stars and Stripes newspapers. The table displays selected AP/UPI military stories that were run in one paper, but not the other. Some examples of stories omitted from the European paper, but run in the Pacific paper, include a story about former Navy Secretary John Lehman breaking up a naval promotion board after accusations of favoritism and a report accusing Kelly Air Force Base personnel of wasting millions of dollars.

Examples of military stories from AP/UPI omitted by the Pacific paper include a story about a general being forced to retire and mentions his opposition to the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces treaty, problems with Sikorsky aircraft, an administrative law judge finding that the Army had illegally pressured DOD civilians to vote for the Teamsters, and a critical report on the B-1B bomber.

Table I.1: Examples of American Dateline AP/UPI Military Stories Omitted by One Paper but Run in the Other

Dateline	Theme
<b>Omitted from the European Stars and Stripes, but run in the Pacific</b>	
Washington	Breakup of Navy promotion board
San Antonio	Report accusing Kelly Air Force Base Officials of wasting millions
Albuquerque	14 unit members convicted of drug charges over 5 years
Washington	Marine accused of spying
<b>Omitted from the Pacific Stars and Stripes, but run in Europe</b>	
Washington	Teamsters election fraudulent
Washington	Problems with Bradley fighting vehicle
Philadelphia	Fraud in the military clothing procurement office
Washington	SGT YORK/DIVAD problems end weapon
Washington	Veterans' Administration policy on alcoholics questioned
Washington	Flaws in the B-1B Bomber
Washington	Pentagon criticism of joint-service exercise
Washington	Senators want probe of DOD spending
Washington	Navy report warns of crisis
Washington	Audit says Air Force could save millions
Washington	Marine spy scandal
Washington	Navy disputes environmental allegations
Washington	Weinberger admits spying against friends
Washington	Pentagon concurs with GAO
Washington	Uninspected steel reported in cruiser
Washington	Regulation of defense industry jobs required

Case Studies of Pacific and European Reporting

We examined the 38 instances where both newspapers either used the same wire service story to report on a DOD event or used different wire stories to cover the same DOD event. In most cases both papers portrayed the same U.S. military image, but in five cases, differences in editing the same story or the use of different wire stories led the Pacific paper to portray a neutral or mixed image of the military, while its European counterpart portrayed a negative image. In one case, the Pacific paper

portrayed a neutral image of the military and the European paper portrayed a positive image. Below, we describe several examples of editing or source differences.

Both papers used the same wire story about Air Force Lt. Col. Burton who was allegedly forced to retire because he was critical of the Bradley fighting vehicle. Both papers reported that an inspector general's report cleared the service of forcing Burton out, but that Senator Pryor and Representative Levine conducted their own study of the incident. The Pacific story noted that DOD would not comment until they saw the Congressmen's report, but edited out the following paragraph that appeared in the European story:

“ ‘In clearing the service for its handling of the Burton case,’ said Levine and Pryor in a letter, ‘the report by the inspector general’s office was incomplete and misleading. Significant episodes and evidence are omitted; important aspects are seriously understated.’ ”

The Pacific paper edited out another comment about Burton's retirement that appeared in the European story. The following is the text from the story and the comment that was deleted is in brackets:

“Burton retired last year instead of accepting a transfer, and the Air Force says it was his choice in the face of a normal and routine transfer. [But critics say the transfers were designed to force Burton out or keep him silent.]”

When we checked the actual AP source article, we found that the European paper had carried the original text.

In another case, the selection of different stories resulted in the Pacific paper conveying a less negative image of the military than either the European paper or the wire services. Both papers had run mixed image stories that described the B-1B bomber. The European paper, however, carried one other story about the B-1B bomber that was negative image. The story dealt with congressional criticism of the plane and portrayed both the Air Force and the Pentagon unfavorably. For example, the article stated the following:

“ ‘The perception today in the vernacular of today, is that the B-1 sucks,’ Rep. Larry Hopkins, R-Ky., said in no uncertain terms about the bombers that cost \$280 million each in today’s dollars. ‘It is not doing what it’s supposed to be doing on time.’ ”

“The Pentagon’s chief civilian weapons tester, John Krings, largely blamed the Air Force for the bomber’s shortcomings, which first began to emerge publicly when

fuel began dribbling from the wings after it arrived at Dyess (Air Force Base), Texas.

“ ‘The Pentagon and the Air Force already knew of the problems,’ Krings says.”

When we checked AP and UPI coverage of B-1B bomber stories during the month, we found that they reported four stories: two were mixed image and two were critical of the U.S. military.

In another case, the Pacific paper’s coverage presented a neutral image of the U.S. military, but the European paper portrayed a positive image. Both papers reported overwhelming support by the House of Representatives on DOD’s attempts to make the GI bill permanent. However, the Pacific paper ended its coverage by noting one Congressman’s support for the bill and one opposed. The European paper continued its coverage by quoting several Congressmen and other sources who portrayed military service and DOD in a positive way. For example, a congressional quote omitted in the Pacific paper states that the program is “paying big dividends in terms of high-quality recruits and longer periods of enlistments.” Another omission quoted the Congressional Budget Office stating that the DOD program “will produce a net reduction of \$367 million in government spending over the next five years because personnel contributions will exceed benefits the system pays during that period.” Several other positive quotes appeared in the European coverage.

Differences in editing and source stories between the papers did not change the DOD image in most of the cases we examined, but we detected subtle differences in the presentation of the stories. For example, in a story about the closing of Calumet Air Force Base, the Pacific paper simply reported that the Air Force intends to close the 37-year-old base that employs 98 people. The European paper included all this information but further explained that a Congressman on the House Committee on Armed Services was trying to reverse the decision and that the closing would cost the local economy \$3 million to \$4 million.

In another case, the Pacific paper ran a brief article related to the Iran-Contra affair on former National Security Advisor John Poindexter, who decided to accept a reduction in rank rather than leave the Navy. The story stated that Poindexter’s future “depends on the final resolution of all issues raised by the various investigations.” The European paper ran a longer front page story that included information about provisions in the law prohibiting Poindexter from retaining 3 stars and stated the following: “Pentagon sources said last month that Reagan,

---

the actions taken in four cases, and both agreed with the actions taken in five cases. They split their judgments in three cases. A description of each case follows.

---

---

**Case E1—Dismissal of  
German General**

This case involved the omission of a January 1984 wire service story on the dismissal of a German general who was the deputy commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The news editor stated that when the paper called the U.S. European Command for comment, a public affairs official told it not to run the story. The then Command Deputy Commander made the decision not to print the story. According to a letter written to explain his action, the Deputy Commander stated that the story was highly speculative and sensational and could harm relations with the host nation if it were printed. The current editor in chief, the managing editor, the news editor, and the majority of the editorial staff said that the Deputy Commander's actions involved outright censorship of the newspaper. The Director of the American Forces Information Service agreed. As a result of this situation, the DOD instruction on newspapers was rewritten and omitted the phrase "undermining the discipline of the troops" as a reason not to publish a story. The two panel members who reviewed this case both disagreed with the Deputy Commander's actions.

---

**Case E2—Letters to the  
Editor on General's  
Dismissal**

This case involved the selection of letters to the editor concerning the dismissal of the German general. In February 1984, the European paper planned to publish seven of the most articulate letters along with the names of five other people who submitted letters. The letters were sent to the U.S. European Command for comment. According to the managing editor, the paper normally sends the letters to the appropriate military command for comment. According to him, the Command Deputy Commander said the paper could only print 4 of the 7 letters and not the most critical one. The managing editor told us that this was the only time in his 30 years at the paper that a military command told him not to print a letter to the editor.

The two panel members who reviewed this case both disagreed with the Deputy Commander's actions. One wrote, "It's troublesome when higher command selects, edits, or responds to letters to the editor. Hopefully, this practice retired with the deputy commander." The other wrote that the paper "should have been able to print all the letters it wanted to print."

---

**Case E3—School Bus  
Monitors**

This case involved the omission of two February 1987 bureau-produced stories about the lack of monitors to supervise children on school buses serving the Darmstadt military community. The managing editor told us that after reading the articles, he asked the reporter to determine if the problem existed in other military communities. He was concerned that reporters were always doing stories on Darmstadt, where the paper is headquartered. According to the reporter, the only feedback he received was to obtain the Darmstadt community viewpoint of the story. He maintains that he was not told to contact other communities to see if they had similar problems as the editor indicated, and that if he had received such direction, he would have completed the stories.

The two panel members who reviewed this case split their judgments. One wrote, "It appears to be a legitimate editor's call." The other panel member disagreed with the actions taken, saying the story was "well-reported and written." He felt that the editor's objection was not valid.

---

**Case E4—Flagpoles**

This case involved the omission of a 1985 bureau story about the placement of 100 flagpoles at each U.S. Air Force base in Europe. The managing editor became aware of the story during a budget meeting. After reading the story, he decided not to run it. He recommended that the issue be covered with a picture of the flagpoles at one base and a statement indicating this was done at all Air Force bases and at what cost. The city editor decided this was not the best way to run the story, so it was never printed. However, after learning that the flags were not going to fly daily, the managing editor stated that he had second thoughts about his decision.

The two panel members who reviewed this case split their judgments. One disagreed with the actions taken. He thought that the article was a good "boondoggle" story. He noted that there could have been more details on the fraud, waste, and abuse allegations contained in the story. The other panel member wrote that although it was probably a bad call, it was an editor's call nonetheless.

---

**Case E5—Admiral Moreau  
Heart Attack**

This case involved a 1-day delay of a November 1986 bureau story about the condition of Admiral Arthur S. Moreau, Jr., commander of U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Allied Forces Southern Europe, who had suffered a heart attack about 10 days earlier. The Director of Public Affairs for the U.S. European Command requested the managing editor to hold the story based on unknown concerns raised by the admiral's

staff. The managing editor passed the request on to the editor in chief, who agreed to hold the story 24 hours. The next day, the Director tried to find out the reasons for the admiral's staff concerns. The initial reason provided was the admiral's wife feared for her safety because of terrorist incidents. When he told the admiral's staff that this was not a valid reason to kill the story, the staff then cited national security. According to the Director of Public Affairs, the Deputy Commander did not believe citing national security was valid and said the story must run.

The editor in chief told us that this incident happened early in his tenure and he was not aware of the residual negative effects on the staff of holding the story. He noted that now he would run a story unless the military provided specific and valid reasons for holding it. The Director of Public Affairs stated that he believed this story serves as a good example of how the paper is adequately protected from outside influence because it ran the story even though senior military officials did not want it run.

Both panel members who reviewed this case agreed with the actions taken. One panel member complimented the actions of the Director of Public Affairs. The other panel member thought that the editor showed bad judgment at first, but should be lauded for remaining firm.

---

#### Case E6—General Rogers Replacement

This case involved a 1-day delay of a November 1986 wire service story about the replacement of General Bernard Rogers as the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe. Based upon information he received from the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, the U.S. European Command Deputy Director of Public Affairs asked the editor in chief to hold a UPI wire service story about General Rogers' replacement because it had some errors and a forthcoming AP story was more accurate. The original UPI story had a statement that neither DOD nor the Supreme Headquarters had any comment on the story. The editor in chief held the UPI story until the AP story arrived the following day. The editor in chief told us that this incident happened early in his tenure and that he did not know the negative impact on the staff of holding the story. Based on this experience, he would run a similar story with a statement that no comment was available unless specific errors were identified.

Both panel members who reviewed this case disagreed with the actions taken. One panel member noted that the editor in chief had not learned

---

from the earlier incident involving the delay of the Admiral Moreau story.

---

---

**Case E7—Book-Banners  
Headline**

This case involved changes to a headline for a February 1984 New York Times story on censorship of textbooks and libraries in American public schools. The managing editor directed that the word “censorship” be deleted from the headline because of U.S. European Command sensitivities that followed the withholding of the story on the dismissal of the German general (see E1). The published headline read “The Book-Banners at Work.” The former editor in chief admonished the individual who developed the original headline, writing that if the headline had been published as originally prepared, it could have caused great disservice to the newspaper and its professional staff.

Both panel members who reviewed this case disagreed with the editor’s actions. One wrote that the editor himself should have received a letter of admonishment for finding anything wrong with the headline. The other wrote that “censuring another editor for using the right word is most appalling.”

---

**Case E8—U.S. European  
Command Portico**

This case involved the development of a 1987 bureau story about an ornate portico under construction at the U.S. European Command building, which was used during World War II to house tank units. The reporter made an initial inquiry to the Command public affairs office in May 1987. A public affairs official referred the reporter to the Stuttgart military community, which responded a few weeks later by referring the reporter back to the Command public affairs office. On June 8, 1987, the reporter filed 13 questions with the U.S. European Command. Those questions included the purpose of the portico, its cost and status, who decided to build it, and whether other building projects were “bumped” for the portico to be constructed.

The Command Director of Public Affairs contacted the editor in chief to express his concern over the questions and direction of the story. The editor in chief stated that he did not believe the questions were investigative reporting and wanted them answered. The Director of Public Affairs went to the Deputy Commander of the Command, the publisher, with the questions. The Deputy Commander decided the questions were investigative reporting and would not be answered. The only answer provided to the paper was a one sentence statement that the decision to build the portico was due to deterioration of the building’s face, coupled



with construction of a new security mall, and that it was a routine action. Although he disagreed with the publisher's decision not to answer the questions, the editor in chief accepted the publisher's decision.

The two panel members had difficulty reviewing the case because a page was missing from the case description. One panel member disagreed with the actions taken. He believed that the managing editor, who had misgivings about not pursuing the story, should have done so. The other panel member was unable to make a determination.

---

**Case E9—Removal of  
Command Surgeon**

This case involved the public affairs office's responsiveness on a reporter's queries regarding an investigation of theater medical care and the removal of the U.S. European Command Command Surgeon. The paper reported on March 14, 1986, that an investigation had been initiated on medical care in the Command. During July 1986, the reporter was unable to obtain a report to develop a story on the results of the investigation. In a written statement, the reporter indicated that she was unofficially told never to expect the results of the investigation, which was initiated in March 1986. According to a Command public affairs official, the reporter could not have the report at that time because the review process had not been completed. On July 31, 1986, the paper ran a story concerning the medical care study in which the reporter wrote, "The investigation into medical care in the theater has been completed, but the results have not been released."

The two panel members who reviewed the story agreed with the paper's pursuit of the story, but criticized command actions. One member wrote that the paper "pursued a good story—the holes in it are the fault of [the U.S. European Command]." The other panel member thought that command actions showed undue command influence.

---

**Case E10—Closing of  
Bitburg Skeet Range**

This case involved public affairs office responsiveness to reporter queries regarding the closing of the Bitburg Air Base skeet range. The range was closed because of alleged lead contamination of local farmland. On October 8, 1987, the reporter filed 11 questions with the Bitburg public affairs office concerning the skeet range. These included questions on the background and status of the skeet range, events surrounding the discovery of the lead contamination problem, corrective actions, compensation for a farmer, and the names of spokespersons. Personnel from the Bitburg public affairs office prepared answers to these questions.

However, after coordinating with their higher headquarters, 17th Air Force, the Bitburg officials were directed to give the reporter a specific two sentence reply on who ordered the closing and the purpose and status of the closing.

The 17th Air Force public affairs official who approved this response stated that it answered the reporter's questions, except for the names of spokespersons and how long the range would be closed. However, the reporter believed the reply was nonresponsive. The reporter later obtained additional information from German newspapers, and on October 20, 1987, he refiled four of his original questions. He received answers to three of the four questions and a story ran on November 8, 1987.

Both panel members who reviewed this case agreed with the actions of the paper. They, however, objected to the lack of responsiveness of the public affairs office. One panel member wrote that the Air Force should have been criticized in print for its poor response to reasonable questions. The other panel member thought that the command was nonresponsive in this case.

---

### Case E11—Cratering Device Accident

This case involved the alleged 1-month delay of reporters' requests for information pertaining to a fatal training accident, which occurred on June 28, 1987. The paper reported on the accident the next day and published four additional stories related to it. Reporters from the paper stated that they had difficulty obtaining the accident report from the Army and, as individuals, filed a Freedom of Information Act request. The Army, after receiving the request and obtaining the preliminary investigation report, provided a press release and the paper published an article on September 22, 1987, showing the cause of the accident.

The reporters covering this story believed the investigation was completed at least 1 month before they received information, which was only provided after they submitted a Freedom of Information Act request to U.S. Army Europe. The U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs Officer told us the investigation was actually completed 2 months before the information was provided but the intervening time was needed for the Commander in Chief to review the investigative report and to prepare a press release.

The Public Affairs Officer emphasized that no linkage existed between the Freedom of Information Act request and the release of information.

---

He noted that it took time to complete a report, especially when people were killed and seriously injured. He also said that European Stars and Stripes received a release as soon as it became available. The editor in chief, however, believed that the Freedom of Information Act request and his own discussions with the U.S. European Command Public Affairs Officer were instrumental in obtaining the report.

Both panel members agreed with the actions of the paper. They, however, took exception to the actions of the military. One panel member wrote that the case shows aggressive, persistent work by the paper's staff, but the chain of command needs to be educated about DOD policy. The other panel member thought that the "military foot-dragging on this was incredible."

---

## Case E12—AIDS

This case involved the delay of a March 1987 bureau story on AIDS and the military. According to the reporter, the story passed back and forth between the city desk and the features desk for about 2 months before being published. The story described German and U.S. AIDS education programs and quoted a German doctor as saying that "the danger to our [German] society from AIDS is much worse than from the Russians." The features editor told us that the original story was always planned to be accompanied by other articles on AIDS for the features section. The reporter, however, believed the article was going to run as a separate story. She noted the ideas for the additional stories were developed well after the first story was completed. The article eventually ran on May 5, 1987, along with two other articles the reporter developed on AIDS.

One panel member agreed with the actions of the paper stating that it "took a while for everything to jell, but it turned out to be a good package." The other panel member was unable to make a determination, but noted that such a story could easily "get lost between the cracks for a while."

---

## Pacific Stars and Stripes

As mentioned in chapter 5, we followed up on 45 allegations involving stories that were allegedly altered, delayed, or omitted by the current editor in chief. They included at least one story from all but one of the months during which he has served in that position through January 1988. Twenty-six cases involved wire service stories and 19 cases involved bureau stories. The 45 cases involved allegations from 13 current employees of Stars and Stripes and 6 former employees. These people included news editors as well as reporters.

We asked the editor in chief to explain his rationale for taking these alleged actions. In 9 cases, he could not recall taking any actions on the particular stories. In 7 cases, he believed the actions taken were different from those which were alleged. For the remaining 29 cases, he remembered the alleged changes.

Of the 29 cases for which the editor remembered the alleged changes, 18 involved a change or delay in the story and 11 involved withholding stories. He cited balance and accuracy most often as the reasons for the changes or omissions. Either balance or accuracy, or both, are cited in 17 of the 29 cases.

In 6 of the 7 cases the editor believed his actions were different from those alleged. Those involved cases where the story was allegedly omitted from the newspaper. In 5 of the 6 cases, he said he did not kill the stories, but rather asked the reporter for a more balanced story.

The Society of Professional Journalists reviewed each case and indicated when possible whether it agreed or disagreed with the actions taken. Although the panel consisted of five members, only four provided written responses on individual cases. These four members were unanimous in their judgments in 9 cases. They all disagreed with the actions taken in 5 cases, and agreed with the actions taken in 4 cases. Three of the 4 panelists disagreed with the actions taken in 14 cases. Conversely, 3 of the 4 panelists agreed with the actions taken in 4 cases. They were evenly split in 6 cases. In the other 12 cases, at least one panelist was unable to make a decision based on the information provided.

---

## Case P1—Censorship Investigation

This case involved the deletion of the last two paragraphs of a May 1987 UPI story about Senator Proxmire's proposed introduction of legislation requiring an investigation of allegations of censorship at Stars and Stripes. The two paragraphs that were deleted contained quotes from Proxmire regarding the seriousness of the charges. One of the deleted paragraphs included the following statement: "It [censorship] means that soldiers based in the Pacific may not realize the full benefits of a free press, even though they put their lives on the line for it and other freedoms every day." The editor could not recall the story or the circumstances around the particular changes.

The panelists split their judgments on this case, with two disagreeing with the action taken, one agreeing, and one uncertain. One of the panelists who disagreed felt that the story may have been edited for length,

---

but most editors would be sensitive to working with such a story. The panelist who agreed noted that Senator Proxmire was liberally quoted in the other paragraphs and that a makeup editor probably cut the last two paragraphs to make the story fit the space available.

---

Case P2—Soviet Ability to  
Invade Iran

This case involved changes made by the editor in chief to a December 1986 New York Times wire service story about Russia's ability to invade Iran. The story as it was printed in the December 18, 1986, issue differed substantially from the original story.

The panelists questioned whether the original and printed stories provided to them were related. We subsequently found that we had provided a copy of a story that was based on a different version of the New York Times wire service story. We found out that the wire service story provided to the panel related to another article that appeared in the paper on December 23, 1986, and this second article was, in fact, changed. A reference to former National Security Adviser Robert C. McFarlane, in which he is said to maintain that the Soviet military threat to Iran gave Iranian moderates a motivation to open a dialogue with the United States was deleted. The article also omitted a reference to an analysis of nuclear options under the Reagan administration. The editor in chief stated that he changed the article to make it more accurate. He explained that he knew from his prior experience on the Mideast desk in the organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the reference to studies "under the Reagan administration" was incorrect because he knew that the nuclear studies had been started prior to the Reagan administration.

---

Case P3—Libya  
Disinformation

This case involved an October 4, 1986, story on an administration program to deceive Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi. The original AP story, which was 186 lines long, had 120 lines edited out. Sections deleted included a statement by an official of the American Civil Liberties Union who had asked for a congressional investigation and for legislation banning disinformation campaigns in the United States and the use of journalists by the Central Intelligence Agency. Other comments deleted included one by President Reagan in which he challenged the charges. The article also omitted comments by an administration official regarding distinctions between the audiences at which the program was aimed, and another administration official regarding the use of military exercises to send warning signals to Gadhafi. The editor told us that the editing was done because of the story's length.

---

Two of the four panelists agreed with the editor's actions, while one disagreed, and one partly disagreed. One of the two panelists who agreed with the actions taken said that the story was overwritten and that, "with trims, it hangs together nicely." One member who did not entirely agree with the actions taken noted that some editing was justified for space reasons, but eliminating references to the possibility that "dis-information" planted abroad might have reached the U.S. publications was a disservice to the readers. The one panelist who disagreed noted that all American Civil Liberties Union material was deleted.

---

Case P4—Chun Cabinet  
Changes

This case involved the placement of stories for the May 27, 1987, edition of the paper. Although a news editor and others asked that a wire service story on the resignation of the Republic of Korea's Prime Minister and seven other cabinet members be placed on page 1, it was placed instead on page 3 and referred to on page 1. The news editor considered this story the most important development in South Korea in the previous 4 months. Page 1, instead, included a story about former Secretary of Labor Ray Donavon being found innocent by the New York State Supreme Court, and a story about Vice President George Bush formally opening the celebration of the Constitution's 200th birthday. The editor in chief did not remember the circumstances around these stories, but he does remember thinking the opening of the Constitution celebration was important. He also noted that the Korea story was published, not killed.

In response to an earlier inquiry from Senator Proxmire's staff, the editor in chief noted that he is not reluctant to cover legitimate stories sensitive to the Republic of Korea, and included copies of 27 stories on Korea run by the paper. We found that only one of the 27 stories appeared on the front page. It appeared in the edition dated 11 days prior to the letter responding to the staff inquiry. In addition, 2 of the remaining 26 stories had photographs related to the story placed on page 1.

The panel members split their judgments on the actions taken in this case. Two members agreed with the actions taken, and two disagreed. The members who agreed with the editor's actions felt that the stories selected for page 1 were more appealing to the U.S. readers than the Korea story. One panel member who agreed also stated that the referral that appeared on page 1 to the Korea story was fully adequate. One of the panelists who disagreed noted that "intended or not, the choice of Donavon and Bush stories as the only stories on page one makes it appear to be a political decision, and that for the sake of balance alone

---

there should have been variety." The other panelist who disagreed with the editor's actions characterized the placement of the stories as poor news judgment, at best.

---

---

Case P5—U.S. Exceeds  
SALT II

This case involved an AP story about the United States exceeding the ceilings in the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT II). The story, which appeared on the front page of the November 30, 1986, edition of the paper, was changed by the editor in chief. He removed quotes by five members of the Congress that were critical of the administration's actions. The members included the House Speaker-designate and the incoming Chairmen of the House and Senate Committees on Armed Services. In a response to an inquiry from Senator Proxmire's staff, the editor explained that the story, as it came over the news wire, was unbalanced in its coverage of the topic. He noted that although five members of the Congress supporting the treaty were quoted regarding the President's decision, no one critical of the treaty was quoted. He believed the story as printed gave equal coverage to both sides of the issue.

Three of the panel members disagreed with the editor's actions, while one panel member agreed. One of those panelists who disagreed felt the action showed poor judgment. Another called the action questionable editing, and noted that eliminating all comments by administration critics "smacks of censorship." The panelist who agreed with the action thought the story as it ran gave readers the gist of the decision and included some reaction. The panelist, however, would have preferred for the editor to include comments by either of the incoming Chairmen of the Committees on Armed Services.

---

Case P6—Warsaw  
Demonstration

This case involved the alleged placement of a February 1987 UPI story on students in Poland demonstrating in favor of creating an independent student union. The alleged claims that the editor in chief directed that a news brief on this subject be expanded into a full story with a reference to it on page 1. After the panel reviewed this case, we discovered that, contrary to the allegation, the story was published as a brief on page 6 of the February 20, 1987, newspaper.

---

Case P7—Laxalt  
Settlement

In this case, the editor ordered that an AP story initially budgeted as a brief on page 4 be expanded to a full story on page 2. The story involved the settlement of a libel suit brought by Republican presidential hopeful

Paul Laxalt. The story appeared in the June 6, 1987, edition of the paper. The editor told us that he moved the story to a more prominent position in the paper because he felt that it was unusual for someone to win a libel case.

One of the panelists agreed with the editor's actions, saying that the story was worth more than a brief, and that it was impossible to explain both sides in such a short report. Two panelists disagreed with the actions. One of them thought that the brief was sufficient. The other noted that ordinarily, he would say it is the editor's call, but sensitivity to Democratic politicians already displayed by the editor would dictate similar treatment for this story (see case P1). The fourth panelist was uncertain as to whether he agreed or disagreed with the actions taken.

---

Case P8—Poindexter  
Memo

In this case, the editor changed a headline for a July 14, 1987, front page story about a memo in which former National Security Advisor John M. Poindexter said he briefed President Reagan on the diversion of profits from the U.S. arms sales to Iran to pay for covert activities. The initial headline consisted of two parts. The first part in large type was "Memo: Reagan was briefed." Directly below this and in smaller type was the following: "But still no proof he knew." The revised headline also consisted of two parts. The first part, in large type read "Poindexter memo revealed." Directly below this and in smaller type was the line "Will be focus of his testimony." The editor told us that the original headline was nonsensical because it stated that the President was briefed, but that there still was no proof that he knew about the diversion of funds. He felt the headline was inaccurate because the former National Security Advisor had only alluded to the fact that the President may have been briefed.

Two panelists disagreed with the editor's actions, one panelist agreed, and the fourth panelist neither agreed nor disagreed with the action taken. One of the panelists who disagreed felt that the original headline was accurate. The panelist who agreed with the actions taken thought that it was an editor's call to change the headline. The panelist who neither agreed nor disagreed noted that the initial headline was less than clear, but the published headline was dull and failed to tell much of a story.



---

### Case P9—Sailor Shot in the Philippines

This case involved a Stars and Stripes bureau story about a U.S. Navy man who was shot during a robbery while riding a passenger bus in the Philippines. The story appeared in the April 17, 1987, issue. The editor deleted a line stating the victim told a witness that he was shot because he was a serviceman. He also deleted an investigator's statement that there was no indication that the shooting was politically motivated and a line stating that the motivation and details of the shooting could not be confirmed. The editor could not recall making changes to this particular story.

The panelists split their judgments on the actions by the newspaper in this case, with two agreeing and two disagreeing. One of the panelists who agreed noted that the story did not say if the serviceman was in uniform and that the reasons why he was picked out were not confirmed—only the victim's own opinion. He also noted that the story was too long and needed trimming. One of the panelists who disagreed with the actions taken wrote that the "story was censored—pure and simple."

---

### Case P10—Censorship Investigation

This case involved changes made to an AP story on the Defense Authorization Act requiring us to investigate allegations of censorship at Stars and Stripes. The story appeared in the December 13, 1987, issue of the paper. The last three paragraphs were deleted and two new paragraphs were inserted. The deleted paragraphs included statements from Senator Proxmire critical of Stars and Stripes and statements regarding a policy, subsequently retracted, allowing senior officers to review articles quoting them before those articles were published. In place of these paragraphs, the editor inserted quotes from himself that the U.S. Army Inspector General had investigated the allegations and given the newspaper a clean bill of health and that he was confident that a fair and impartial review by GAO would confirm the inspector general's conclusion. The editor told us that the last two paragraphs were taken out of the story so that the Stars and Stripes position could be added. He had instructed his assistant managing editor that, if necessary, the original wire copy was to be cut from the bottom.

Three of the panelists disagreed with the editor's actions. The remaining panelist did not indicate agreement or disagreement, but noted that it was the second time the paper had deleted Senator Proxmire's views. This panelist also noted that the policy directive allowing senior officers to review articles in which they are quoted before the articles are published was a key point of the story and should have been retained. The

---

panelist further stated that some other story could have been trimmed to allow full treatment of this story, which was certainly a sensitive one for the paper. One of the panelists who disagreed also noted that the editor should have found room for the whole story plus his own comments.

---

---

**Case P11—Mock Attacks**

This case involved changes made to a November 1987 AP story about U.S. mock attacks against a Soviet port city. Among other changes, the editor ordered that inaccurate language be deleted. This included references to the aircraft being armed and supersonic. The story was first seen by the unified command's Public Affairs Officer, who thought that the references to the aircraft were inaccurate and asked the editor to make the changes. None of the panelists disagreed with the actions taken in this case.

---

---

**Case P12—Japanese Comics**

This case involved a change in the art work accompanying a January 22, 1987, story about Japanese "Manga" comic books. The originally planned art work showed an excerpt from a comic book that depicted the bombing of Hiroshima. In its place, the editor chose another comic book excerpt that dealt with a fictional topic. He believed that this was a perfect example of a display of insensitivity of some reporters to where the paper is located in the world.

Three of the panel members agreed with the editor's actions. One disagreed, noting that the comic that was deleted was a widely distributed Japanese comic. One of the panelists who agreed with the actions taken noted that under the command policy on host nation sensitivity, the editor did the right thing. The panelist, however, questions the command policy.

---

---

**Case P13—AIDS in the Philippines**

This case involved changes to a bureau story about AIDS in the Philippines that was written at the request of the editor after he allegedly questioned attributions in an earlier AP story. The editor changed the layout of the bureau story. Specifically, he deleted a graph that showed the 10 countries with the largest number of reported AIDS cases, and split the story between 2 pages. He deleted the graph because he believed it was inaccurate since it showed the United States had a significantly greater number of cases than other countries. He believed that the United States simply reports the cases more. He believed African

nations have high incidences of AIDS and that the reports do not reflect it.

Three of the panel members agreed with the actions taken. One wrote that the original wire service story needed amplification, and that reporting the number of cases would be more meaningful by also reporting the population. The panel member who disagreed with the actions taken felt the editor had done the right thing by staffing a significant story and doing a better job, but seriously undermined the whole effort by breaking up the layout.

---

**Case P14—Misawa  
Aircraft Noise**

This case involved an October 1986 bureau story on the relocation of Japanese residents who lived near Misawa Air Base because of increased noise from aircraft using the base. The editor questioned the figures for sorties by U.S. aircraft. (A sortie consists of one takeoff and one landing.) The story as originally written stated that the base had an average of 140 takeoffs and landings each day and that the U.S. F-16s accounted for 60, or about 43 percent, of them.

Before the story was written, the U.S. Forces Japan Public Affairs Officer called the editor to express concern with the queries from the reporter about this issue. The Officer also suggested that the reporter may not have the right data for indicating the seriousness of the problem. The editor felt that the figures for U.S. takeoffs and landings were inaccurate and that the reporter was confusing takeoffs, landings, and sorties. He asked the reporter to verify the figures. According to the reporter, he verified his figures twice after meeting with the editor. Subsequently, the editor changed the figures for F-16 takeoffs and landings from 60 to 30. This meant that the U.S. F-16s were reported to account for about 21 percent of the takeoffs and landings. We found, however, that for January through September 1986, there were, on average, 218 takeoffs and landings per day. The U.S. F-16s accounted for about 78 of these per day, or 36 percent of the total takeoffs and landings.

None of the panelists disagreed with the editor's actions in this case. However, they were not provided with our analysis of the sortie rates at the time of their review because it had not been completed.

---

**Case P15—Army  
Counterintelligence**

This case involved withholding a September 1986 wire service story and changes to a September 1986 bureau story about allegations of misconduct by Army counterintelligence agents in South Korea. The editor

decided not to use the wire service version because he thought it was sensational. He had a correspondent obtain the other side of the story for balance. Subsequently, the editor changed a quote in the staff-written story. He now feels changing the quote was a mistake. If he were to do it today, he would put brackets around the changes made to the quote.

All the panelists disagreed with the actions in this case. One panelist wrote that altering quotes to change meaning and adding conclusions not made by the source are not good journalism. This same panelist wrote that he would not have minded working with the public affairs office to obtain the Army side of the story as long as it is presented as one of the sides reported. Another panelist wrote that this was another instance that the editor's desire for balance was used to "defang" a negative story.

---

**Case P16—Japan National Railroad**

This case involved changes to a bureau story about the financial troubles of the Japan National Railroad and its privatization. The story appeared in the March 21, 1987, issue. Several portions of the original story were deleted, including comments by railroad officials that criticized the government's decision to end an unofficial freeze on the "bullet train" construction, which the officials believed was unprofitable. The editor believed that a copy editor had edited the story.

None of the panel members disagreed with the actions taken by the newspaper in this case. Two of the panelists were uncertain as to how to judge the actions taken, with one noting that there was not enough evidence to make such a judgment. Another panel member thought that the story was well edited, and that the allegation was "classical nit-picking."

---

**Case P17—Zushi Housing**

This case involved changes to a bureau story published October 5, 1987. The story was about the long-delayed construction of a U.S. Navy housing project near Yokosuka Naval Base in Japan. The project had encountered opposition by local citizens. A word and a sentence were deleted from the story. The word deleted was "preliminary" since the work had already begun on the project. Also, a sentence about the expected delivery of construction material was deleted. The editor believed that the deletions were insignificant and none of the panel members disagreed with his actions.

---

Case P18—Thunderbirds

This case involved changes to a bureau story published September 19, 1987, about the cancellation of an air show at Yokota Air Base and a planned performance at the Kadena Air Base. Two deletions were made to the original story. First, a statement that the Kadena performance was not on the original schedule was deleted. Second, a statement was deleted about a 1986 air show by the Japan Air Self-Defense Force's precision flying team because the show was found to be in violation of a 1964 U.S.-Japan agreement prohibiting acrobatic flights over Yokota Air Base. The reporter who wrote the story told us that he, the Pacific editor, and the editor in chief disagreed over whether an earlier Air Force press release mentioned an airshow over Okinawa. The editor in chief asked the reporter to verify with the U. S. Forces Japan that Okinawa was mentioned in the press release, which he did. The editor in chief did not recall making the changes to the story in this case.

The panel members split their judgments in this case, with two disagreeing with the actions by the newspaper, and two agreeing. The panel members who agreed thought that this was an insignificant case.

---

Case P19—USS Midway Retirement

This case involved the development of a December 1987 story on the proposed retirement of the aircraft carrier Midway. The story was developed by a bureau reporter at the request of the editor in chief. The editor felt that the story as originally written was not fully developed and asked the reporter to answer seven questions. This same story was published in European Stars and Stripes and except for deleting the last six paragraphs and adding one sentence and one phrase, it was published as originally written. The reporter answered some of these questions in a follow-up story that was printed. According to the editor, he again asked the reporter to pursue the story, but the reporter told him that there was no more information to pass along. The editor further explained that he did not receive a story on the outcome of the proposed retirement and was dissatisfied with the reporter's coverage of the story.

One panel member disagreed with the editor in chief's actions in this case. Another panel member wrote that the editor asked some good questions of the reporter. A third panel member who agreed thought that the story was improved.

---

**Case P20—Massachusetts  
Barroom Rape**

This case involved changes made to an October 1986 wire service story about demonstrations in support of commuting prison sentences for four Portuguese-Americans who were convicted of rape. Several paragraphs were deleted from the original wire service story. The editor explained that he did not remember the story well, but recalled being concerned that the paper follow DOD guidance to avoid morbid, sensational, and alarming details not essential to factual reporting. He felt that the story was given the attention its news value deserved.

None of the panel members disagreed with the actions taken. One wrote that the trimmed portions were acceptable and that the main point of the story was there. Another noted that most family newspapers use care in reporting sex crimes.

---

**Case P21—B-1B Bomber**

This case involved an allegation that the editor did not publish an April 1987 wire service story critical of the Air Force's management of the B-1B bomber program, and in its place, published an Air Force News Service story that praised the B-1B bomber. When we asked for comments from the editor, we did not have a copy of the AP or UPI stories, but rather a Reuter-Kyodo news service story that was similar to the AP and UPI versions. According to the editor, the absence of the AP and UPI stories was worth noting because he would not see both wire stories. He also noted that the daily budget was also missing, which we were unable to obtain. The editor suggested that the underlying allegation is that he is reluctant to publish stories critical of military equipment. He provided six stories and a cartoon about the B-1B bomber that had been published since his arrival until April 1987.

All four panelists disagreed with the editor's actions in this case. One panelist thought that the editor had no defense in this case. Another panelist considered this as an example of public relations rather than news.

---

**Case P22—South Korean  
Riots**

This case involved the placement of a wire service story on the withdrawal of South Korean police who were surrounding a cathedral held by student protesters. The story was initially selected to appear on page 3 of the June 16, 1987, issue of the paper. According to the allegor, the editor ordered the story to be printed on the front page because it depicted the South Korean government in a positive way. In response to the allegation, the editor wrote that the street riots in Korea had been a major story for days in the paper and had been printed on the front

page for 4 days immediately preceding the story in question. According to the editor, the unexpected shift in the Korean government's position from one of confrontation to one of accommodation was a major story and deserved to be printed on page 1 as well. He disagreed with the "implied allegation" that he was unwilling to publish stories critical of the Korean government. According to the editor, during Korea's summer of unrest (May 16 through August 1, 1987), the paper published 58 stories on pages 1, 2, or 3; and 23 of these were on page 1. He provided copies of the front pages for June 12-17, 1987. All six front pages included South Korean protest stories.

The panelists split their judgments in this case, with two agreeing and two disagreeing. One of the panelists who agreed wrote that it was an editor's call.

---

**Case P23—Congressional  
Double-Dipping**

This case involved the alleged withholding of a July 1987 bureau story about congressional double-dipping with military and federal pensions. The story cited the chief researcher for the National Taxpayers Union, who reported having difficulty obtaining data from the Army and the Navy. The alleged said that the editor did not print the story because he thought it was unbalanced and because the National Taxpayers Union was grinding a political axe. The *European Stars and Stripes* ran the story. The editor could not recall holding this story, but he thought that he may have asked the reporter to get the Army and Navy viewpoints.

The panel members split their judgments in this case. Two panelists thought that the story lacked balance. Another panelist thought that the story was reasonably balanced, and that it would be of high interest to soldiers.

---

**Case P24—Philippine  
Communist**

This case involved the omission of a January 1987 wire service story about a female communist guerrilla in the Philippines. The editor did not print the story because he felt it was one-sided and showed only the communist viewpoint. He believed that this was a public relations piece for the communists.

All four panelists disagreed with the actions in this case. One panelist wrote that almost any reader would recognize it as communist copy, but felt it presented a viewpoint that people fighting communism ought to

---

be aware of. Another panelist wrote that killing the story “robbed readers” of an interesting profile of an enemy who also happens to be human.

---

---

Case P25—Guam Land  
Claims

This case involved the alleged omission of a May 1987 bureau story about local land claims against the U.S. government and some military installations in Guam. The editor thought that the story was not balanced because the reporter quoted four people arguing the litigants’ position, but only one person speaking for the U.S. government. The four people speaking for the litigants’ included an attorney for a litigant around which the story was written, a family member, and two attorneys representing two different factions of litigants. The one person speaking for the government was an attorney with the U.S. Department of Justice on Guam. The reporter attempted to pursue the story further with the Department of Justice for over 2 months, but was unsuccessful. The story was neither rewritten nor printed. The reporter and the Pacific editor felt that the original contacts reported in the story were sufficient.

Three of the panelists disagreed with the actions taken. One panelist thought that the reporter seemed to have done all that could be done. Another panelist wrote that the editor’s obsession with literal balance seemed to provide a convenient excuse for not printing a story. The fourth panelist could not determine whether the actions were justified because of an inability to read some of the editor’s questions penciled on the copy of the original story that we provided to the panel.

---

Case P26—Asner Remarks

This case involved an October 1986 wire service story about actor Edward Asner’s address at an Arkansas Civil Liberties Union banquet. The article included quotes critical of the Reagan administration’s proposals on fighting pornography. The editor did recall killing this story. He explained that the previous day’s issue included a story on the pornography issue, and that both the Asner story and the previous story were one-sided. He was concerned with presenting the same side of the story in consecutive issues of the newspaper.

Three panel members disagreed with the actions taken in this case. One of them wrote that the “strange pairing” of the Asner story with the previous story “is not the sort of day-to-day reasoning real editors indulge in.” The panel member who agreed with the actions taken thought that the story was not newsworthy.



---

Case P27—Inventory  
Accuracy Study

This case involved the omission of a February 1987 Washington Post story about Air Force inventory accuracy problems found by GAO. The editor had a bureau reporter follow up on the story. He felt the Washington Post story was not balanced. The bureau-produced story, which ran 10 days later, gave the Air Force's view of the GAO report, which the Air Force stated was inaccurate. The editor explained that this occurred during the time when he was trying to educate his staff about the need for balance. He felt that the other side of the story should have been obtained.

All four panel members disagreed with the actions taken in this case. Two panelists noted that the bureau story was not balanced since it did not present GAO's response to the Air Force accusations. Another noted that the published story had an editorial headline: "Garbage, Air Force denies GAO's claim of poor accounting."

---

Case P28—Recognition of  
Vietnam

This case involved the omission of a March 1987 bureau story about an interview with an economic and military affairs expert who advocated that the United States recognize Vietnam. In its place the paper published a human interest photograph. The editor recalls discussing this story with the reporter, but does not recall killing the story. He explained that he questioned the interviewee's credibility, and disagreed with his ideas.

The panel members divided their judgments in this case. Two agreed with the actions taken, one disagreed, and one was uncertain. One panelist who agreed thought that the story was not newsworthy. The panel member who disagreed thought that the story was worth a brief.

---

Case P29—Vietnam  
Veterans' Protest

This case involved the withholding of an October 1986 wire service story about Vietnam veterans, including a congressional Medal of Honor winner, who were fasting and burning medals to protest U.S. aid to the Nicaraguan Contras. The editor explained that he held up the wire service story because he did not believe war veterans would burn what he considered was a large number of medals, nor did he believe that a true Medal of Honor winner would have taken such action. Two days later, the paper printed a follow-up wire service story that included the names of two veterans. In response to an inquiry from Senator Proxmire's staff, the editor wrote that the second story "satisfied me that at least some of the group were veterans, so it ran."

---

Three panelists disagreed with the actions taken. The fourth was uncertain. Two of the panel members who disagreed thought that the story should have run sooner. The third member who disagreed thought that the actions were arbitrary, given the information available to him.

---

Case P30/P31—Teen  
Suicide

This case involved the development of a bureau story on teenage suicide. The editor in chief, in a note to the managing editor and Pacific editor, wrote that he thought the article advocated publicizing teen suicides to prevent other attempts and that the reporter gave only one short paragraph to the other position that publicity encourages teen suicide. The editor did not believe he killed the story. He gave the editors two options: either get the other side of the story, or make it an "upbeat" story. The reporter declined to pursue the story further.

Three panel members disagreed with the actions in this case. One member thought the story covered a valid subject and that it was a shame that it did not run. Another member who disagreed wrote "a marvelous concept, upbeat treatment of teen suicide. No wonder the story was eventually killed." One agreed with the editor's actions, noting that the story was not focused locally.

---

Case P32—Arab Travel  
Agency

This case involved the alleged omission of a July 1987 bureau story about an Arab-owned, Palestinian-run travel agency that provided services to the National Security Agency and a Marine base. The story was printed in the European paper, but not in the Pacific paper. The editor in chief could not recall seeing or killing this story.

The panel members all disagreed with the actions taken by the newspaper in this case. Two wrote that the story would have been of interest to the paper's readership.

---

Case P33—Christmas  
Human Interest Story

This case involved the alleged omission of a December 1987 bureau story about Navy families who made videotapes for their spouses on deployment at sea. The editor told us that he never saw this story and did not kill it. He said that he was expecting to receive it and was curious as to why it did not get published.

The panel members had various judgments in this case. Two panel members neither agreed nor disagreed with the actions taken by the newspaper. They noted that there was no evidence that the editor in chief took

---

any action on this story. Of the other two panelists, one agreed and one disagreed with omitting the story.

---

---

**Case P34—Christmas  
Human Interest Story**

This case involved the alleged omission of a December 1987 bureau story about volunteer work on a Christmas project to help needy Navy families. As in case P33, the editor told us that he never saw this story and did not kill it. He said that he was expecting to receive it and was curious as to why it did not get published.

The panel members had various judgments in this case. Two panel members neither agreed nor disagreed with the actions taken by the newspaper. They note that there was no evidence that the editor in chief took any action on this story. Another panel member thought that the story was not newsworthy. The fourth panel member disagreed with not printing the story.

---

**Case P35—Congressional  
Delegation Visits Pacific**

This case involved the omission of a story about a congressional delegation's trip through the Pacific. According to the person who made the allegation, the editor did not publish the story because it was not newsworthy. The editor stated that the story was not run because an earlier story had covered the issues. A story did run in the December 11, 1987, paper.

Three panel members agreed with the actions taken and one disagreed.

---

**Case P36—Military  
Medicine Malpractice**

This case involved the alleged omission of two April 1987 bureau stories on military medicine malpractice and proposed legislation that would allow service members to sue the government for peacetime military medical malpractice. The editor recalled making some changes to the first story, but does not recall killing the stories. He believed that he may have asked the reporter to obtain balance.

Three panel members disagreed with the actions taken. The fourth neither agreed nor disagreed and noted that it was unclear as to what action was taken. This panelist added, however, that the story was of great personal interest to readership and that it should have run. One of the panel members wrote that killing these two stories was the act of a censor. Another thought there was no excuse for the actions taken.

---

**Case P37—Korean Student Protest**

This case involved the omission of an October 1986 wire service story about South Korean student protests. The editor did not remember the reason why he killed this story. He believed, however, that the number of stories he ran on the South Korean riots showed that he was not inappropriately killing these stories. In a February 1987 response to an inquiry from Senator Proxmire's staff, the editor in chief objected to the idea that he was reluctant to cover legitimate stories sensitive to the Republic of Korea government.

The panel members split their judgments in this case. Two disagreed with the action taken and the other two neither agreed nor disagreed. One panel member thought that it was hard to judge the case without knowing what else had run. The other panel member wrote that the decision not to run the story was an editor's call.

---

**Case P38—Anti-Americanism and College Intolerance**

This case involved the omission of two stories from a March 1987 issue of the paper. One story was a Los Angeles Times story about U.S. efforts to combat anti-Americanism in South Korea. The other story was a wire service story about intolerance and bigotry in America's colleges. The editor in chief could not recall killing the Los Angeles Times story. He did recall killing the wire service story. He said that he killed the story because it was not balanced. His concern was that there had been a number of cases where ambassadors and other high level officials were not able to speak on stage because of adverse audience reaction. He believed that the article presented a one-sided view and that the people expressing the view that intolerance and bigotry against groups was occurring had either released the story themselves or had held a press conference. The wire service story discussed "the upsurge in incidents against blacks, women, Jews, homosexuals and others."

Three panel members disagreed with the actions taken in this case. One of these panel members thought that there seemed to be a problem with the Korea stories. Another panel member wrote that stories were apparently killed because they did not fit the editor's idea of balance. The fourth panel member neither agreed nor disagreed.

---

**Case P39—American Forces Korea Network Censorship**

This case involved the omission of two stories about censorship of information on the American Forces Korea Network. The first story was a November 1986 Washington Post story. The second was a June 1987 wire service story. The editor believed that he did not like the stories because they implied that the host nation sensitivities applied only to

Korea. He felt that the articles were misleading. In a February 1987 response to an inquiry from Senator Proxmire's staff, the editor objected to the idea that he was reluctant to cover legitimate stories sensitive to the Republic of Korea government.

Three panel members disagreed with the action taken in this case. The fourth did not judge this case. One member wrote that readers were denied a fascinating piece of writing and reporting—very balanced—because of the editor's rigid adherence to literal interpretation of policies. Another panel member wrote that both stories were of great interest to readers in Korea especially. If there were questions, they could and should have been answered.

---

**Case P40—Reagan and  
Bush Comments on AIDS**

This case involved the omission of a June 3, 1987, wire service story about comments by President Reagan and Vice President Bush that were overheard in which they allegedly indicated that critics of the administration's AIDS policies were homosexuals. The person making the allegation stated that the editor in chief felt the story was sensational, unbalanced, and not supported by facts. This person further alleged that the editor is adamant that stories dealing with homosexuals not appear in the paper. The editor, in a written response to the allegation, said that he did not recall the instance well. Further, he stated, "... the fact that the President believes that at least some of the critics of his AIDS policies are homosexual would be news to no one, least of all the homosexuals involved." The editor in chief noted that a story about a large White House demonstration by gay activists and AIDS victims protesting the President's AIDS policies was substituted for the omitted story.

Three of the panel members disagreed with the actions taken in this case and the fourth member thought there was insufficient evidence to judge. One member wrote that the action seems to be intended to shield military personnel from negative news about the administration.

---

**Case P41—AIDS in the  
Philippines**

This case involved the omission of a December 28, 1986, wire service story about AIDS in the Philippines. The editor said he killed the story because it was unbalanced and inaccurate. He thought that the story made it seem as though the military servicemen were the only source of AIDS. The editor also thought that the story was inaccurate because it stated that all the women found carrying AIDS were in the vicinity of the Clark and Subic military bases. He believed this occurred because the American government paid to have the AIDS tests done, and that the

tests were conducted only in those areas. According to the editor, he knew that the tests were conducted only around the bases from reading other papers and from his own general knowledge. Rather than publishing this story, he asked his Philippines bureau to follow up on the story. The bureau story appeared in the January 20, 1987, issue of the paper.

Three panel members disagreed with the actions taken in this case. The fourth panel member neither agreed nor disagreed. One panel member wrote that if the editor in chief had reservations, he should have had them resolved, and then printed the story since he could have saved some lives. Another panel member wrote that it seemed to be the kind of story that should have been printed to reinforce readers' perception of a severe health problem.

---

Case P42—DOD School  
Teacher

This case involved the alleged omission of two stories about a teacher for a DOD Dependents School who alleged that defense officials tried to drive him out of his job through false charges of alcoholism. According to the allegor, although one short story was run in the Pacific paper, it was of little news value. He said that the editor did not print one of the stories and deleted most of the other story because they presented the teacher's views and those of his wife, which the allegor claims the readership would want to read. The editor said that he held the one story because he felt strongly that the other position—the union's position—needed to be obtained. The story that was published in the Friday September 25, 1987, paper began, "A panel of educators Wednesday will hear charges that the military is dumping teachers. . ." The bureau reporter's story dated September 23, 1987, began, "A teacher at a U.S. military school in Okinawa appeared here Wednesday with horror stories. . ."

Three panel members agreed with the actions taken and one disagreed.

---

Case P43—AIDS in Rio De  
Janeiro

This case involved the omission of a June 1987 wire service story about sailors on leave in Rio De Janeiro who were paying little attention to the dangers of AIDS. The allegor stated that the editor would not permit publication of this story because it was unbalanced, sensational, and inaccurate. In a written response to this allegation, the editor stated that he killed the proposed story because he did not consider it newsworthy. He explained that the information that some sailors visit houses of prostitution would not be news to any of the paper's readership. He noted that removing the story from its recommended position on page 2 enabled

the paper to provide more coverage of its two front page stories: the then upcoming economic summit in Venice and new information about the Iraqi missile attack on the USS Stark. The editor also objected to allegations that he may be reluctant to publish stories about AIDS. He noted that the paper ran over 450 stories on AIDS since his arrival in September 1986. He also listed 18 stories published about AIDS in conjunction with servicemen.

Three panel members disagreed with the actions in this case, and the fourth member neither agreed nor disagreed. One wrote that the paper lost a chance to save some lives through education. Another thought that not running everything on AIDS the paper had room for was a disservice to the military community. The fourth panel member thought that the newsworthiness of the article was questionable and could not judge the actions taken based on the material provided.

---

#### Case P44—Strategic Defense Initiative

This case involved the omission of a February 1987 wire service story about a Congressional Budget Office report claiming that the government could save \$8.7 billion over 5 years by slowing growth of the Strategic Defense Initiative. The editor wrote that he killed the story because he believed that it was erroneous in substance, and was probably misstating the Congressional Budget Office's position. He believed that the Office actually said that one option to reduce the budgets involved with the Five Year Defense Program would be to slow the growth of the Strategic Defense Initiative, but to claim that money was saved would have been nonsensical. He also believes that no knowledgeable person in Washington believes that delaying a program and spreading its acquisition out over additional years will save money. The editor took exception with any underlying allegation that he was unwilling to publish stories critical of the initiative, and provided copies of eight stories he considered critical.

The panel members split their judgments in this case. Two disagreed with the actions taken. Another thought that it was an editor's call. The fourth member neither agreed nor disagreed.

---

#### Case P45—Korean Prostitution

This case involved the omission of a September 1986 wire service story about Korean women entering the United States through sham marriages with servicemen and engaging in prostitution. According to the editor, he killed the story because both he and the managing editor thought that it was overly sensational, and possibly slanderous in its

broad connection of military wives to the prostitution rings, and could easily be interpreted by Korean-Americans as an ethnic slur.

Three panel members disagreed with the actions in this case, and the fourth member neither agreed nor disagreed. One of the panel members wrote the story was basically a solid story and deserved to run, although some editing was needed for balance and fairness. The panel member who neither agreed nor disagreed thought that it was an editor's call, but it reflects strange news judgment.

---

### Case P46<sup>1</sup> —Communists in the Philippines

This case involved the placement of a January 1988 opinion piece from the Asian Wall Street Journal about the growing threat of the communists in the Philippines. The person making the allegation believed that the article was an opinion piece and should not have been printed on the news page. He called the main office of the Asian Wall Street Journal and found that the article had run on its opinion page. The allegor also criticized the amount of space given to the article, which covered two full pages and included five photographs and a map of the Philippines. He believed that the mixing of news and opinion clearly violates journalistic principles. According to the editor, he initially thought the article, first proposed by the Pacific editor, should have been run on the viewpoint page. He noted that the pages where the article appeared were already layed out, and was convinced after his discussion with the Pacific editor and others that the placement of the article was appropriate. He stated that in the future such articles should be placed on the viewpoint page. He felt, however, that it was entirely appropriate to place an opinion piece on a news page as long as it is identified as such.

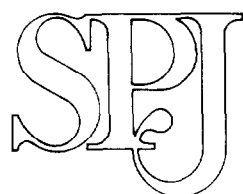
Three panel members disagreed with the actions taken. The fourth panel member agreed, but noted that the article needed to be labelled as an analysis. Two panel members who disagreed also felt the story was not newsworthy, and felt the article should not have been printed on a news page. One panel member wrote, "I can't find any justification for running a piece like this anywhere except on a Viewpoint page. It is so strongly editorial in nature that it can't hold up as analysis or background or whatever else one might choose as a label for a news page."

---

<sup>1</sup>Forty six separate allegations were originally selected for review. However, we later combined cases numbered 30 and 31, and treated them as one case, therefore we reviewed a total of 45 cases.



# Comments From the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi



**The Society Of Professional Journalists**  
Sigma Delta Chi

*Publishers of The Quill: a magazine for journalists*

**PRESIDENT**

**JAMES F. PLANTÉ**  
Managing Director  
News Support Services  
NBC News Room 6915  
30 Rockefeller Plaza  
New York, NY 10112  
(212) 604-2241

**PRESIDENT-ELECT**

**PAUL M. DAVIS**  
News Director  
WGN-TV  
2501 Prater Place  
Chicago, IL 60606  
(312) 883-3200

**VICE PRESIDENT CAMPUS  
CHAPTER AFFAIRS**

**MERRILL BANKESTER**  
Dean, High School of Journalism  
New State University  
New York, NY 10024  
(212) 512-3000

**SECRETARY**

**CAROLYN S. CARLSON**  
Reporter  
The Associated Press  
210 Virginia Avenue, N.E.  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
(404) 521-3643

**TREASURER**

**FRANK GIBSON**  
Managing Editor  
The Tennesseean  
1000 Broadway  
Nashville, TN 37203  
(615) 259-8096

**IMMEDIATE-PAST PRESIDENT**

**ROBERT H. WILLS**  
Editor  
Milwaukee Journal  
Journal City  
Milwaukee, WI 53201  
(414) 224-1114

June 1, 1988

John Harper  
Group Director  
Stars and Stripes Censorship Study  
U.S. General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Mr. Harper:

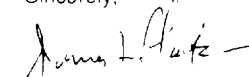
The Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi is pleased to submit the enclosed report on censorship and news management at Stars and Stripes newspapers. It was most appropriate that the bill introduced by Sen. William Proxmire directed that the Society work with the General Accounting Office in this important study.

The Society's report represents the work of five SPJ members appointed to serve as an advisory panel to the GAO. Those panelists include:

Phil Robbins, George Washington University, Chairman  
Charles Voss, New York Daily News  
Ruth Wilson, Milwaukee Journal (retired)  
Paul McMasters, USA Today  
Peter Prichard, USA Today

I think the work done by the panelists contributes significantly to the GAO's efforts. I trust that they will be assigned an appropriate role in developing the final report for Congress.

Sincerely,

  
James F. Plante  
President

Appendix III  
Comments From the Society of Professional  
Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi



THE  
GEORGE  
WASHINGTON  
UNIVERSITY

Journalism Department Washington, D.C. 20052 / (202) 676-6225

August 29, 1988

Mr. John Harper, Group Director  
Stars and Stripes Censorship Study  
U.S. General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C., 20548

Dear Mr. Harper:

After examining the GAO's draft final report on charges of news management and censorship at Stars and Stripes, members of the SPJ,SDX advisory panel would like this letter added to our report. We wish to emphasize these points:

- 1) The GAO defined our panel's role narrowly, essentially limiting it to advising your staff about newspaper operations and content, about definitions of news management and censorship, and reacting to allegations against S&S editors.
- 2) The SPJ,SDX panel was asked to examine only a fraction of the full set of allegations. Panelists were not made aware of an abundance of information relating to these allegations, nor were we allowed to know the names of those making the charges. As the draft final report shows, much of this material provided a wider context of news management and censorship than did the material examined by the panel.
- 3) The panel appreciates the additional and corrected material made available to it on two occasions including our meeting with you July 14, 1988. But we do not find that this alters our consensus of much evidence of news management and censorship in the cases we reviewed.
- 4) The panel has one serious reservation about the final draft report of GAO: recognition of two "missions" for Stars and Stripes newspapers, one stated in DoD policy and the other gleaned from other regulations and which in effect would sanction use of the newspapers for military "morale" purposes. Our panel does not agree that the regulations permit military commanders to manipulate "local news" in Stars and Stripes newspapers for their own military purposes as they are allowed to do with command and installation publications.

Those points made, we wish to make it clear that panelists were asked to review and make recommendations on the GAO draft final report, that we were treated throughout most courteously and professionally by members of the GAO staff, and that we have been very impressed with the conscientious effort represented by the work of the GAO staff and by the draft report.

Sincerely,  
  
Philip Robbins, Chair  
For the SPJ,SDX Advisory Panel

Appendix III  
Comments From the Society of Professional  
Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi

April 4, 1988  
Amended July 14, 1988

CENSORSHIP AND NEWS MANAGEMENT  
AT STARS AND STRIPES NEWSPAPERS

A Report Prepared  
By the Society of Professional Journalists,  
Sigma Delta Chi

INTRODUCTION

The members of the advisory panel of the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi have studied the material provided by the General Accounting Office in connection with its inquiry into allegations of censorship and news management at Stars and Stripes newspapers in Europe and the Pacific.

Material examined included the Department of Defense policies, command policies, and policies and procedures at the newspaper level. In addition, the panel members examined each of the more than 50 allegations of news management and censorship. (See Appendix A.)

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE POLICIES

Dod Instruction 5120.4, Nov. 14, 1984, gets to the point very quickly. Under "policy" on the first page:

"Department of Defense policy is that a free flow of news and information shall be provided to all military personnel without censorship or news management. The calculated withholding of unfavorable news is prohibited."

That's a clear statement of intent. Unfortunately, the implementing instructions at times muddy the waters. Some of these instructions raise legitimate journalistic concerns because commanders/editors-in-chief can cite them as justifications for news management or censorship. For example:

- 1) The stricture against conducting polls, surveys, or straw votes relating to political campaigns (E2j(2)). This seems inconsistent with the mission of reminding military personnel of their obligations as citizens. Most certainly it restricts "the free flow of news and information."
- 2) The directive to write all book, radio, TV, and movie reviews "objectively" (E3c). An objective review is a contradiction in terms. This directive dictates either bland descriptions or no reviews at all.
- 3) The stricture against investigative reporting. (Enc. 5, H10). Much of what a reporter does each day involves some investigation. One panelist suggests that in-depth and special project reporting can make up somewhat for the lack of investigative reporting in Stars and Stripes. However, the instructions also say that such reporting has to be "reviewed" by the S&S advisory board -- at the least, that means delay, and in the news business delay often means death for a story.
- 4) The regulations do not always make it clear whether they apply to all DoD publications, just to the S&S newspapers, or just to command and installation publications.

COMMAND POLICY

Command policies in general implement the DoD Instructions. There are a couple of concerns, however:

Appendix III  
Comments From the Society of Professional  
Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi

CENSORSHIP AND NEWS MANAGEMENT AT STARS AND STRIPES NEWSPAPERS - 2

1) In Europe, reporters are not allowed to engage in independent political or diplomatic reporting. Not only can this policy restrict ordinary reporting, it deprives the newspaper of an opportunity to demonstrate what a free press in a democracy is all about. The bottom line, however, is that it deprives the readers of vital information routinely provided to their fellow citizens back in the states.

2) Both commands mention "host country sensitivities." The comments above apply. Even more pertinent is a line from the European command's standard operating procedures: "Editors should remember, first and last, that the best advertisement our country has in Europe is an exemplary representative of a free press."

NEWSPAPER POLICIES

EUROPE:

Newsroom procedures are comparable to a civilian operation, with the obvious exceptions. It would be a good idea, however, to get them in writing.

PACIFIC:

The policies reflect a preoccupation with host-country sensitivities. In a command that covers more than 50 percent of the globe, that can add up to a very long list of topics to avoid.

The proscription of investigative reporting is even more stringent and damaging to the free flow of news and information:

1) It allows military personnel to bring an interview - and the story - to a screeching halt simply by accusing the reporter of engaging in "investigative reporting."

2) It makes reporters an arm of military law enforcement and military justice. It should be readily apparent that such a perception on the part of news sources and readers greatly limits a reporter's ability to do the job.

SPECIFIC ALLEGATIONS

INTRODUCTION:

Each member of the SPJ, SDX advisory panel was given two binders containing copies of written allegations. They amounted to roughly a fourth of the allegations the GAO staff examined. In some cases, copies provided the panel members were not very clear; in others, material was not sufficient to make an informed judgment. In all cases, the GAO would not reveal to the panel who was making the allegations, whether it was one or more persons, or other information that might have put the allegations in context. So the panelists, working separately, made their judgments based solely on the material provided them.

They gave great weight to the DoD policy statement in their evaluations. That statement is short, to-the-point, and sets the tone for implementing instructions, which uphold policy goals with only a few exceptions.

The panel determined that all the tools are in place for a healthy, vigorous newspaper that military personnel stationed overseas can be proud of. Generally, both S&S editions have lived up to that mission. A review of recent papers in both commands indicate that on a day-to-day basis, our military personnel and dependents are provided journalistically sound newspapers.

Appendix III  
Comments From the Society of Professional  
Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi

CENSORSHIP AND NEWS MANAGEMENT AT STARS AND STRIPES NEWSPAPERS - 3

The allegations examined by the panel members, however, reveal some troubling exceptions.

DEFINITIONS:

"Censorship": Not selecting stories, killing stories, or removing parts of stories for reasons other than national security. For example, "to protect the troops."

"News management": Changing a news story to obscure or eliminate information considered damaging to the military or otherwise unpopular with the editor. For example, killing or delaying a "negative" story until a more positive or innocuous one can be substituted. "The calculated withholding of unfavorable news."

EUROPE:

In general, ES&S seems to be free of news management or censorship, based on the 12 allegations examined by the members of the advisory panel. However, European commands need to be reminded of DoD Instructions 5120.4, especially H11 of Encl. 5: "Commanders and public affairs officers may not use the U.S. Government status of S&S personnel to block the release of or access to otherwise releaseable news, information or event."

PACIFIC:

Of the 46 allegations of news management or censorship, several were what one panelist termed "classical nitpicking" - in other words, the typical second-guessing that goes on in a newsroom. No determination could be made on others because material provided was incomplete or unclear. And in a number of the instances, it was the panel's conclusion that not only did the commander/editor-in-chief (C/EIC) not engage in news management or censorship, he greatly improved the original stories (see P-13, P-14, and P-19).

Among the remaining allegations, however, a troubling pattern emerges: A C/EIC using his interpretation of "balance" as an all-purpose weapon for killing a story, or delaying a story, or parrying the thrust of a story. The most frequent targets were stories about the armed forces or stories with political overtones.

Some examples of what panelists considered news management:

P-15: C/EIC ordered a story prepared to counter a wire story critical of Army counter-intelligence. The resulting story was heavily "balanced" in the Army's favor.

P-21: C/EIC killed AP and UPI stories on the B-1b bomber and instead published a very positive government news release.

P-27: C/EIC killed a story on a government report critical of Air Force and ordered a story prepared that criticized the report -- without obtaining the "balance" of quotes for the agency preparing the report.

P-46: The C/EIC's most frequent reasons for delaying or killing a story were imbalance, lack of space, and host-country sensitivities. He set all those aside, however, when he cleared a news page to reprint an anti-communist opinion piece from the Asian Wall Street Journal. The package included six graphics but no identification as analysis or opinion.

Some examples of what panelists considered censorship:

**Appendix III  
Comments From the Society of Professional  
Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi**

CENSORSHIP AND NEWS MANAGEMENT AT STARS AND STRIPES NEWSPAPERS - 4

P-1: This was a story about censorship of Stars and Stripes. Editing out quotes that were negative by a U.S. senator seemed to support the allegation.

P-9: References to the shooting of a man because he was a U.S. serviceman were edited out by the C/EIC because "we don't want to panic the troops."

P-24: The C/EIC killed a story from UPI about a female communist guerrilla in the Philippines. He called it "enemy propaganda." The panel found both that characterization and his action unwarranted. Military personnel would be better served by learning about the thinking and habits of "the enemy" rather than being considered incapable of recognizing or resisting "propaganda."

P-29: C/EIC killed a story he perceived to be negative with the explanation that he didn't think real veterans would participate in such an event.

P-36: The allegation that a medical malpractice story was killed was denied but not refuted. At the least, it was sent back for "balance." From the material provided to the advisory panel, it seemed clear that the C/EIC was determined to delay or at least defang a story he perceived to be negative. The story was of high interest to military personnel who have no alternative to military medical care; they deserved to know that there were problems; they also deserved to know that those problems were being addressed. Subsequent stories could have corrected any significant "imbalances." Instead, PS&S readers had to depend on the rumor mill for their information about this vital topic.

P-38: Story about college speaker being suppressed was killed. C/EIC's comment: "No details on what left doing to right wing."

P-39: Readers of PS&S were denied a fascinating and balanced story on censorship problems at AFKN.

P-41 & 43: Two incidents of stories on AIDS not making it into the PS&S. Sometimes killing such stories can have consequences other than stifling ideas or facts. Running these stories could possibly have saved some lives.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

There was inconclusive evidence -- in the material the panel was provided -- of censorship or news management at the European Stars and Stripes.

There were indications of attempts by higher commands to delay or stifle news stories in violation of DoD directives in the European command.

There was evidence of censorship and news management at the Pacific edition of Stars and Stripes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That ES&S produce a stylebook and an SOP to avoid confusion over policies and procedures.

That all levels of command in Europe be thoroughly apprised of DoD directives proscribing interference with ES&S news-gathering efforts.

That the following restrictions be reviewed with the goal of resolving their conflict with the DoD policy statement:

- 1) No investigative reporting

Appendix III  
Comments From the Society of Professional  
Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi

CENSORSHIP AND NEWS MANAGEMENT AT STARS AND STRIPES NEWSPAPERS - 5

- 2) No independent diplomatic or political reporting
- 3) No polls, surveys, or straw votes in political campaigns (one panelist did not feel that this conflicts with the DoD policy statement)
- 4) No stories affending host-country sensitivities
- 5) No stories about armed forces broadcasting operations

That all news, local or otherwise, be treated the same.

That advisory boards be abolished.

That the editor-in-chief of both ES&S and PS&S be a civilian, not a military officer.

That the editor-in-chief of both ES&S and PS&S be required to have solid journalism credentials.

CONCLUSION

As members of the SPJ, SDX advisory panel, we do not base our findings of censorship and news management at the PS&S on one or two or three examples. Nor do we make the assertion lightly.

Each member of the panel recognizes the difficult if not impossible task the C/EIC faces. For obvious reasons, the military milieu is not hospitable to the workings of a vigorous, questioning press. But the Department of Defense has directed that the Stars and Stripes newspapers be just that.

And while the DoD is to be commended for that basic policy, it does present a dilemma for a military officer put in command of a Stars and Stripes newspaper. Whether civilian or military, journalists generally agree that censorship or news management violate the principles of a free press and the free flow of information. But the military editor of Stars and Stripes has additional reasons to adhere to those principles:

- 1) He is not employed by a private businessman who owns the newspaper; he is employed by the U.S. government and acts as its agent.
- 2) He is specifically forbidden to engage in censorship or news management by DoD policy.

From the material examined by the panel, the picture that emerges in the Pacific is that of a loyal public servant struggling to resolve his conflicting duties as an officer and an editor. In too many instances studied, the editor lost. So did the readers of the Pacific Stars and Stripes, the dedicated men and women sworn to defend the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution. One of the most vital of those freedoms is an unfettered press that guarantees the free flow of information.

Phil Robbins  
Charles Voss  
Ruth Wilson  
Peter Prichard  
Paul McMasters

# Comments From the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs)



PUBLIC AFFAIRS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1400

NOV 2 1988

Mr. Frank Conahan  
Assistant Comptroller General  
National Security and International  
Affairs Division  
U.S. General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Conahan:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the General Accounting Office (GAO) draft report entitled "Stars and Stripes Censorship Issues," dated September 29, 1988 (OSD Code 391607 Case 7786).

The Department agrees in part with the report findings and recommendations. The DoD recognizes that there are misunderstandings about DoDI 5120.4, supporting DoD regulations, and policies that have led to charges of censorship in both Europe and the Pacific. The GAO evaluation has been instrumental in providing the DoD an opportunity to evaluate its procedures and policies, and it is hoped in part that the DoD reply will assist in clearing up some of those misunderstandings. The DoD intends to thoroughly evaluate its regulation in the light of the GAO recommendations in concert with affected DoD agencies, the Unified Commands, and the two Stars and Stripes organizations. The DoD intends to begin its review of DoDI 5120.4 in December 1988, and, as part of that review, will also address the concerns about additional civilian editor positions at Stars and Stripes.

The Department appreciates the quality level of the Society of Professional Journalists' panel members who assisted the GAO in preparing its report to the Congress on Stripes Censorship Issues. The DoD thanks the Society's President, James F. Plante, for the panel's efforts in its limited review and is especially grateful for its high tribute to the quality of Stars and Stripes.

The panel determined that all the tools are in place for a healthy, vigorous newspaper that military personnel stationed overseas can be proud of. Generally, both S&S editions have lived up to that mission. A review of recent papers in both commands indicate that on a day-to-day basis, our military personnel and dependents are provided journalistically sound newspapers.




---

**Appendix IV**  
**Comments From the Assistant Secretary of**  
**Defense (Public Affairs)**

The detailed responses to the findings and recommendations are addressed in greater detail in the enclosure. The DoD has also provided to GAO a technical review of the draft report separately. The DoD appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft report. The DoD will review DoDI 5120.4, its implementing regulations, and supporting DoD regulations and plans to complete actions by December 1989. The DoD assures Congress and the GAO that DoD's primary goal, as always, is to provide DoD personnel and their families overseas the right to free press under the provisions of the First Amendment.

Sincerely,



**William E. Hart**  
Deputy Assistant Secretary

Enclosure:  
As Stated

Appendix IV  
Comments From the Assistant Secretary of  
Defense (Public Affairs)

GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE DRAFT REPORT  
"STARS AND STRIPES CENSORSHIP ISSUES"  
DATED SEPTEMBER 29, 1988  
(GAO CODE 391607) OSD CASE 7786

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS  
\* \* \* \* \*  
FINDINGS

**FINDING A: ORGANIZATION AND MISSIONS OF THE STARS AND STRIPES.**  
The GAO reported that the Stars and Stripes newspapers are authorized DoD publications that are published in the Pacific and in Europe. The GAO reported that, organizationally, the Pacific newspaper is controlled by a military commander, while the European newspaper is controlled by civilian journalists. The GAO reported that under DoD Instruction 5120.4, it is DoD policy that a free flow of news and information be provided to all military personnel, without censorship or news management. In addition, the GAO pointed out that the instruction prohibits the calculated withholding of unfavorable news and requires that editorial policies be designed to improve the ability of personnel to execute the DoD missions. The GAO reported that under the instruction, Stars and Stripes has two specific missions: (1) to provide stateside news to help DoD personnel intelligently exercise their citizenship responsibilities and improve their morale and readiness; and (2) to provide applicable news and information, including local news, that improves individual capability for mission accomplishment. To accomplish the first part of their mission, the GAO reported that both papers buy their news from commercial sources. The GAO pointed out that the DoD instruction requires the newspapers to maintain balance in presentation of commercial news and opinion and prohibits the newspapers from taking editorial positions. To accomplish the second part to the mission, the GAO reported that both papers print articles provided by DoD news sources and local news gathered by Stars and Stripes reporters. The GAO concluded that, while both of the Stars and Stripes missions are worthy pursuits, when commingled they create an inherent conflict, since one mission is to provide news protected by the First Amendment, while the other is to provide "company" news. (p. 2, pp. 10-13, pp. 88-89/GAO Draft Report)

**DoD RESPONSE:** Partially Concur. The GAO and the Society of Professional Journalists have provided valuable third-party observations regarding the organization and the functions of Stars and Stripes. Nevertheless, the DoD wishes the Society of Professional Journalists' representatives had personally visited the Stars and Stripes in the two theaters so that they could have observed firsthand the editing of these major daily newspapers by the DoD civilian and military journalists.

Enclosure

Now on pp. 2, 10-11, and  
51-52.

**Appendix IV**  
**Comments From the Assistant Secretary of**  
**Defense (Public Affairs)**

The current directive, DoDI 5120.4, authorizes the Unified Command newspapers (Stars and Stripes) in the Pacific and Europe to publish military and commercial news of interest to DoD personnel and their families overseas; however, the GAO report misunderstands the two information missions as they are applied in each theater. The DoD directs policy that there will be a free flow of news and information provided to all military personnel without censorship or news management. The calculated withholding of unfavorable news is strictly prohibited. These policies are applicable to both the stateside commercial news and military theater news missions of the Stars and Stripes. Reporting on newsworthy local military community news and information is an important function of Stars and Stripes. It is specifically not to be treated as "company news" in the context attributed by GAO to Pacific Stars and Stripes.

Stars and Stripes is recognized as the G.I.'s newspaper and has a long, proud tradition of being a credible news source providing a daily hometown newspaper filled with national, international, and military community news as well as features, United States newspaper editorial comment, comics, and sports. Recognizing the need to provide credible news for their Unified Commands both in peacetime and in the event of conflict, the editorial staff of the papers is a mixture of civilian and military personnel.

Both newspapers are organized similarly. In accordance with DoDI 5120.4, the fiscal/editorial operations of the newspaper are commanded by senior military officers (i.e., Colonel/Navy Captain). However, the GAO incorrectly concluded that DoDI 5120.4 allows "the papers to be controlled on a day-to-day basis by a military commander, as in the case of the Pacific, or by civilian journalists, as in the case of Europe." (Emphasis added) DoDI 5120.4 enjoins the commander to be responsible for all operations of the newspaper. The individual management styles of incumbents in the senior civilian/military positions have had a greater effect on decision-making process in the newsroom than any chain-of-command.

The DoD disagrees with GAO's conclusion that the commingling of the two aspects of the mission as defined in DoDI 5120.4, creates an inherent conflict. The accumulated evidence suggests that misunderstandings of the mission definitions by Stars and Stripes' employees have led to conflicts among the various editorial staff levels, including bureau reporters. To help clarify any such misunderstandings, the DoD affirms that the second aspect of the mission statement of Stars and Stripes is to report newsworthy events in the military community, its policies, its unclassified achievements, events, and other areas of interest to the newspapers' readership on an objective, impartial, and accurate basis. Nonetheless, the DoD will ask the Unified Commands to reevaluate the two mission statements in the review of DoDI 5120.4.

Appendix IV  
Comments From the Assistant Secretary of  
Defense (Public Affairs)

FINDING B: ALLEGATIONS OF CENSORSHIP AT THE STARS AND STRIPES.  
The GAO reported that, in late 1986, staff members at the Pacific Stars and Stripes began circulating a package of documents supporting their allegations of censorship, news management, and command influence at the paper. According to the GAO, these allegations included external pressures by general and flag officers and their representatives to withhold sensitive stories, replacing newspaper officials, and censorship by the C/EIC. The GAO reported that three separate investigations of these allegations were conducted by the DoD and each concluded that the allegations were not valid. The GAO stated that the first report was based on an examination conducted by the Army of the staff submitted documents. The Army reported finding no instances of undue influence or pressure. The GAO reported that the second investigation was conducted by the Command Information Officer for the U.S. Forces, Japan, and concluded that some of the staff either did not understand or disagreed with editorial policies established in the DoD instruction. According to the GAO, the third investigation was conducted by a professor of journalism for the Director of the American Forces Information Service and also concluded there was no definitive evidence of censorship. The GAO pointed out, however, that this report noted that some of the civilian journalists did not seem to accept the differences between the Stars and Stripes and other newspapers. (p. 2., pp. 13-17/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp 2, 12-13.

DoD RESPONSE: Concur. Prior to GAO's report, two military evaluations and an investigation by a journalism professor from the American University (Department of Journalism Director, American University, Washington, D.C.) concluded that there was no censorship at Pacific Stars and Stripes. These studies showed that editorial staff practices were in accordance with the provisions of DoDI 5120.4. The common thread among the studies is that significant differences of opinion existed between the employees -- bureau and staff reporters, senior editors, and sub-editors about editorial policies and practices, but that censorship, per se, was not observed. As part of his study, the professor noted that, "...Stars and Stripes is (are) regulated by DoDI 5120.4. No where else in American print journalism are such 'official' standards promulgated, although informal codes and standards of conduct from various professional organizations and individual newspapers are on record."

When editorial staffs raised questions on what constituted accuracy, impartiality, and balance in Stars and Stripes-generated material, the DoD forwarded the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics to the Unified Command Public Affairs Offices and the two Stars and Stripes. In forwarding the code, the DoD recognized that while the Stars and Stripes publications are unique, industry-recognized journalistic standards are useful. Further, in the American University Professor's study, he stated that the Commander/Editor in Chief (C/EIC) standards of

**Appendix IV  
Comments From the Assistant Secretary of  
Defense (Public Affairs)**

accuracy, balance, nonsensationalism, and objectivity not only were in full compliance with the provisions of DoDI 5120.4, but "the standards of many of the nation's 1,657 daily newspapers."

The DoD agrees with the GAO that Stars and Stripes are not installation newspapers. Neither are they like commercial newspapers published in the United States. Unlike any commercial newspaper, the Stars and Stripes are military newspapers published by military organizations, using military resources in a military chain of command, restricted to a readership which has specialized interests, needs, and outlooks in often cloistered overseas environments. Further, there are constraints not applicable to commercial newspapers that must be imposed on Stars and Stripes such as restrictions on printing classified information. Such constraints are not always understood by reporters. To the greatest extent possible, the DoD advocates that the same standards of reporting that govern commercial publications be applied to Stars and Stripes. To prevent misunderstandings caused by Stars and Stripes unique newspaper role, common points of reference should be placed in both the DoD governing directives and the Stars and Stripes employee contracts. This should minimize confusion resulting from dissimilar interpretations or opinions. To that end, the DoD will begin a review process of DoDI 5120.4 that will start by December 1988, evaluate professional journalist code of ethics for possible incorporation within the DoD Instruction applicable to Stars and Stripes, and direct that employee contracts specify the terms of government employment.

**FINDING C: LEGAL, JOURNALISTIC AND MILITARY VIEWS ON CENSORSHIP ISSUES.** The GAO reported that, because the European and Pacific Stars and Stripes are "authorized" DoD newspapers, there is a question whether the Federal Government could ever be considered, in a legal sense, to censor one of its own publications. The GAO reported that it could find no legal decision directly relevant to this question. The GAO did identify cases that may be indirectly applicable, but concluded it is difficult to predict whether these principles would be applied by the courts to an entity such as the Stars and Stripes. According to the GAO, professional journalists view censorship as any effort (such as news management) to suppress publication of news for other than national security reasons. The GAO also pointed out, however, that the journalists said censorship is a gray area for the newspaper industry. The GAO reported that the concept of censorship reflected in the DoD investigations that have been conducted (see Finding B) revolves around the concept of external pressure on Stars and Stripes in the selection and presentation of news. (pp. 3-4, pp. 19-24/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 2-3, 15-17.

Appendix IV  
Comments From the Assistant Secretary of  
Defense (Public Affairs)

DoD RESPONSE: Concur. The DoD agrees with GAO that censorship and news management are gray areas. The DoD also notes that while citing a number of legal decisions regarding First Amendment rights of newspapers and press freedoms, GAO stated there was no legal precedent regarding a government-owned newspaper. The DoD agrees that there is no legal precedent precluding the government from applying censorship to itself. Regardless, the DoD does not condone censorship of Stars and Stripes.

The DoD recognizes the concern noted by the Society of Professional Journalists in these "muddy waters." The DoD policy is that a free flow of news and information shall be provided to all DoD personnel without censorship or news management. The calculated withholding of unfavorable news is prohibited. The DoD policy is that Stars and Stripes reporters are to be afforded the same treatment and have the same access and information rights as extended to the commercial regional, national, and international press. Further, the DoD public affairs policy remains "maximum disclosure with minimum delay." In cases where information is not readily forthcoming, the DoD has no objection to Stars and Stripes stating simply that the government agency or organization "declined to comment." Likewise, the DoD, as a matter of policy, does not endorse "stonewalling" of Stars and Stripes reporters. However, the DoD considers it unfair for Stars and Stripes reporters to characterize delays that are part of the routine public information processing normally expected of any public or government agency as "news management" or censorship. In keeping with the DoD public affairs policies for release of information to media, Stars and Stripes access to news is supported by their Unified Command. For example, if there is unreasonable delay by subordinate commands for providing a response to query, the C/EIC, or the Unified Command acting as the publisher, is encouraged to expeditiously intervene on behalf of Stars and Stripes. Both Unified Commands have specific policies discouraging subordinate command pressure that would "spike" or prevent publication of news stories. The DoD concurs in these policies and reinforces the basic DoD public affairs policy of "maximum disclosure with minimum delay."

FINDING D: BUILT-IN CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE MILITARY AND THE MEDIA. The GAO reported that there are a number of built-in conflicts resulting from cultural and institutional differences between the military and the media, which in turn, give rise to allegations of censorship at Stars and Stripes. According to the GAO, these conflicts result, in part, from the military emphasis on control and respect for authority and the media emphasis on skepticism and competition in breaking a story. The GAO reported that the DoD instruction governing newspapers was revised in 1984 partly to provide newspapers greater protection in this conflict.

Appendix IV  
Comments From the Assistant Secretary of  
Defense (Public Affairs)

The GAO further reported that, according to the senior DoD official responsible for newspaper policy, the key means of providing this additional protection was a clearer distinction between unit or installation newspapers and Stars and Stripes. The GAO concluded however, that instead of affording greater protection, the revised instruction allows for a stronger military influence. As an example, the GAO pointed out that the instruction now states that editorial policies of DoD newspapers should be designed to improve the ability of personnel to execute the DoD mission, whereas previously the instruction stated that these policies should be designed to enhance knowledge. As another example, the GAO reported that the revised instruction added a provision that has been widely interpreted as prohibiting investigative reporting. In this regard, the GAO noted that a clear definition as to what constitutes investigative reporting has not been established and that this is a serious concern to Stars and Stripes reporters and editors. A third conflict identified by the GAO is the requirement for an advisory board of each newspaper, chaired by the Unified Command public affairs officer, with responsibility to evaluate compliance with editorial policies. The GAO noted that there are concerns the board is, in effect, a formal mechanism to influence the news. (p. 4, pp. 25-37/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp 3-4, 18-24.

DoD RESPONSE: Partially Concur. The DoD notes that a conflict between reporters and editors is not unique to Stars and Stripes; it occurs in commercial newspapers as well. The GAO believes a major source of the conflict as being the 1984 changes to DoDI 5120.4, but the DoD believes that those regulation changes were in keeping with the spirit and tradition of the original Stars and Stripes. Stars and Stripes is a unique government newspaper with government employees, and draws its policies and procedures from the broad scope of federal regulations that apply to government employment, not just DoD public affairs policies or directives. The DoD places high standards on the Stars and Stripes newspapers and requires the newspapers to report on newsworthy military matters and other areas of interest to readers in a truthful, objective manner. These are the same tenets of responsible journalism practiced by the commercial newspaper industry. The GAO has observed misunderstandings between some Stars and Stripes reporters and its editorial staff management. One area of misunderstanding is the requirement for management to maintain a neutral editorial position inasmuch as Stars and Stripes is a government newspaper. These misunderstandings may occur if reporters perceive they are thwarted by DoD public affairs policies. DoDI 5120.4 must reflect Congressional policies that are applicable to all government publications. Indeed, DoDI 5120.4 received the sanction of Congress before it was published. Nevertheless, GAO has raised legitimate concerns about editorial issues which require clarification between DoD, the Unified Commands, and the Stars and Stripes. The DoD plans to review DoDI 5120.4 and will initiate actions by December 1988.

Appendix IV  
Comments From the Assistant Secretary of  
Defense (Public Affairs)

The DoD does not condone use of the Advisory Boards as a means to control editorial content of the Stars and Stripes. The Advisory Boards serve an important function similar to community counsel found in the United States for commercial newspapers. Their purpose is to establish two-way communication between the Stars and Stripes staff and the members of the Unified Command for communications, discussion of issues, requests for support, and viewpoints.

**FINDING E: VIEWS OF STARS AND STRIPES GUIDANCE BY THE SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS.** The GAO reported that the Society of Professional Journalists reviewed the applicable DoD and command instructions and concluded that the basic intent of the instruction is clear: to provide for the free flow of news and information, without censorship or news management. According to the GAO, however, the Society found the implementing instructions to be unclear in this regard, and in fact, some provisions in the instructions raise legitimate journalistic concerns whether they can be used by the editor to justify news management or censorship. As an example, the GAO reported that, according to the Society, a stricture against polls and surveys related to political campaigns is inconsistent with the Stars and Stripes mission to remind personnel of their responsibilities as citizens. In addition, the GAO noted that, according to the Society, all reporting involves some investigation, even though the instruction prohibits investigative reporting. The GAO reported the Society concluded that a European Command directive prohibiting independent political or diplomatic reporting denies Stars and Stripes readers the type of information that is available to readers in the U.S. (pp. 38-39/GAO Draft Report)

**DoD RESPONSE:** Partially Concur. The Society of Professional Journalists has identified possible misinterpretations in DoDI 5120.4, but the scope of their evaluation was apparently limited only to the DoD public affairs instruction and its subordinate directives. There are no comments on the wider body of other DoD or federal regulations that impacted on the development or basis for DoDI 5120.4. These impacting directives are integral to the policies and guidance contained in DoDI 5120.4 and are the basis for management of Stars and Stripes' fiscal, editorial, and personnel management practices.

The DoD plans to begin evaluating DoDI 5120.4 by December 1988, in concert with the Unified Command implementing regulations, but notes that such review must also include the wider body of applicable DoD, theater, and Military Department regulations. Further, any significant change to DoDI 5120.4 must undergo the full coordination of DoD, the Military Departments, and the Unified Commands. It would also receive the approval of Congress before publication.

Now on pp. 24-25



Appendix IV  
Comments From the Assistant Secretary of  
Defense (Public Affairs)

FINDING F: ALLEGATIONS OF COMMAND INFLUENCE OF STARS AND STRIPES. The GAO found that, of the 20 allegations of censorship and news management identified at the European Stars and Stripes, 12 merited reporting. According to the GAO, eight of these allegations involved external influence on specific stories by commanders and their public affairs officers, who caused stories to be withheld or who were untimely and unresponsive to reporter inquiries. The GAO reported that the other four allegations involved internal decisions by the managing editor and features editor, which caused the stories to be delayed. The GAO noted that two of these cases were delayed because of accuracy questions, while in the other two, reporters received untimely or incomplete responses to their queries. The GAO also discussed one other allegation in Europe involving a Stars and Stripes reporter who was denied access to Air Force officials. In this latter case, the GAO noted that access was denied for a time, and the reporter was then subsequently stonewalled. The GAO also noted, however, that according to the Director, American Forces Information Service, the stonewalling was legal, since reporters from the commercial media are also occasionally stonewalled. The GAO identified over 200 allegations of influence at the Pacific Stars and Stripes. In addition to allegations similar to those in Europe, the GAO also identified and discussed instances where public affairs officials attempted to influence reporting on special projects and sensitive subjects, such as host nation sensitivities, and where command influence was exerted in the management of personnel at the Pacific Stars and Stripes. (pp. 4-5, pp. 40-63/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 4. 26-38.

DoD RESPONSE: Partially concur. The DoD notes that the Society of Professional Journalists found no instances of censorship or news management for European Stars and Stripes. Further, the DoD points out that an analysis of editing decisions is difficult because there are hundreds of editing decisions facing an editorial staff daily, as is true on any major newspaper such as Stars and Stripes, the Washington Post or the Los Angeles Times. Stars and Stripes' editing decisions have to consider financial and other constraints that limit the newspapers to about 28 pages daily, thereby reducing space available to support readership interest in material such as comics, sports, editorial columns, wire service stories, and staff-generated material. A significant space-limiting factor is the DoDI 5120.4 requirement to balance United States editorial columns/political commentary so that it represents the full spectrum of political and editorial commentary in the United States. This balance is required to ensure, at Congressional request, that the Stars and Stripes not take an editorial position. This confirmation of balance is addressed at each semiannual Advisory Board meeting.

---

Appendix IV  
Comments From the Assistant Secretary of  
Defense (Public Affairs)

---

The DoD notes that the Society of Professional Journalists stated in their report that for each newspaper, "... all the tools are in place for a healthy, vigorous newspaper that military personnel stationed overseas can be proud of. Generally, both S&S editions have lived up to that mission. A review of recent papers in both commands indicate that on a day-to-day basis, our military personnel and dependents are provided journalistically sound newspapers."

As a matter of policy, Unified Commands advise their subordinate commands that Stars and Stripes reporters should be treated and provided the same rights as other commercial media. The DoD does not advocate "stonewalling" any reporter. However, the refusal by anyone to speak to a newspaper reporter is not censorship. The OSD, the Director of the American Forces Information Service, and the Unified Commands do not endorse stonewalling as a policy because it ultimately affects the credibility of Stars and Stripes. "Stonewalling" serves to the detriment of the agency by keeping a bad story alive and not dispelling rumor, a major purpose for Stars and Stripes. The DoD encourages all commanders to exercise "maximum disclosure with minimum delay" as a principle of operation in media relationships.

M. L. Stein, former Stars and Stripes reporter and noted Chairman, Department of Journalism at New York University, states, "Just as the reporter is free to seek news, the sources are free to withhold it. There is no law that forces a mayor, for example, to issue daily statements to the press."<sup>1</sup> This means that the Stars and Stripes reporters themselves must remember that they can request a response, but they may not necessarily get the full, or even partial, answer they seek. This is also true in the commercial newspaper world.

The DoD supports the rights of the editorial staff as described in DoDI 5120.4. Further support is provided through vehicles such as the Unified Command Advisory Boards whose charter within the DoD Instruction is to act in an advisory, not policy capacity. The DoD believes that these Boards are supportive of the uniqueness of the military community and mirror counsel for commercial newspapers found in the public sector. "The other practical course that remains open is an effort at self-regulation that goes beyond the passage of pious resolutions and includes continued efforts to confer with ... bench, bar, government officials at various levels, and others who have an interest in softening conflicts of interest,"<sup>2</sup> states Columbia University journalism professor and Society of Professional Journalists award winner, John Hohenberg. The Unified Command

Appendix IV  
Comments From the Assistant Secretary of  
Defense (Public Affairs)

Advisory Boards are an important vehicle to offer open forums within all levels of the command leading to these softening of conflicts.

-----  
<sup>1</sup>M. L. Stein, Freedom of the Press (New York: Julian Messner, 1966).

<sup>2</sup>John Hohenberg, The News Media: A Journalist Looks at His Profession (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1968).

FINDING G: REVIEW OF EUROPE ALLEGATIONS BY THE SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS. The GAO requested the assistance of the Society of Professional Journalists to assess the allegations of censorship and news management at Stars and Stripes. According to the GAO, the Society reviewed all 12 of the allegations that merited reporting for the European paper, including explanations for why the specific actions were taken. The GAO noted that, although the Society panel consisted of five members, only two of the panelists provided written responses on individual cases. The GAO reported that both panelists disagreed with the actions taken in four cases, agreed with the actions in five cases, and split their judgments in the other three cases. Based on its assessment, the Society reported that there was inconclusive evidence of censorship or news management at the European Stars and Stripes. In fact, the Society concluded that, in general, the European Stars and Stripes seems to be free of news management or censorship, based on the 12 allegations it reviewed. (p. 5, pp. 104-119, pp. 166-167/GAO Draft Report)

DoD RESPONSE: Concur.

FINDING H: REVIEW OF PACIFIC ALLEGATIONS BY THE SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS. The GAO requested that the Society of Professional Journalists review the allegations of censorship and news management for 45 of the cases at the Pacific Stars and Stripes involving stories allegedly altered, delayed or omitted. The GAO noted that for the Pacific cases, four of the five Society panel members provided written responses. Based on their review of the 45 Pacific cases, the GAO reported that the panel members unanimously disagreed with the actions taken in five cases, while three of the four panelists disagreed with the actions in 14 other cases. The GAO further reported that in four cases, the panel members unanimously agreed with the actions taken, and in four other cases, three of the four members agreed with the actions. The GAO noted that, in the remaining 18 cases, there was no majority opinion reached by the panel members. Based on its review of the Pacific cases, the panel identified a

Now on pp. 4, 65-72, and  
98-99.

**Appendix IV  
Comments From the Assistant Secretary of  
Defense (Public Affairs)**

number of cases where the C/EIC did not engage in news management or censorship, but in fact greatly improved the original stories. In other cases, however, the panel identified a "troubling pattern" whereby the C/EIC actions resulted in a story being killed, a story being delayed or the story parried. Overall, the panel concluded that there was evidence of censorship at the Pacific Stars and Stripes. The panel observed that it did not base its findings of censorship and news management on just a few examples, nor did it make the assertion lightly. The panel further observed that the editor of the Pacific paper was a loyal public servant struggling to resolve conflicting duties as a military officer and editor. The panel concluded, however, that in too many instances the editorial duties lost. (pp. 5-6, pp. 119-161, pp. 165-168/GAO Draft Report)

DoD RESPONSE: Partially concur. The DoD points out that the panel of distinguished journalists did not have the opportunity to actually visit the theater, but based their findings on material submitted by the GAO. The findings by the Society of Professional Journalists are of interest, particularly the stated conclusions that: a) there were a number of cases where the actions of the C/EIC actually improved the story, and b) he was a loyal public servant struggling to resolve conflicting duties as a military officer and editor. Also of interest, there were three previous on-scene investigations conducted during the EIC's first year of assignment. (See additional remarks at Finding B.) These separate visits to the Tokyo facility found that Pacific Stars and Stripes was operating in compliance with DoDI 5120.4, and was free of censorship. These visits resulted in a number of helpful suggestions covering misunderstandings of instructions or misinterpretations of policy.

As an example of one of the investigations above, the professor of journalism from The American University noted that the C/EIC and the Pacific Stars and Stripes editors, many of whom are civilian journalists, daily selected stories from dozens that appeared on the news wires or were written by the Stars and Stripes staff. The professor also stated in his study that the C/EIC was a strict editor in his interpretations of the provisions of DoDI 5120.4, but that he was not a censor. In addition to the two military investigations and the investigation by the professor, a visit was made by the Washington Post Asia Bureau Chief [Tokyo] to Stars and Stripes. He interviewed the C/EIC about media reports of censorship and concluded that there was insufficient information to justify a Washington Post story. Furthermore, an eminent Bowling Green State University professor of journalism was at Pacific Stars and Stripes for about six months under the "Distinguished Editor" [in residence] program. He observed all aspects of the editorial process on a daily basis, and saw no troubling trends beyond normal staff disagreements.

Now on pp. 4-5, 72-93, and  
97-100.

**Appendix IV**  
**Comments From the Assistant Secretary of**  
**Defense (Public Affairs)**

In this light, the DoD notes a contrast offered by the Society of Professional Journalists' panel evaluation. The allegations were provided individually to the panel and spanned several months, the majority of cases coming from the period of 1986/1987 when the C/EIC was newly assigned to the Pacific Stars and Stripes. At that time, the C/EIC had inherited an organization in fiscal distress with a largely disgruntled staff. Upon assuming command, the C/EIC declared to his staff that his principle concerns were: (1) compliance with directives to rectify the fiscal situation, and (2) observance of the highest standards of journalism.

The wide differences in conclusions drawn from the prior studies by individuals who personally observed Pacific Stars and Stripes editorial activities and those drawn by the Society causes the DoD to be unwilling to concur in full with the conclusions in the GAO report. The DoD notes that the panel report appendix stated that the method of evaluation was by two binders containing copies of the written allegations. The DoD notes that in some cases, copies provided to the Society's panel members were not clear; in others, material was not sufficient to make a clear judgment. Working separately, the panel made their judgments based solely on the material provided them. In addition, the panel reviewed the contents of the draft report. The DoD has not seen the evidence supporting the allegations. Further, the DoD would have preferred a firsthand observation by the Society of the entire editorial process at both Stars and Stripes. Based on GAO and Society observations that there is a possible conflict between the roles of the EIC and military commander, the DoD will review its existing Stars and Stripes instructions and policies to remove inconsistencies, conflicts, and incomplete definitions, beginning in December 1988.

FINDING I: STORY CONTENT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN STARS AND STRIPES AND THE WIRE SERVICES. For the month of March 1987, the GAO analyzed and compared the content of news stories and coverage of both the European and Pacific Stars and Stripes with that of the wire services and identified a number of differences. The GAO found that the Pacific Stars and Stripes (1) ran fewer stories than the European paper on selected topics that former and current employees had said were sensitive; (2) ran fewer DoD stories in total than the European paper; and (3) ran a lower proportion of stories that presented a negative image of the DoD than did the European Stars and Stripes. The GAO also found that both papers ran a lower proportion of stories that presented a negative image of the DoD than the wire services had offered. As an example, the GAO reported that of the wire service stories on the DoD during this time, 47 percent portrayed a negative image of the military. The GAO found, however, that only 35 percent of the wire service stories published in Europe were negative and only 27 percent in the Pacific. The GAO concluded that the story

**Appendix IV  
Comments From the Assistant Secretary of  
Defense (Public Affairs)**

**FINDING J: COVERAGE AND TREATMENT OF SENSITIVE STORIES BY THE STARS AND STRIPES.** The GAO found that both of the Stars and Stripes papers ran a small percentage of stories on politically sensitive topics, but the Pacific paper ran fewer than did the European paper. The GAO reported, for example, that as compared to the European paper, the Pacific Stars and Stripes carried only about half as many stories on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and strategic subjects, 30 percent fewer on the Iran-Contra affair, and about one-third as many on the election campaign. The GAO observed that campaign news is critically important to fulfilling the first mission of the newspapers to encourage the continued intelligent exercise of citizenship responsibilities. The GAO pointed out that the number of censorship allegations at the Pacific paper was substantially greater than in Europe, mainly because of the editorial practices established by the current Pacific editor in chief. The GAO explained that the Pacific EIC more tightly controls the news than the European editor, since he personally reads the stories he considers sensitive and edits them based on his interpretation of DoD guidance on balance and accuracy criteria. The GAO found examples, however, where the Pacific EIC has inconsistently applied the balance and accuracy criteria. In addition, the GAO reported that it examined 45 cases at the Pacific Stars and Stripes where the EIC had allegedly changed, delayed or omitted sensitive stories. The GAO pointed out that in 29 of these cases, the Pacific EIC confirmed the alleged actions. In addition, the GAO pointed out that the Society of Professional Journalists concluded there was evidence of censorship at the Pacific Stars and Stripes, based on its review of the 45 cases (see Finding H). The GAO concluded that the pattern of news content at the Pacific Stars and Stripes suggests that the allegations have merit. (p. 5, pp. 64-65, pp. 75-86/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 5, 39-44.

**DoD RESPONSE:** Partially concur. (See also the DoD responses to previous findings). The DoD policy for Stars and Stripes is that there will be a free flow of information without censorship or news management; as previously noted, the DoD desires that the editorial operations of Stars and Stripes mirror those of their mainstream American commercial counterparts, to the greatest extent possible. DoD policy also reflects the First Amendment provision on the freedom of the press. It is the DoD's continuing goal that the newspapers' journalists reflect the highest standards of the industry. To that end, DoD Instruction 5120.4 and implementing Unified Command instructions applicable to the publication of Stars and Stripes state that the newspapers will have "no censorship or news management." The DoD agrees with the GAO assessment, that in the newspaper industry the issue of censorship is a "gray area," and that there are no clear, binding definitions available.

**Appendix IV**  
**Comments From the Assistant Secretary of**  
**Defense (Public Affairs)**

Now on pp. 5, 39, and 45-50.

coverage differences it found were consistent with the allegations of censorship and news management. (p. 6, pp. 64-75/ GAO Draft Report)

DoD RESPONSE: Nonconcur. Despite the evident care and diligence with which this statistical analysis was performed, the one month content analysis conducted by GAO is of limited value to the DoD and Stars and Stripes. There are absences of a number of critical factors. In comparing the two Stars and Stripes with the two major commercial journalism wire services, the analysis falls short of a complete or valid picture. For example, missing from the study are the length and relevance of articles to each paper; the size, composition and interests of each audience; the placement of the stories in each paper; and the timeliness of the material. In addition, the content analysis cannot consider such factors as the formats of the paper; these are two different military newspapers serving a readership in vastly different parts of the world with different mixtures of Armed Forces. Even discounting the difference between surveying the overseas military audience compared to a civilian readership, a more realistic analysis would have been a variety of stateside newspapers against the Stars and Stripes. According to Baskette and Sissors in their book, The Art of Editing: Second Edition, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.), "Today's wire editors may get a four- or five-line abstract of the complete offering -- foreign, national, regional and state....[wire] services provide subscribers with individually requested stories." Once the wire editors receive copy, they "...have two considerations in selecting wire copy for publication -- the significance of the stories and the space allotted for the wire copy. If the space is tight, fewer wire stories are used and heavier trims may be made on those that are used. Budget stories usually, but not necessarily, get top priority."

In any given day at Stars and Stripes, four to six editorial staff members select, edit and size wire news well before any of the material reaches the senior management editorial staff. This process is similar to commercial newspaper industry practices where only about 10% of the wire stories are used. The variety and content is highly dependent on world events. For example, during March 1987, European Stars and Stripes reports it ran an abnormally low proportion of its own reporter-generated material and a higher level of wire service copy to make up the difference. Further, while the content analysis focused on March 1987, there has been a significant change in Pacific Stars and Stripes editorial staffing. To have been of value for Stars and Stripes, a content analysis should have included a number of consecutive months randomly selected throughout the year and findings compared to other commercial newspapers which use news wire services.

---

Appendix IV  
Comments From the Assistant Secretary of  
Defense (Public Affairs)

---

In a 1987 study, a journalism professor from The American University (also see Finding H), defined the role of editor as "one who alters or revises another's work to make it conform to some standard or serve a particular purpose," or "one who directs or supervises the expressive policies or the preparation of a publication (as a newspaper, periodical ...)." That report also emphasized that many of the allegations from Stars and Stripes employees often stemmed from wide interpretations of censorship and confusion over the legitimate constraints placed upon the newspapers by government and Federal employment, Standards of Conduct regulations, and legitimate national security interests. Although the Society of Professional Journalists' panel did not visit either Stars and Stripes organization, the DoD certainly finds their comments of interest and worthy of consideration. As stated in other responses, the DoD will initiate an evaluation of the current DoDI 5120.4.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct that guidance be issued stating that Stars and Stripes shall have a civilian EIC whose term of office shall be fixed for a period of 3 to 5 years.. (p. 7, p. 90/GAO Draft Report)

DoD RESPONSE: Partially concur. Both Unified Commands have stated it is important that their Stars and Stripes, as a unique military organization which must meet the information/news needs of the Command during a combat or contingency situation, must be commanded by a military officer. They state that an experienced, qualified commander is needed to effectively plan and execute this mission. In addition, this officer is needed to deal with the retail side of the Stars and Stripes mission as well as the complexities of military logistics, personnel management, facility security, and procurement.

The DoD concurs with the Unified Commands that Stars and Stripes must be under military leadership and, at the same time, agrees that the recommendations of GAO and the Society of Professional Journalists for a civilian editor-in-chief under a military commander have merit and will be evaluated. The DoD will be discussing the issue with the Unified Commands and evaluating their theater positions for further action, beginning in December 1988.

Now on pp. 5, 52.



Appendix IV  
Comments From the Assistant Secretary of  
Defense (Public Affairs)

RECOMMENDATION 2: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct that guidance be issued stating that Stars and Stripes shall have editorial and news policy provisions that emphasize subjects of interest to the readership. (p. 7, p. 90/GAO Draft Report)

DoD RESPONSE: Concur. The OSD, the Unified Commands, and European/Pacific Stars and Stripes will continue to ensure that regulations and policies reflect this recommendation. This will be accomplished as part of the overall evaluation of DoDI 5120.4 beginning in December 1988 and incorporated into the next change. The DoD plans an overall review of DoDI 5120.4, its implementing regulations, and supporting DoD regulations to begin in December 1988 and plans to complete actions by December 1989.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The GAO recommended that the Stars and Stripes guidance should state that military officers shall not interfere with or attempt to influence news content. (p. 7, p. 90/GAO Draft Report)

DoD RESPONSE: Concur. The DoD agrees that there should be no outside military interference with either the news-gathering or news publication process of the Stars and Stripes. The C/EIC is the final authority on all editorial content of the Unified Command newspaper, except for news that may adversely affect the security of our country or endangers the safety of DoD personnel. This is the current policy existing in DoDI 5120.4 and the DoD will reemphasize that policy.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The GAO recommended that the Stars and Stripes guidance should state that investigative reporting is allowed. (p. 7, p. 90/GAO Draft Report)

DoD RESPONSE: Nonconcur. The DoDI 5120.4 paragraph on prohibiting Stars and Stripes from being an investigative organization was not established as a public affairs policy. It states that Stars and Stripes . . . "is not an investigative function within the military community, it is a reporting function." Further, reporters and staff are required to report any wrongdoing discovered in the performances of their duties to the appropriate official. This procedure is required by DoD Directive 5500.7, "Standards of Conduct" which prescribes responsibilities for all DoD personnel, regardless of assignment. Stars and Stripes reporters engaging in investigative reporting may have conflicts in their duty performance because of established Standards of Conduct and the Uniform Code of Military

Now on pp. 5-6, 52.

Now on pp. 6, 52.

Now on pp. 6, 52.

**Appendix IV**  
**Comments From the Assistant Secretary of**  
**Defense (Public Affairs)**

Justice. The DoD is also concerned over STATUS OF FORCES AGREEMENTS which allow United States government employees to reside in host nations. The DoD contends that a reporter is a government employee serving with U.S. Forces overseas first and then a reporter -- a position unique to Stars and Stripes and unlike commercial newspapers.

Commercial newspapers are also concerned about the issue of investigative reporting. For example, journalist organizations and publishers have expressed concern about legal and extra staffing issues that investigative reporting brings to a newspaper. Investigative reporting may bring lawsuits and libel claims. Further, in an overseas area, host-nation nationals could sue the government newspapers. Stars and Stripes would have to be supported by an appropriate legal staff at potential considerable expense to the taxpayer. Investigative reporting is an expensive proposal -- an editorial decision often denied by commercial newspapers based on the same perspectives.

As government employees, Stars and Stripes reporters are subject to DoDD 5500.7, "Standards of Conduct." The policy applies to all DoD personnel, including nonappropriated fund activities employees. In the directive, employees must report suspected violations of the criminal statutes promptly to appropriate officials...or to law enforcement officials. Reports of any violations also may be made to the DoD/IG in accordance with DoD Directive 7050.1 and DoD Directive 5240.4. Further, DoD personnel are obligated to cooperate with official investigations of possible violations. Present and former DoD personnel are subject to criminal or other penalties for aiding, concealing, or failing to report to proper authorities the commission of a felony under any criminal statute if such personnel knew of the actual commission of the crime (see 18 U.S.C. 4). As a matter of policy, DoDD 5500.7 states that DoD personnel shall avoid the appearance of making a Government decision outside of official channels. This could impact on investigative reporting or investigations because, in the commercial world, reporters engaging in investigative reporting frequently must make decisions as to confidentiality of sources and delaying the reporting of crimes. In addition, the DoD Directive also notes that "practices that may be accepted in the private business world are not necessarily acceptable for DoD personnel."

The DoD believes the current investigation procedures in the Unified Commands are satisfactory, but need to be clarified for the Stars and Stripes reporters. The Stars and Stripes should not be an agency designed to conduct investigations. If reporters uncover crime, they are to report it through their supervisor to an authorized DoD investigative agency so that appropriate action can be accomplished immediately. Reporters are authorized to ask questions of that investigative agency.

Appendix IV  
Comments From the Assistant Secretary of  
Defense (Public Affairs)

Now on pp. 6, 52.

RECOMMENDATION 5: The GAO recommended that the Stars and Stripes guidance should state that content analyses, similar to the ones the GAO performed, shall be done on a periodic basis to ensure that U.S. troops in the two different parts of the world are exposed to approximately the same news from back home. (p. 7, p. 90/GAO Draft Report)

DoD RESPONSE: Nonconcur. While the DoD recognizes that content analysis is a research technique that is respected and widely used, the DoD does not consider that the content analysis is applicable to Stars and Stripes because such uncontrollable variables as readership interest, local military exercises, unforeseen variations in numbers of editorial staffing, and world/national newsworthy events can lead to inconclusive findings. The DoD is reluctant to initiate a trend analysis which could be interpreted or used as news management.

Now on pp. 6, 52.

RECOMMENDATION 6: The GAO recommended that the new Stars and Stripes guidance should either abolish the advisory board or change its mission to help Stars and Stripes to report on news of interest to the readership. (p. 7, p. 91/GAO Draft Report)

DoD RESPONSE: Partially concur. The DoD will consider adding an additional mission to the Advisory Boards regarding the Stars and Stripes matters of readership interest in the next change to DoDI 5120.4. The current structure of the Unified Command Advisory Boards is satisfactory in that it provides an open forum for discussion of viewpoints and matters of such interest with the component commands. The Advisory Boards are never used as methods to control Stars and Stripes news content.

---

# Major Contributors to This Report

---

National Security and  
International Affairs  
Division Washington,  
D.C.

Martin M Ferber, Senior Associate Director, (202) 275-8412  
John K. Harper, Group Director  
William J. Wood, Evaluator-in-Charge  
Tetsuo Miyabara, Social Science Analyst  
Matthew J. Scire, Evaluator  
Carolyn S. Blocker, Writer-Editor

---

Far East Office  
Honolulu, Hawaii

Katherine M. Iritani, Site Senior

---

European Office  
Frankfurt, West  
Germany

Michael J. Kennedy, Site Senior