

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: DEGREES OF ACCESS: FACTORS PREVENTING WIDE-SCOPE COVERAGE OF THE IRAQ WAR BY EMBEDDED REPORTERS—FROM “SHOCK AND AWE” TO “MISSION ACCOMPLISHED” (MARCH 21 - MAY 1, 2003)

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Reporters “embedded” with U.S. military units during the first two months of the Iraq War (2003-) dealt with a number of impediments the combination of which was previously unseen in the history of war reporting. These included physical proximity, bonding, and shared peril with American soldiers, informal self-censorship based on “ground rules,” and technological capacity for real-time visual transmission of reportage. These and other factors such as travel restrictions and post-9/11 editorial bias prevented “embeds” from seeing anything but a narrow slice of the war.

DEGREES OF ACCESS: FACTORS PREVENTING WIDE-SCOPE COVERAGE
OF THE IRAQ WAR BY EMBEDDED REPORTERS—FROM “SHOCK AND
AWE” TO “MISSION ACCOMPLISHED” (MARCH 21 - MAY 1, 2003)

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this project to Jonathan Z. Seder, without whose unending support its completion would not have been possible.

And to Barbara Melnyk, who forged the reporter in the fire.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Top military brass liked the Defense Department's "embedding" program. It was a way in which to channel journalistic eagerness to be on the front lines, witnessing the "first draft of history," into the many-valved organ of the armed forces. Reporters would eat, sleep, and interact with—and more likely than not befriend—the soldiers in their units. This would lead to—the architects of embedding hoped—a positive aggregate picture of military operations during the Iraq War.

The U.S. Department of Defense—specifically Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld—and President George W. Bush reasoned that placing troops within military units offered the greatest possibility for countering misleading press reports or negative propaganda from Middle Eastern news sources.¹ Proximity to the battlefield, in addition to technology that made real-time event coverage possible, supporters argued, allowed the public a more intimate look into the confusion, horror, bravery, and sacrifice of war than ever before.² As Terence Smith wrote for the *Columbia Journalism Review*, the combination of cutting-edge broadcast technology

¹ Jeffrey C. Bliss. "Iraq: The Press Goes to War." *Hoover Digest*. No. 3. (2003) <http://www.hoover.org/publications/digest/3057436.html>. "It was President Bush and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld who thought that embedding reporters with military units would help win the propaganda war at a time when the United States seemed to be losing it in the Arab world. If military leaders let reporters hear and see what they were doing, the resulting stories would do the administration more good than harm in the battle to win over Muslims to the American cause: This was a big part of the rationale behind the mandate to open it up."

² Jim Garamone. American Forces Press Service. (Air University, Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base) Mar. 26, 2003. <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/dod/embedded.htm>. ASDPA Victoria "Torie" Clarke: "First reports of the process have been positive. "So far, the embedding seems to have gone very well," ... "Americans and people around the world are seeing firsthand the wonderful dedication and discipline of the coalition forces."

and physical closeness would lend itself to “a kind of intimate, immediate, absorbing, almost addictive coverage, the likes of which we have not seen before.”³

Defense Department officials’ hopes were fulfilled—the strategy worked. Like an Impressionist painting, the flood of intense, personal, affecting, and predominantly objective reports displayed at least a recognizable pattern of the war’s progression on both strategic and human fronts.⁴

Journalists also largely describe the program as a success. About 80 percent of 159 Iraq war reporters surveyed between January and March 2004 said embedded journalists were successful in their reporting of the war. Only 17.5 percent of reporters polled by Fahmy and Johnson said that war coverage by “embeds” was biased; 21.4 percent felt that reports from embeds were sensationalized.⁵

This is not to say that journalists were entirely uncritical of the program, though. Ninety percent of reporters surveyed said that while embedded reporters avoided bias and sensationalism, the reports they produced from the field provided only a “narrow slice of the conflict.”⁶ In 2003 embedded reporter George C. Wilson of the *National Journal* said on PBS’s *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* that embedded reporters were “somewhat like the second dog on the dogsled team...you saw an

³ “The Real-Time War: Defining news in the Middle East.” *Columbia Journalism Review*. May/June 2003. <http://cjrarchives.org/issues/2003/3/standard-smith.asp>.

⁴ See e.g.: Sean Aday, Steven Livingston, and Maeve Hebert. “Embedding the Truth: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Objectivity and Television Coverage of the Iraq War.” *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*. Vol.10, no.3. (2005) “[E]mbedded reporters had among the highest percentage of neutral [in tone] stories...of any type of reporter.”

⁵ Shahira Fahmy and Thomas Johnson, “How We Performed: Embedded Journalists’ Attitudes & Perceptions Toward Covering the Iraq War.” *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*. Vol. 82, No. 2. (2005) pp. 301-317. (Table 1.)

⁶ Ibid.

awful lot of the dog in front of you and a little bit to the left and the right.”⁷ This “dogsled” effect resulted from the way the embedding program was structured. Embeds were given greater free rein within the operations of their assigned units than had been the case since the conflicts following the Vietnam war⁸, but were constrained for the sake of safety and other considerations to mirroring the motion of that unit, curtailing reportorial freedom by situational lack of access.⁹

Access, for the purposes of this paper, will be defined as the combination of all the elements to which a reporter must be exposed in order to cover a story well, including depth, opposing points of view, observable firsthand descriptions of events, and the means by which to relay information to consumers of news. The effects of editorial decisions and self-censorship will also be explored. Access to events in a war zone, access to those affected, access to the technological means to give the raw story material to their editors (filing), and relative freedom from unreasonable censorship are part of the concept of access in this case. Walter Lippmann wrote that the most obvious place to find news is “where people’s affairs touch public authority.”¹⁰ By that definition, a war equals almost constant newsworthiness. A

⁷ “The Media’s War.” (Transcript). *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*. PBS. Apr. 21, 2003. http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/jan-june03/embed_4-21.html.

⁸ See e.g.: Chip Reid. “Recalling life as an embedded reporter.” NBC News. Mar. 14, 2004. “After all, the argument went, we depended on the Marines for access and for our own safety. Not to mention the fact that reporters became friends with and in many cases (definitely in my case), admired the troops they were covering. The commanding officer of my battalion gave us virtually unlimited access, even on sensitive stories. He said his orders were to let us report on ‘the good, the bad and the ugly.’ And that’s what we did.” Also: Baker, Peter. “Inside View.” *American Journalism Review*. May 2003. <http://www.ajr.org/article.asp?id=2993>.

⁹ Judith Sylvester and Suzanne Huffman. *Reporting from the Front*. Lanham (Md.): Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005. p. 123. “There were reporters I knew who were upset because they couldn’t get transportation to go talk to other people about what was happening. The commanding officers wanted us to let them know where we were, if we left the unit. It just didn’t seem that it was worth it to move about.”

¹⁰ Lippmann, Walter. *Public Opinion*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1922. p. 341.

combat zone is hypersaturated with intersections between people's affairs and public authority, sometimes in the bluntest and most grisly manner possible.

The concept of "access" for the individual embedded reporter turned out to determine quality and breadth of coverage during offensive operations before the fall of Baghdad. Reporting in the Iraq War—much like World War II—involved journalists reconciling abstract patriotic outrage at an attack on U.S. soil with the imperative to report on the war at hand¹¹, and balancing emotional attachment to the soldiers that reporters covered with the need to report military actions honestly and fairly.¹² The degree of access achieved specifically by embedded reporters in this most recent conflict was determined by a number of factors that had not been seen in this particular combination in the history of war reporting. These factors included: 1) close physical proximity, shared danger, and companionship with soldiers; 2) subjective and/or informal censorship, as opposed to formal submission of transmitted text to censors; and 3) the technological capacity for real-time transmission of live visual reportage.

Each of these factors on its own—and sometimes in combination with one or two of the others—has been a part of war reporting in the past. The first combat reporters in recorded history were considered part of the armed forces, sharing meals,

¹¹ Lawrence Nakatsuka. "Star-Bulletin's only Japanese reporter sent to interview 'enemy.'" *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*. Dec. 4, 1999. "As for myself, there was no ambiguity: I was born, raised and educated an American. Period. The Star-Bulletin accepted me as an American without qualms. It had no doubts at all about my loyalty as an American... On that Sabbath morning of Dec. 7, 1941, I was still asleep at home when my phone rang. 'This is Howard Case.' My city editor's voice was taut and tense. 'Get down here to the office right away!' I raced to the city room on Merchant Street downtown. The place was jumping with activity... I wanted to get in on the action. I wanted something to do, anything."

¹² Brian Corbin. "'Voice of common soldier' lives on at museum." *Evansville (Ill.) Courier & Press*. Oct. 28, 2007. "'He basically was the voice of the common soldier: What he focused on and what he was interested in was what the GIs experienced and their daily lives,' said David Weaver, acting manager of the [Ernie Pyle] state historic site. 'Today, you have embedded reporters out with the troops; well, that was kind of Ernie Pyle's idea. He lived with the troops, he camped with them, he wanted their story, not the official press releases all the time.'

lodging, and travel with the troops: In 424 BCE, Thucydides led the Athenian fleet at Thasos and simultaneously penned an account of his forces' defeat at the hands of the Spartans.¹³ As an army commander as well as correspondent, Thucydides of course was an armed participant in the battle. The post of the modern unarmed professional war correspondent began with William "Billy" Russell, who covered several wars for the London *Times*, including the Crimean War in the 1850s and the Austro-Prussian War of 1866. Russell was not fed or housed by the British armed forces, however; he had to provide his own tent, horse, and rations.¹⁴

In America, the notion of journalists traveling along with the troops under military supervision and protection was not a new one. Mark Kellogg, a freelance reporter traveling with Lt. Col. George Custer's Seventh Cavalry Regiment at the Battle of Little Bighorn was allowed by Custer to follow the regiment against the orders of superior officers, bunking with the troops and sharing meals before the engagement on June 26, 1876. On that day, Kellogg rode a slow mule behind the charging cavalry onto the field of battle, and died along with Custer and his troops.¹⁵ Part of the lot of the war reporter who lived with soldiers is also to face the same mortal peril as the soldiers. A World War I correspondent for *The New Republic*, Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, was gravely wounded near Reims, France in 1918 when

¹³ Thucydides. *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Rex Warner, trans. New York: Penguin Classics, 2001. p. 328. "They and Eucles, the general from Athens who was there to defend the place, sent to the other general in Thrace, Thucydides, the son of Olorus, the author of this history, who was then at the island of Thasos, a colony of the Parians, about half a day's sail from Amphipolis, asking him to come to their relief."

¹⁴ William Russell (2004). "The Evolution of War Reporting from the Crimea to Iraq."

¹⁵ Harold M. Evans. "The Combat Correspondent: A look at war reporting from Caesar's commentaries to cell phones." *Media Studies Journal*. Vol. 15, no. 1. (Summer 2001) p. 3.

an Army Lieutenant near her picked up an unexploded grenade.¹⁶ War writer Ernie Pyle, who became famous for roving the front lines during World War II looking for “tellable stories,” was killed in 1945 on the island of Ie Shima when a machine gunner’s stray bullet hit his left temple.¹⁷

A system of informal censorship based on a set of rules generated by the military and agreed to by war correspondents was likewise not unique to the second war in Iraq. Certainly, the government has both used the press and limited the press since America’s first war, the Revolution of 1775 to 1783. Gen. George Washington and his allies sometimes provided the colonial press with inflated figures for British casualties.¹⁸ Washington also complained about wartime journalists’ detailed reporting. “It is much to be wished that our printers were more discreet in many of their publications. We see, almost in every paper, proclamation or accounts transmitted by the enemy of an injurious nature. If some limit or caution could be given them on the subject, it might be of material service.”¹⁹

Formal censorship of military reporters’ material in America had its beginnings in the Sedition Act of 1798 under the specter of war with France, and was carried through the Civil War to all U.S. conflicts up to and including operations in Korea. Though war was not actually declared on France in the last decade of the 18th century, the administration of President John Adams signed into law the Sedition Act,

¹⁶ Tad Bartimus. “Bullets and Bathrooms.” *Media Studies Journal*. Vol. 15, no. 1. (Summer 2001) p. 9. “A stunning report, a blinding flash, and I am precipitated down the bank, hearing, it seems, as I go, the Lieutenant’s shriek of horror: ‘My arm! My arm has been carried away!’ ...The surgeon is bending over my wounds now...I am getting ether in large quantities. Sensation of vibration—of waves beating, and through it voices very clear: Who is she? A journalist.”

¹⁷ Owen V. Johnson. “Ernie Pyle: 60 years after his death.” *Bloomington (Ind.) Herald-Times*. April 15, 2005. <http://journalism.indiana.edu/news/041505pyle/>.

¹⁸ “Blame Grenada! American invasion of tiny Caribbean island changed everything for press.” (2001)

¹⁹ Philander D. Chase. *The Papers of George Washington*. Vol. 9. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1969. p. 68.

which made publishing “any false, scandalous, and malicious writing or writings against the government of the United States...with intent to defame, or to bring them contempt or disrepute; or to excite against them [the] hatred of the good people of the United States.”²⁰

During the American Civil War, both Union and Confederate correspondents were numerous. In the North, large newspapers such as the *New York Herald* had as many as 60 war reporters in the field.²¹ The North subjected its correspondents to no formal censorship, leading Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman to complain:

“They publish without stint positive information of movements past [and] prospective, organizations, names of commanders, and accurate information which reaches the enemy with as much regularity as it does our People...[N]o matter how rapidly we move, the enemy has advance notice...Never had an enemy a better corps of spies than our army carries along, paid, transported, and fed by the United States.”²²

For this reason, the Lincoln administration suppressed publishing of certain facts in Union newspapers.²³ Meanwhile, the Confederacy used a sort of “pool” system in which local journalists would cover battles close to their locations.²⁴ In World Wars I and II, offices of censorship were established on the home front to prevent information such as that causing Sherman such grief during the Civil War—prospective troop movements, names of operations, etc.—from reaching enemy eyes and ears. Few reporters objected to these policies because of a strong nationalistic sentiment that—as Byron Price, director of the U.S. Office of Censorship in 1942,

²⁰ Geoffrey Stone. *Perilous Times: Free Speech in Wartime from the Sedition Act of 1798 to the War on Terrorism*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2004. p. 36.

²¹ Russell (2004). “The Evolution of War Reporting from the Crimea to Iraq.” p. 32.

²² Peter S. Prichard. “Basic Training.” *Media Studies Journal*. Vol. 15, no. 1. (Summer 2001) p. 54.

²³ Jacqueline E. Sharkey. “War, Censorship, and the First Amendment.” *Media Studies Journal*. Vol. 15, no. 1. (Summer 2001.) pp. 20-21.

²⁴ Russell (2004). “The Evolution of War Reporting from the Crimea to Iraq.” p. 33.

said—“the outcome of the war is of vital personal concern to the future of every American citizen.”²⁵ Veteran CBS correspondent Walter Cronkite supports censorship in the case of full access to the battlefield. “They’ve obviously got to be sure that we are not releasing any military secrets in the copy we file thereafter. I believe in censorship. It worked pretty well.”²⁶ The press notice for D-Day (June 6, 1944) indicated that each corps beaching at Normandy that day would be accompanied by seven war reporters, three photographers, two public relations officers, two radio operators and two driver-messengers. Four censors also accompanied each battalion. Stories filed from the battlefield had to be submitted to the censors before they were transmitted electronically for publication, and any copy carried by boat was checked in the United Kingdom before being transmitted.²⁷

During operations in Korea, there was no official censorship until Chinese intervention in the war in 1950. When commanders complained that sensitive information such as notices of troop movement and the existence of a new fighter plane were being released via the American press, reporters were required to submit their stories to Army and Air Force censors. The government also established a Japan-based censorship office for television footage in March 1951.²⁸ Only during the war in Vietnam were reporters truly free of most government intervention (this will be discussed at length in section I of this paper, Traditional and Historical Blocks to Access).

²⁵ Byron Price. “What Can and What Cannot be Printed in War Time.” *Congressional Digest*. Feb. 1942. pp. 36-37.

²⁶ Sylvester and Huffman (2005). *Reporting from the Front*. p. 14.

²⁷ Hernandez, Debra Gersh. “The Simple Days of War Coverage.” *Editor & Publisher*. Vol. 127, no. 31. (July 30, 1994)

²⁸ James Aronson. *The Press and the Cold War*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970.

The third factor, capacity for real-time satellite-uplinked visual coverage of a war has only been a consideration for less than two decades. Satellite-based live feed for both print and broadcast journalists went from sporadic and expensive in the late 1980s and early 1990s to prevalent by the time of the conflict in Bosnia in 1992.²⁹ In Operation Iraqi Freedom, advanced technology—including internet filing and broadcasting—presented its own set of difficulties, explored in the second part of this paper, *New Restrictions, New Considerations*.

Before the start of operations in Iraq in 2003, journalists, of course, were unable to anticipate the combination of mitigating factors that would prevent embedded journalists from seeing the full scope of the conflict during Iraqi Freedom. In 1992, reporters and journalism scholars made a list, a “statement of principles,” of the failures of military-press cooperation after the end of the Vietnam War. The press essentially wanted the military and Defense Department to correct what they physical access to the battlefield during combat, unlike what was granted in Grenada; an end to the “pool” system that so disappointed reporters during first Gulf War; and—perhaps most idealistically—they did not want to submit stories to official military censors.³⁰

²⁹ Edith M Lederer. “From Telex to Satellite.” *Media Studies Journal*. Vol. 15, no. 1. (Summer 2001) pp. 18-19.

³⁰ “Principles that should govern future arrangements for news coverage from the battlefield of the United States military in combat.” Adopted Aug. 11, 1992. Courtesy of Poynter Online. http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=6242&sid=44 “1. Open and independent reporting will be the principal means of coverage of U.S. military operations. 2. Press pools are not to serve as the standard means of covering U.S. military operations. Pools may sometimes provide the only feasible means of early access to a military operation. Pools should be as large as possible and disbanded at the earliest opportunity (within 24 to 36 hours when possible). The arrival of early access pools will not cancel the principle of independent coverage for journalists already in the area. 3. Even under conditions of open coverage, pools may be appropriate for specific events, such as those at extremely remote locations or where space is limited. 4. Journalists in a combat zone will be credentialed by the U.S. military and will be required to abide by a clear set of military security ground rules that protect U.S. forces and their operations. Violation of the ground rules can result in

The great irony of the embedding program is that while the Defense Department acquiesced to *all* of these demands,³¹ more subtle and pervasive obstacles to access cropped up in their place. Embedded reporters experienced legal, physical, ideological, and emotional blocks to unfettered reporting that narrowed their field of vision.

The first part of this paper examines, in the context of the conflicts leading up to the 2003 Iraq War, more traditional obstacles to access, such as legal blocks, denial of physical admission to the field of combat, and military distrust of press motives. For instance, *Hustler* publisher Larry Flynt faced legal obstacles to access when his bid to send reporters with special operations troops to Afghanistan shortly after 9/11 failed on appeal in federal court. The first section discussed the scaling back of reporter access to U.S. combat operations that happened in the mid-1970s, and the slow return of reporters to the thick of combat operations between 1975 and 2003. Some veteran war reporters believe that the optimum level of access to battlefield operations was achieved during U.S. operations in Vietnam between 1965 and 1975, and that reporters have since been prevented from returning to that ideal because

suspension of credentials and expulsion of the journalist involved from the combat zone. News organizations will make their best efforts to assign experienced journalists to combat operations and to make them familiar with U.S. military operations. 5. Journalists will be provided access to all major military units. Special operations restrictions may limit access in some cases. 6. Military public affairs officers should act as liaisons but should not interfere with the reporting process. 7. Under conditions of open coverage, field commanders should be instructed to permit journalists to ride on military vehicles and aircraft whenever feasible. The military will be responsible for the transportation of pools. 8. Consistent with its capabilities, the military will supply PAOs with facilities to enable timely, secure, compatible transmission of pool material and will make these facilities available whenever possible for filing independent coverage. In cases when government facilities are unavailable, journalists will, as always, file by any other means available. The military will not ban communications systems operated by news organizations, but electromagnetic operational security in battlefield situations may require limited restrictions on the use of such systems.”

³¹ Donald Rumsfeld. “Public affairs guidance (PAG).” February 2003. <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Feb2003/d20030228pag.pdf>. Sec. 1. “Media will be embedded with unit personnel at air and ground forces bases and afloat to ensure a full understanding of all operations.”

military higher-ups believe that negative media coverage influenced public opinion and lost the military the war in Vietnam.³² The first part ends with an explanation of how the Pentagon and the Defense Department sought to reach out to the American press through the embedding program, and sought to provide for access and freedom from censorship that would at least match the level of freedom achieved during the Vietnam conflict.

The second section explores new obstacles to battlefield access that were unique both to the embedded reporter and to the Iraq War. Access to combat action, unlike in Vietnam, depended on the embedded reporter's unit assignment, and even more on the mode of transportation the unit used, satellite uplink access, the caprice of the commanding officer—even the weather. Some embedded reporters who saw a lot of combat with their assigned units, and the others saw little or none at all. Journalists embedded with infantry units often spent long, cramped days on the road to Baghdad riding in virtually windowless Bradley fighting vehicles, exiting only to sleep and camp. One of the reporters who died during the push toward Baghdad, David Bloom of NBC, suffered from a fatal pulmonary embolism that may have been caused by sitting in a cramped Bradley.³³ During the initial push toward the capital, many military units told their embeds that they did not have time for the reporters to stop in the small villages along the road—either hostile or friendly—to gauge the reactions of ordinary Iraqi citizens to the war. Safety considerations necessitated that

³² Sylvester and Huffman (2005). *Reporting From the Front*. See e.g.: Schieffer, p. 20. "Vietnam was maybe the last and maybe the only war in American history where there was no censorship." Also: Cronkite, p. 16. "[T]he press has never since had the kind of freedom that it had in Vietnam..." "It was that kind of freedom and that lack of censorship that suffered...the old army command from Vietnam, many of them blamed the press and television for losing the war for them."

³³ Frederik Balfour. "David Bloom's Last Ride." *Business Week*. April 7, 2003. http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/apr2003/nf2003047_8783_db071.htm.

the journalists travel along with them, leaving precious little time to interview ordinary Iraqi citizens—and few translators were available if the time *was* there. What was always available was access to conversation with soldiers; and their points of view. George Wilson’s “dogsled” analogy made itself manifest as embeds got to know the soldiers and operations of their units intimately, but had only fleeting glimpses of the effect of the war past the muzzles of the unit’s guns.³⁴

Adding to the aspect of “luck of the draw” that defined embedding, the way in which the journalist was received by the unit—positively, negatively, or ambivalently—varied by unit assignment. Certain commanders were more open and less skeptical of embeds, while suspicion and distrust prevailed with others. For instance, William Branigin of *The Washington Post* said that he received unexpected support from unit commanders when he told them he intended to cover the mistaken shooting of a vanload of Iraqi civilians by U.S. soldiers at a security checkpoint.³⁵ On the other hand, Brett Lieberman of the Harrisburg (Pennsylvania) *Patriot-News*, despite being well liked by his unit, got into a shouting match with a Marine lieutenant colonel and the unit’s public affairs officer over a story in which he reported on some of the technical capabilities of the unit. Lieberman had run all of the information he planned to use in the story by the Marine battalion commanders he spoke to, but they had not gone up the chain of command to verify that the information did not violate any of the ground rules—such as explicitly giving away troop position or strength—laid out in Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld’s public affairs

³⁴ See note 7.

³⁵ Bill Katovsky and Timothy Carlson. *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. Guilford (Conn.): The Lyons Press, 2003. p. 233. “The military commanders all said from day one that they understood embedding was going to be for better or for worse.”

memo.³⁶ Liebermann was “disembedded”—commanded to leave his unit and return to the U.S.³⁷

As much as access depended on the attitudes of commanding officers toward the press, it also depended on the news organization with which the embed was affiliated. Fox News channel correspondent Rick Levanthal reported being very well received by the Second Battalion, 23rd Marines because of the perception that Fox’s coverage in the run-up to the war had been overwhelmingly pro-Bush administration, pro-war.³⁸ On the other side of the spectrum, Al-Jazeera reporter Amr El-Kakhy told of being purposely left out of briefings because of his affiliation with the station.³⁹

Part II also addresses how media “star power” affected access—both positively and negatively. Embed and *Nightline* (ABC) anchor Ted Koppel could easily break from his assigned unit to get a broader view of the conflict, because his distinguished career brought him name recognition that other journalists did not have.⁴⁰ Star power *and* a troop-friendly network affiliation, however, were not enough to stop the disembedding of former network talk show host and Fox News

³⁶ Rumsfeld (2003). “Public affairs guidance (PAG).” Sec. 4. “Ground Rules. “The following categories of information are not releasable...Specific number of aircraft...specific number of troops.”

³⁷ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 321. “The story ran in Saturday’s paper. Around Saturday morning about 6:00 a.m. when we got up, I found that I had an appointment at the Public Affairs Office...Later that day, they told me to get my gear and leave Echo Company.”

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 192. “[The troops] appreciated [Fox News Network’s] tone of coverage. Fox was supportive of the troops, supportive of the U.S. efforts in the war.”

³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 182. “I asked the duty officer why I wasn’t invited to that briefing...He returned and said, ‘I asked the colonel. He said, ‘You know, guys, [Al-Jazeera is] a station with a reputation.’”

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 98. “[Koppel] had more access to helicopters and vehicles to move around and see things. He could report on the grand scheme of things.”

special correspondent Geraldo Rivera, who was booted from his unit for drawing a rough map in the sand suggesting troop position during a live broadcast.⁴¹

Section two also addresses the technological limitations of embedding—or, rather, the unexpected limitations of having an arsenal of new reporting technology at one’s fingertips. For instance, the units occasionally observed “dark” periods, in which all electronic equipment had to be shut down. Deadlines, even for real-time television stories, fell victim to the security needs of the military unit. A few days into the invasion, all Thuraya brand satellite telephones were confiscated from reporters and others because Central Command had received intelligence that the satellite encryption codes for that brand of phone had been hacked. Additionally, journalists lost laptops, cameras, and satellite phones in combat and by accident.

Reporters’ stated penchant for allowing the troops to use their communication equipment to talk to loved ones at home also compromised unfettered access, and to some minds caused a conflict of interest and emotional investment, which is discussed in the third section of the paper. The third section looks at some of the more amorphous and subjective obstacles to access. Many embedded reporters openly admitted that they began to feel affection and kinship with the soldiers in their unit. Some would refer to the fighting squads as “we” instead of “they.”⁴² Few embeds, however, actually said that their emotional attachment compromised their

⁴¹ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 140. “[W]e looked up and this Humvee pulled up and Geraldo [Rivera] got out... We interviewed him and asked him about what he was doing and where he was going. He downplayed the fact that he was being kicked out.”

⁴² See e.g.: Julia R. Fox and Byunggho Park. “The ‘I’ of Embedded Reporting: An Analysis of CNN Coverage of the ‘Shock and Awe’ Campaign.” *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*. Vol. 50, no. 1. (2006) pp. 36-51. “Hypothesis 2 predicted that embedded journalists would use the inclusive pronoun “we” in its various forms...[the hypothesis] is supported by the comparison of references to the reporter and the troops.”

objectivity.⁴³ Many more said that the limited view of the war afforded by being “stuck” with their units was the major factor in producing unbalanced coverage.⁴⁴

The way that reporters’ coverage was affected by how editors and TV channels used and edited the raw filed material will also be discussed in Part III. Editors in the print format could make choices as to what parts of the story would run, and photo editors could decide not to run pictures if they were too graphic. U.S. TV audiences were still eager to see the effects of the war, which may have resulted in what some press scholars call the “sanitizing” of war. If all the viewers can see on the screen are flashes of light from infrared images of bombing raids, or explosions lighting the horizon behind a reporter’s head, they tend to think of aerial bombardment as safe, targeted, and tend to ignore the inevitable human cost.⁴⁵ I will also address the possibility of a “9/11 effect”—an unquantifiable but increased nationalistic sentiment stemming from outrage over the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. I argue, as do many communication theorists and professional journalists,

⁴³ Sylvester and Huffman (2005). *Reporting from the Front*. p. 112. “Regardless of what any embedded reporter says, it was impossible not to lose some of your objectivity. These were the men and women who were feeding you, protecting you, and befriending you.” Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 53. “It always amuses me when reporters say, ‘Oh, you know, I have no feelings about an issue,’ or ‘I’m totally objective.’ I don’t see how anybody can do it. That’s what editors are for—to make sure that your copy comes out objective.”

⁴⁴ See Note 9.

⁴⁵ See e.g.: Christopher Bollyn. “Mainstream Media’s Sanitized War Coverage Helps Mask Carnage.” AmericanFreePress.net. Apr. 12, 2004. http://www.americanfreepress.net/03_28_03/Mainstream_Media_s_Sanitized_/mainstream_media_s_s_anitized.html. “The “sanitized” view of the war presented by the U.S. media is dominated by long-distance photos of missile attacks and battlefield scenes reported by reporters who are traveling with U.S. and British soldiers....The Arab world sees pictures of bloodied bodies of young children. They watch scenes crowded with corpses, including gruesome images of dead American soldiers. Americans see almost none of that...”

that effects of 9/11 lingered both in the minds of embeds and on the editors and anchors who shaped their stories a year and a half after the event.⁴⁶

The fourth section concludes the paper with a recap of the various realities and mentalities that prevented individual embeds' wide-scope war coverage.

⁴⁶ See e.g.: Nancy Snow. *Information War: American Propaganda, Free Speech, and Opinion Control Since 9-11*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003. Also: "Media, War and Propaganda: Strategies of Information Management During the 2003 Iraq War." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*. Vol. 3, no. 1. (Mar. 2006) pp. 48-69; "The Times and Iraq." (News staff). *The New York Times*. May 26, 2004.

Chapter 2: Traditional and Historical Blocks to Access

Vietnam through Gulf War I: Lessons

Vietnam was the first time in American history in which reporters were subject to little or no official government censorship. In the first years of the war (1961-1965), regulations about journalists' presence and their news product were lax to nonexistent.⁴⁷ Formal censorship, such as the system of submission to official military censors of all outgoing news stories employed in World War II, was considered in 1965 because of heightening coverage of military operations.⁴⁸ The idea was eventually discarded. Reporters had only to abide by a list of "ground rules" aimed at preserving military security, but could otherwise operate as they chose.⁴⁹

In any case, restrictions put in place for the purposes of protecting American forces have historically met with little resistance from the press, and are unlikely to

⁴⁷ Phillip Knightley. *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Kosovo*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University press, 2002 (revised edition). "The mechanics of becoming accredited were straightforward. The correspondent applied to his nearest South Vietnamese embassy for an entry visa. It was usually granted. In Saigon, the correspondent reported to the U.S. authorities with a letter from his newspaper requesting accreditation and accepting responsibility for him. The correspondent was then issued an accreditation card...[and] signed an agreement to abide by a set of fifteen ground rules, dealing mainly with preserving military security, and was on his way."

⁴⁸ Daniel C. Hallin. *The Uncensored War: The Media and Vietnam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. p. 114. "More than half of television's coverage in these early years (1965-1967) was concerned with military operations."

⁴⁹ David L. Anderson and John Ernst. *The War That Never Ends: New Perspectives on the Vietnam War*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007. p. 276. "Although these ground rules changed slightly from time to time, restricted information generally fell into the following categories: 1. future plans, operations, or strikes; 2. rules of engagement; 3. amounts of ordnance or fuel... 4. exact numbers and types or identification of casualties suffered by friendly units; 5. during an operation, unit designations and troop movements...until officially released by [Military Advisory Command, Vietnam]; 6. intelligence unit activities; and 7. air operations against North Vietnam. Also: Joe Galloway. *The News Hour with Jim Lehrer*. "Reporting the Story." Apr. 20, 2000. "You had that press card, you agreed to a simple list of rules. That press card would take you anywhere. You could go anywhere and stay as long as you wanted to."

do so. Such commonsense restrictions include a ban on reporting specific troop movements, the state of supply lines and/or reinforcements, and unexecuted battle plans. The guidelines that embedded reporters were to review and sign before departing for the Middle East to cover operations in March 2003 very closely resembled those employed in Vietnam including an acknowledgement that embeds would refrain from reporting “[s]pecific number of troops...[s]pecific number of aircraft ... equipment ... ships ... [n]ames of military installations or specific geographical locations of military units ... [i]nformation regarding future operations [and]...force protection measures...rules of engagement...[i]nformation regarding intelligence collection activities” and more.⁵⁰ Every single embedded reporter signed off on these guidelines before taking a unit assignment. Rare indeed is the reporter on either side of a conflict who wants to take responsibility for jeopardizing missions by inadvertently or intentionally informing the enemy of classified plans.

In the case of Vietnam, the lack of formal censorship stemmed in part from the American government policy against acknowledging official U.S. participation in driving back the North Vietnamese.⁵¹ At the beginning of combat operations in 1961, the U.S. Army policy was one of “maximum information” to the press.⁵² Reporters had been in Vietnam since even before the Buddhist uprising of 1963 and were well established by the time unrest in the country leapt into American public

⁵⁰ Rumsfeld (2003). “Public Affairs Guidance (PAG).” Sec. 4.

⁵¹ Hallin (1986). *The Uncensored War*. p. 29. “[T]he Kennedy administration did not consider the home front entirely secure, and its public information policies were generally designed to keep American involvement in Vietnam out of the news.”

⁵² Army Regulation 360-5, 1961. “[t]he American public has a right to maximum information concerning the Army and its activities. Defense Department and Army policy require maximum disclosure of information except for that which would be of material assistance to potential enemies. The Army Public Affairs Program. www.asaie.army.mil/Public/IE/Toolbox/documents/r360_1.pdf.

consciousness after the Gulf of Tonkin incident in August 1964.⁵³ By the time censorship may have been considered, conflicting policy decisions had already eroded news organizations' trust in the military and the government. A February 1962 communiqué from the U.S Information Agency and Department of Defense, known as Cable 1006, said that press relations should be conducted with an eye to reinforcing the idea that the conflict was a purely South Vietnamese operation, with American help on the periphery.⁵⁴ U.S. policymakers, in fact, saw the war on broader terms than simply military—seeking to convey a sense of futility for the North Vietnamese cause to Communist centers in Peking and Moscow. Amid contradictory policy decisions aimed simultaneously at showing determination in the face of the North Vietnamese forces and keeping the conflict off the domestic policy agenda, MACV on unstable ground as to how to treat the press.⁵⁵ “The U.S. Government is prepared to join the Viet-Nam Government in a sharply increased joint effort to avoid a further deterioration in the situation in South Viet-Nam,” read the statement, which was declassified in 1976.⁵⁶

As historian Daniel C. Hallin notes, the fact of sending U.S. forces into combat took away some of the government's ability to control what was “news” and what was not. By the time it was released in 1962, Cable 1006 was moot: “In October 1961...there were only a handful of officials...whom journalists regarded as ‘authoritative.’ By the next spring the story could be covered from a very different

⁵³ Hallin (1986). *The Uncensored War*. p. 15.

⁵⁴ William M. Hammond. *Public Affairs: The Military and the Media 1962-1968*. Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1988. p. 15.

⁵⁵ Hallin (1986). *The Uncensored War*. p. 36.

⁵⁶ National Security Action Memorandum. November 22, 1961.

level and perspective—from the perspective of the Americans in the field who were fighting and administering [the political agenda].”⁵⁷

Judging by retrospectives written by veteran journalists it would appear that all reporters want to return to the unfettered access of the Vietnam conflict, while the government is working at all costs and sometimes at cross-purposes with the press to *avoid* another Vietnam—at least with regard to war reporting. “Vietnam was the most free press exercise in the history of this country,” former United Press International reporter Joe Galloway told PBS during a retrospective on reporting in Vietnam.⁵⁸ General William C. Westmoreland, who was commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam from 1964 to 1968, essentially substantiated this notion in a *Time* magazine interview in 1982. “Vietnam was the first war ever fought without any censorship,” Westmoreland said.⁵⁹

However, unfettered access was only a single factor in a complex brew that created the climate of mutual press-military distrust post-Vietnam. Maj. Gen. Winant Sidle, who held various public affairs positions in the Army from 1967 to 1975—and whose panel would famously investigate the role of the press in the war in Grenada eight years afterward—blamed “lazy” reporters in Vietnam in part for encouraging American sentiment to turn against the war. “There were too many reporters unwilling to check stories before filing...some believed [the Army] wouldn’t give them facts; some felt it was unnecessary to check.”⁶⁰ Certainly, a handful of reporters in Vietnam produced one-sided reports because they were afraid to go into combat.

⁵⁷ Hallin (1986). *The Uncensored War*. (introduction.)

⁵⁸ *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*. “Reporting the Story.” Apr. 20, 2000.

⁵⁹ Thomas Griffith. “Reagan’s TV Troubles.” *Time*. Apr. 5, 1982.

⁶⁰ Salisbury, Harrison E. *Vietnam Reconsidered: Lessons From a War*. New York: Harper & Row, 1984. p. 111. “The Role of Journalists in Vietnam: An Army General’s Perspective.”

“The MACV (accreditation) card would admit the correspondent to the daily briefing on the war’s progress given at the Joint United States Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO)...If he was prepared to believe JUSPAO, a correspondent could cover the war simply by attending the briefings each day.”⁶¹

On the other side of the coin, plenty of correspondents would attach themselves to an outgoing convoy and place themselves right in the middle of the action—and the danger.⁶² Former CBS Washington producer William Small said, “A case can be made, and certainly should be examined, that [seeing the effects of fighting in near-real time] was cardinal to the disillusionment of Americans with this war.”⁶³

As the conflict in Vietnam went on, editors became hungrier for combat footage, former Independent Television News (ITN) reporter Richard Lindley said. “Before they (the editors) were satisfied with a corpse...then they had to have people dying in action.”⁶⁴ Lists of soldiers missing and killed in action would appear on the television screen every night, and the evening news was peppered with combat footage spliced into stand-up reels filmed in Saigon. And the turnaround for footage was quick; noncombatant U.S. citizens on the other side of the world could see what was going on with reasonable contemporaneity. CBS television reporter Bob Schieffer, who covered Vietnam early in his career, said if the reports were especially time-sensitive, reporters asked their news networks to charter a jet and have the film

⁶¹ Knightley (2002 rev. ed.). *The First Casualty*. p. 403.

⁶² Sylvester and Huffman (2005). *Reporting From The Front*. p. 16. “[In Vietnam] you just heard of a group that was going out on patrol and you hitched along with them. You got as far as they got, and then when they started hacking their way through the jungle, you hitched along with them.”

⁶³ Knightley (2002 rev. ed.). *The First Casualty*. p. 411.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p. 410.

sent a couple of hours away to Hong Kong or Tokyo, where the footage would be assembled and sent by satellite to New York.⁶⁵ “In the military it became part of this lore that it was the fault of the press that the war turned badly. It wasn’t. The American people lost faith and turned on the war because of the casualties.”⁶⁶

Hallin argues, in contrast, that it was not “lazy journalism,” or the bloody consequences of war appearing on television screens, that turned the U.S. public off to the war effort.⁶⁷ It was the perception of the soldiers on the ground that the war effort itself was turning sour, a sentiment that television reporters would have picked up on by being in such close proximity to the troops.⁶⁸ Speculating on strategy in the wake of the 1968 Tet Offensive, Walter Cronkite famously pronounced the operations in Vietnam “unwinnable.”⁶⁹ That comment won him, CBS, and news organizations in general no paltry number of detractors in the military—but television viewers largely came to agree with him.

The unprecedented ramifications of war on TV more deeply and completely polarized the military and the media. “[T]he Pentagon started blaming the press for standing in the way of victory, while the press accused the Pentagon of lying about the war,” according to an oral history of the embedding program in Iraq.⁷⁰ A 1995 study, co-authored by Frank Aukofer of the Milwaukee *Journal-Sentinel* and retired Navy Vice Admiral William P. Lawrence, noted that 64 percent of the military

⁶⁵ Sylvester and Huffman (2005). *Reporting from the Front*. p. 21.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p. 23

⁶⁷ Hallin (1986). *The Uncensored War*. pp. 129-130. “Of 167 film reports and voice-over stories...before the (1968) Tet Offensive, only 16 had more than one video shot of the dead or wounded.”

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p. 134. “[T]elevision reported the war from [soldiers’] point of view, and as long as they remained supportive of it, there would be the strong tendency for television to be so as well.”

⁶⁹ “Report From Vietnam: Who, What, When, Where, Why?” CBS News. February 27, 1968.

⁷⁰ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. xii.

officers surveyed in the opinion poll believe strongly or somewhat strongly that news coverage of events in Vietnam harmed the war effort. According to Aukofer and Lawrence, 70 percent of press representatives entirely disagreed with that characterization.⁷¹

With Vietnam, the rift of mistrust between the Pentagon and the press was passed to the next generation of reporters and military personnel. Later military campaigns launched by the U.S. Department of Defense featured harsh restrictions on war coverage. The U.S. invasion of the small island nation of Grenada, on October 25, 1983, saw the introduction of the Department of Defense News Media Pool. The group of journalists invited by the Defense Department to form the “pool,” however, was not allowed onshore during the initial invasion, was detained on the nearby island of Barbados, and was prevented from reporting live from Grenada itself until nearly three days after offensive operations began.

On October 27, two days after the initial invasion, a small contingent of only 15 or so reporters from the entire pool—which totaled about 600—were able to take a guided tour of the island. But the Defense Department “grounded the media plane so reporters couldn't file their stories until after [President Ronald] Reagan gave a speech on the invasion.”⁷² On Oct. 30, reporters finally enjoyed unlimited access to Grenada but had to resort to footage and eyewitness accounts from military sources.

⁷¹ Frank Aukofer and Vice Adm. William Lawrence. “America’s Team, The Odd Couple: A Report on the Relationship Between the Media and the Military.” The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center (Vanderbilt University), 1995.

<http://www.freedomforum.org/publications/first/mediaandthemilitary/amicasteamfull.pdf>. Although similar themes of polarization and patriotism within the American viewership again came up during the conflict in Iraq, they will not be addressed in this paper.

⁷² “Blame Grenada! American invasion of tiny Caribbean island changed everything for press.” (2001).

The press' outcry over this prompted then-Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger to issue the "Principles of Information":

"It is the policy of the Department of Defense to make available timely and accurate information so that ... members representing the press, radio, and television may assess and understand the facts about national security and defense strategy. Requests for information from organizations and private citizens will be answered responsibly and as rapidly as possible."⁷³

Press representatives decided this was too vague—and an excuse to continue to withhold information. They drew up their own "Statement of Principles," released in early 1984, demanding that the Defense Department reexamine media access during combat operations. Initial response seemed promising; then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. John Vessey picked by-then-retired U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Winant Sidle to head up a committee, the Military-Media Relations Panel (Sidle Panel), composed of major press representatives and public affairs officers from the Defense Department. From the Sidle Panel's recommendations came the formalization of the pool system that would be used in the next two major U.S. military operations—in Panama in 1989, and again in Iraq in 1991 during the first Persian Gulf War.

Neither engagement worked to the satisfaction of the media, though the Sidle Panel report had recommended both access to the media pool and a reliance on media agreement to a predetermined set of "ground rules" rather than having each story pass through a censorship committee outright. Strategic Studies Institute scholar Pascale Combelles-Siegel reported that, during operations in Panama, the military established a routine by which pool journalists could file three 600-word dispatches within the

⁷³ Caspar W. Weinberger. "Principles of Information." Dec. 1, 1983. (U.S. Department of Defense).

first two hours of the pool's arrival in the combat zone. Pool reporters soon complained that their news organizations had taken on considerable expense to send them, only to be faced with limited dispatches and long periods of non-newsworthy coverage because the reporters could not observe action directly.⁷⁴

The first war in the Persian Gulf, 1991's Operation Desert Shield, saw a sort of proto-embedding development in the pool system. Pools would move with troop units. The Persian Gulf War was not an operation...in which reporters could travel the front in jeeps, or like Vietnam where reporters could take a helicopter to specific points of action, then-Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Pete Williams wrote in a March 1991 *Washington Post* editorial. "American ground units moved quickly – some of them by air. To cover the conflict, reporters had to be part of a unit, able to move with it."⁷⁵

The problem with this was that pools usually consisted of one representative from each of the news media—i.e.: one photographer, one print reporter, one television reporter, and one radio reporter. About 1,600 reporters showed up for the pools, but only 400 were assigned to pools with units. The rest had to stay at the base in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, waiting for reports from the 400 "embedded" pool members. "For the 1200 journalists who were not at the fighting...the press pools were an unneeded restriction, hampering the coverage of the war," according to one scholar.⁷⁶ Even Vice President Richard Cheney, who served as Secretary of Defense

⁷⁴ Pascale Combelles-Siegel. *The Troubled Path to the Pentagon's Rules on Media Access to the Battlefield: Grenada to Today*. Strategic Studies Institute (publisher). 1996.

<http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/PUB325.pdf>

⁷⁵ Pete Williams. "View From the Pentagon: Let's Face It, This Was the Best War Coverage We've Ever Had." *The Washington Post*. Mar. 19, 1991. p. D1.

⁷⁶ David Benjamin. "Censorship in the Gulf." (self-published).
<http://web1.duc.auburn.edu/~benjadp/gulf/gulf.html>.

during the first Gulf War, said that the 1991 conflict was the best-covered war in history, but acknowledged some of its failings in press relations. “They (the press corps) don’t like this at all. They fundamentally disagree because they felt managed and controlled ... I also think it’s fair to say it’s a legitimate criticism for them to make. Access was very uneven.”⁷⁷

The Sidle Panel’s “ground rules” formulation would remain a component of Defense Department policy up to and including the embedding program used during Operation Iraqi Freedom. But the pool system failed miserably in the eyes of reporters. Both Operations Just Cause in Panama, and Desert Shield in Iraq, essentially contravened the recommendations of the Sidle Panel report, so journalists cried foul once more. Journalists gathered to revise the “Statement of Principles,” releasing them in August 1992—this time with a condemnation of the pool system:

“Press pools are not to serve as the standard means of covering U.S. military operations. Pools may sometimes provide the only feasible means of early access to a military operation. Pools should be as large as possible and disbanded at the earliest opportunity (within 24 to 36 hours when possible). The arrival of early access pools will not cancel the principle of independent coverage for journalists already in the area.”⁷⁸

The press also made a far more nebulous but still persuasive argument for access in the “Principles.”⁷⁹ Journalists argued that their tradition of accompanying soldiers on the battlefield was a key pillar of American democracy because it serves

⁷⁷ “Pentagon Considers ‘Embedding’ Journalists in Fighting Units.” Reporters’ Committee for Freedom of the Press. Oct. 2001. <http://www.rcfp.org/news/2001/1001ppools.html>.

⁷⁸ “Principles that should govern future arrangements for news coverage from the battlefield of the United States military in combat.”

⁷⁹ Ibid. “Journalists will be provided access to all major military units. Special operations restrictions may limit access in some cases.”

the people's right to know.⁸⁰ More importantly, however, the Principles reiterated what journalists had been trying to get across since the fallout from Vietnam: the pool system and the various ways in which the government strove to make it work from 1975 into the early twenty-first century, constituted a block to press access to combat.

Moving Toward a New Policy

By the time of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the U.S., the perception of the press by the military, and vice versa, were established and accepted by both parties. A law scholar says, “The stereotypes are well-entrenched: a cavalier media chasing a scoop regardless of consequences and a short-sighted military sacrificing constitutional rights for strategic ends. As a result, embedding appears to put two of our most important priorities—protecting free speech and preserving national security—into inevitable conflict.”⁸¹ Zeide notes that this is a vast oversimplification, but it is fair to say that the Defense Department was back at the drawing board regarding press relations.

Shortly after 9/11, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld put his assistant secretary for public affairs, Victoria Clarke, in charge of revising the Pentagon’s media relations policies in a time of heightened security and national alarm.⁸² Soon after the 9/11 attacks, Clarke and Rumsfeld began to meet with the Washington

⁸⁰ Combelles-Siegel (1996). *The Troubled Path to the Pentagon's Rules on Media Access to the Battlefield: Grenada to Today*.

⁸¹ Elana J. Zeide. “Note: In Bed With the Military: First Amendment Implications of Embedded Journalism.” *New York University Law Review*. Vol. 80, no. 1309. (October 2005.)

⁸² Andrew Cortell, Robert Eisigner, and Scott Althaus. “Why Embed? Explaining the Bush Administration’s Decision to Embed Reporters in the 2003 Invasion of Iraq.” *American Behavioral Scientist*. (forthcoming, 2009)

bureau chiefs of various news organizations to discuss strategy for battlefield news coverage during any future U.S. military operations. “We are in a whole new world here,” Clarke said at a September 28, 2001 meeting with news bureau chiefs before the start of Operation Enduring Freedom, the U.S. campaign in Afghanistan. “We’re trying to figure out the rules of the road. We are trying to figure out how to work with you, how to make sure you get what you need ... while protecting the national security and the safety of the men and women in uniform.”⁸³

However, full battlefield access was once again denied to reporters during operations in Afghanistan. The country was a dangerous place for reporters—American or otherwise—in 2001 and 2002. For instance, four Spanish and Italian reporters were gunned down on the road from Jalalabad to Kabul on Nov. 19, 2001.⁸⁴ The safety situation was one of the reasons that the Pentagon gave for denying reporters access to certain areas of combat. The Defense Department also told reporters that most of the operations in the country were being carried out by Special Forces troops, and that having a reporter tag along would disrupt operational security and eliminate the element of surprise. But the government was actively stalling attempts by reporters to reach certain areas and cover certain operations in the country, as well. On Dec. 5, 2001, reporters were sequestered in a warehouse after a friendly-fire bombing incident that killed five U.S. soldiers and wounded 19, so they could not have access to survivors or attending medics.⁸⁵

⁸³ “Pentagon Considers ‘Embedding’ Journalists in Fighting Units.”

⁸⁴ “Assignment: Afghanistan” *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*. Online NewsHour special. Nov. 20, 2001. http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/july-dec01/reporting_11-20.html.

⁸⁵ Neil Hickey. “Access Denied: The Pentagon’s War Reporting Rules are the Toughest Ever.” *Columbia Journalism Review*. January/February 2002. <http://cjrarchives.org/issues/2002/1/afghan-hickey.asp>.

Press access to operations in Afghanistan also faced legal obstacles. *Hustler* publisher Larry Flynt petitioned Victoria Clarke, Donald Rumsfeld's assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, for permission to send a reporter to accompany one or more specific units in Afghanistan. Clarke rejected Flynt's request for the purposes of security, saying that the majority of troops in the country were small special operations units whose objectives may be compromised by the presence of a reporter.⁸⁶ Flynt brought suit in November 2001, calling into question the constitutionality of the Department of Defense's refusal.⁸⁷ In his complaint, Flynt cited a Defense Department directive stipulating that "open and independent reporting be the principal means of coverage of U.S. military operations."⁸⁸

Flynt's claim was dismissed by a district court, after which he appealed the case. The U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia upheld the lower court's ruling on constitutional grounds, saying that the First Amendment's protection of free speech did not translate into a guarantee of battlefield access for the sake of presenting an accurate story to readers.⁸⁹ An appeal to the Supreme Court was denied. Even Flynt's legal team admitted there was very little standing case history to support the idea of a constitutional right to battlefield access.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ *Flynt v. Rumsfeld*, 359 U.S. App. D.C. 402 (2002). "Clarke explained that 'the highly dangerous and unique nature of their work makes it very difficult to embed media' with ground troops, but also stated that there had been "extensive" media access to other aspects of military operations."

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Department of Defense Dir. 5122.5. Encl. 3. (Sept. 2000)

⁸⁹ *Flynt v. Rumsfeld*. "[T]his Court has held that 'freedom of speech [and] of the press do not create any per se right of access to government ... activities simply because such access might lead to more thorough or better reporting.' *JB Pictures, Inc. v. Dep't of Defense*, [318 U.S. App. D.C. 162, 86 F.3d 236, 238 \(D.C. Cir. 1996\)](#)."

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* "Appellants admit they face a 'dearth of case law concerning press access to battles.'" Flynt's legal team attempted to use the 1980 Supreme Court decision in *Richmond Newspapers Inc v. Virginia* (448 U.S. 555), that argued a constitutional right to access to prisons, as a parallel to battlefield access, but unsuccessfully.

Legal scholar David A. Anderson has argued what is possibly a more legally viable alternative to pleading the constitutionality of journalist access to war zones.⁹¹ Anderson's reasoning rests on legal precedent in the case of a hypothetical claim by the press of a right to receive information. In the Supreme Court's 1982 decision in *Board of Education v. Pico*, Justice William J. Brennan wrote that "the right to receive ideas is a necessary predicate to the recipient's meaningful exercise of his own rights of speech, press, and political freedom."⁹² A legal claim, Anderson argues, could rest on the idea that the non-press public has the right to receive information—barring that which would cause immediate harm—from the press on American warfare. In 1971, Justice Hugo L. Black made it clear information on U.S. conduct of foreign wars was a constitutionally protected right: "[P]aramount among the responsibilities of a free press is the duty to prevent any part of the government from deceiving the people and sending them off to distant lands to die of foreign fevers and foreign shot and shell."⁹³

The right of access to combat in order to provide information has received no judicial protection per *Flynt v. Rumsfeld*, but Anderson suggests that it may be in the government's best interest to grant reporters access to the battlefield when possible. The Pentagon agreed—or at least it did prior to 9/11. Department of Defense Directive 5122.5, issued in September 2000, recommends media access to all major military units and that journalists should be permitted to ride on military vehicles and

⁹¹ David A. Anderson. "Freedom of the Press in Wartime." *University of Colorado Law Review*. Vol. 77, no. 49. (Winter 2006)

⁹² 457 U.S. 853 (1982)

⁹³ *New York Times v. United States*, 403 U.S. 713 (1971)

with convoys when possible.⁹⁴ In Flynt’s case, it hardly mattered that his appeals were denied, however: David Buchbinder, a reporter for *Hustler*, had already deployed to Bagram Air Force Base in Afghanistan. Several stories Buchbinder filed at *Hustler* and other publications indicated that he had accompanied troops on at least one mission to look for Al Qaeda operatives.⁹⁵ As evidenced in *Flynt*, the sluggishness of the judicial process could have been one of many factors that made the Defense Department look to head off further questions of battlefield access at the pass, as it were, by instituting the embedding program in full force in 2003.

Embedding

Because journalists had once again had their expectations for reasonably open battlefield access in Afghanistan defeated, the beginning of the military-press partnership called “embedding” began in a climate of suspicion, wrote *Washington Post* correspondent Peter Baker.⁹⁶ The idea of embedding had its roots in conversations that took place before Afghanistan, but the nature of the conflict in that country turned out to be incompatible with the fledgling plan. “In Afghanistan, for weeks all we had were very small numbers of Special Forces on the ground that infiltrated into very arduous conditions...which was not conducive to being able to

⁹⁴ Department of Defense Directive 5122.5. Encl. 3.

⁹⁵ *Flynt v. Rumsfeld*. “Once in Afghanistan, Buchbinder placed himself on a list of reporters awaiting access to ground units. Since his arrival in Afghanistan, Buchbinder has filed several stories, at least one of which shows he has accompanied troops on a search for al Qaeda operatives.”

⁹⁶ Baker (2003). “Inside View.”

put any significant number of reporters on the ground,” said Bryan Whitman, then the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs.⁹⁷

An Iraq incursion, the Defense Department reasoned, would be a more “traditional” war—much more like World War II than Vietnam or Afghanistan, with established fronts and overt troop incursions rather than scattered units or secretive special-ops missions. The planned structure of the war lent itself to the structure of embedding. If another Afghanistan-like conflict faced the U.S. military in the future, Whitman said it would once again be hard to duplicate the access opportunities granted to reporters in Operation Iraqi Freedom.⁹⁸

Having very little “friendly” press coverage during campaigns in Afghanistan, according to Rumsfeld, caused an unintended consequence—at least in the battle for “hearts and minds” in the Afghan countryside. As Rumsfeld said at one of the meetings with bureau chiefs—in October 2002:

“In the case of ... Afghanistan there was a great degree of skill on the part of the Taliban and Al Qaeda in news management and they were able to co-locate their various military activities in close proximity to hospitals and nursing homes and schools and sympathy-engendering locations. To the extent they couldn’t and some building was bombed, they would then take in some cases, actually physically take people from a hospital and take them over to a place that was bombed and pretend it was a clinic of some kind. It’s helpful to the extent you have people who are journalists and are accurate and professional with you that can see those things on the ground when they happen.”⁹⁹

A major concern of Pentagon officials after Gulf War I had been Saddam Hussein’s use of Iraqi media to turn the tide of Iraqi sentiment against the American

⁹⁷ Sylvester and Huffman (2005). *Reporting From the Front*. p. 44.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 43.

⁹⁹ News transcript, ASD PA Clarke Meeting with Bureau Chiefs. October 30, 2002. http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2002/t11012002_t1030sd.html.

“invaders” by broadcasting graphic pictures of the destruction caused by U.S. bombing raids.¹⁰⁰ Rumsfeld wanted an American perspective on combat operations to counter negative publicity by the Iraqis.

“Secretary Rumsfeld understood that if the American-led coalition failed to leverage the media in [Operation Iraqi Freedom], the enemy might win the information battle by using the media to their advantage,” wrote Col. Glenn T. Starnes in a 2004 Center for Strategic Leadership paper on the embedding program.

¹⁰¹ Rumsfeld decided that, to the extent that it could be done, media would be as close to ground operations as possible in Iraq—both to satisfy media representatives and as a preventive measure with regard to negative enemy-sponsored propaganda.¹⁰² The Department of Defense, and Rumsfeld in particular, theorized that the war effort would benefit in aggregate from the presence of reporters, even if some of the stories they reported painted American troops in an unflattering light. “We need to tell the factual story—good and bad—before others seed the media with disinformation and distortion,” Rumsfeld wrote in a February 10, 2003 Public Affairs Guidance (PAG) memo (discussed below and included as Appendix I to this paper).

Bryan Whitman said the Defense Department began planning the embedding program in late summer or early fall, 2002.¹⁰³ Suggestions from the meetings with the

¹⁰⁰ Col. Glenn T. Starnes. “Leveraging the Media.” Center for Strategic Leadership (U.S. Army War College) Strategy Research Paper. Vol. S04-06. p. 4. (July 2004.) “In 1991 Saddam Hussein controlled the media in Baghdad, using it as a propaganda tool to show the death and destruction caused by the coalition bombing.”

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p. 4.

¹⁰² Ibid. p. 2. “In consultation with... (ASD PA) Clarke, Secretary Rumsfeld chose to implement the Embedded Media Program because he understood that the media coverage of the war would ‘shape public perception of the National Security Environment.’ The technology used by the media to report instantaneously from distant locations, along with the rise of non-American news agencies... would overpower military public relations efforts.”

¹⁰³ Sylvester and Huffman (2005). *Reporting from the Front*. p. 42.

bureau chiefs began to shape the program; Secretary Rumsfeld himself was often present at these meetings to give briefings to members of the press on his goals and objectives.

In late 2002 and early 2003, as an invasion of Iraq was more and more inevitable, Rumsfeld drafted a memorandum to the public affairs officers who would be traveling with the fighting forces during an invasion. It was titled “Public Affairs Guidance (PAG) on Embedding Media During Possible Future Operations/Deployments in the U.S. Central Commands Area of Responsibility (AOR),” and officially released on Feb. 10, 2003. It was meant to be the official set of guidelines for military public affairs officers with regard to embedded reporters.¹⁰⁴

A 2003 article by Andrew Bushell and Brent Cunningham challenged Rumsfeld’s PAG memo, predicting that the promised access and advantages to embedding would fall just as flat as former promises made to the media by military and Defense Department personnel.¹⁰⁵ “The published article [by Cunningham and Bushell] indicated that our media embed program was just a front—that we would never grant the level of access that we said we would give,” said Maj. Tim Blair, who served with the Defense Department’s Media Operations division.¹⁰⁶

The policy promises were an improvement over the situation in Afghanistan, Bushell and Cunningham wrote:

“For instance, in Afghanistan reporters were not allowed to identify soldiers by name and hometown; in Iraq they will be allowed to do so with the soldiers' consent. Also, the new ground rules state that the reporters' safety is not reason

¹⁰⁴ Rumsfeld (2003). “Public Affairs Guidance (PAG).”

¹⁰⁵ Brent Cunningham and Andrew Bushell. “Being There.” *Columbia Journalism Review*. Apr./May 2003. <http://cjrarchives.org/issues/2003/2/pentagon-bushell.asp>.

¹⁰⁶ Sylvester and Huffman (2005). *Reporting From the Front*. p. 49

to exclude them from an operation, and that the standard for release of information is Why Not Release?, rather than Why Release?

However, they argued:

“The devil ... is in the details. The leaked document ... is intended as a guide for public affairs officers. Specific ground rules for each unit, according to Major Tim Blair, the military's media contact on embedding, will be established when reporters get to their units. ‘And those ground rules will change from mission to mission and location to location,’ he says. The military's guiding principle on embedding is ‘security at the source,’ which essentially means that individual unit commanders will have considerable say over what reporters can and cannot do.”¹⁰⁷

It stands to reason that after decades of mistrust, the policy goals contained in the PAG memo may have seemed to writers like Cunningham and Bushell too expansive—even permissive—to be true. The memo promised, among other things:

- “Media will have long-term, minimally restrictive access to U.S. air, ground, and naval forces.”
- “Media will be given access to operational combat missions, including mission preparation and debriefing, whenever possible.”
- “To the extent possible, space on military transportation will be made available for media equipment necessary to cover a particular operation.”
- “No communications equipment for use by media in the conduct of their duties will be specifically prohibited.”

If the document was to be taken literally, operations in Iraq in 2003 would be different from Panama and Grenada in that access would be long-term and with few restrictions. It would differ from the first Gulf War in that reporters would not mostly

¹⁰⁷ Rumsfeld (2003). “Public Affairs Guidance (PAG).”

be sequestered at central command, but participate in “operational combat missions.” And reporters would not be forced to find their own transportation into the combat zone, as in the first weeks of operations in Afghanistan, but would be provided with military transport sanctioned for both them and their gear.

But veteran war reporters say that the gap between what the civilians at the Pentagon envision and what goes on in the field under military command can be large.¹⁰⁸ Bushell and Cunningham also took exception to Rumsfeld’s statements about using the media as leverage in the PAG memo. Among other things, Rumsfeld wrote, “Media coverage of any future operation will, to a large extent, shape public perception of the national security environment now and in the years ahead. This holds true for the U.S. public; the public in allied countries whose opinion can affect the durability of our coalition; and publics in countries where we conduct operations.”¹⁰⁹

Members of the military believed that stating their blunt intention to use the media as a promotional device would be unpopular with the press itself. Just before operations began in Iraq, Lt. Col. Margaret H. Belknap, of the U.S. Military Academy, cautioned military personnel about media distrust in an article in the school’s quarterly journal, *Parameters*.

The notion of “using” the media understandably—if not invariably—will cause serious concerns for skeptical and independent reporters and editors. The intent may not be to dupe anyone, however. There is certainly nothing sinister implied in suggesting that the military use the media as a conduit to accurately and honestly convey information to the American people about the operations

¹⁰⁸ Cunningham and Bushell (2003). “Being There.”

¹⁰⁹ Rumsfeld (2003). “Public Affairs Guidance (PAG).” Sec. 1.

in which their military is engaged.”¹¹⁰

As the embedding program was conceived, news organizations or freelance reporters would apply for embedding “slots,” which would be doled out in proportion to the size of the news outlet. Those journalists given an embedding slot would function as part of their assigned unit—eating, sleeping, sharing space, and traveling with the soldiers. They would be protected by the unit, but also exposed to the same dangers. The PAG memo stipulated that transportation to combat operations should, if at all possible, be allowed to any embed requesting it, that Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical (with the fitting acronym “NBC”) gear would be provided free of charge to embeds. Notably, it said news representatives could be “disembedded” for any reason at any time. It also included the following points:

- “Media are not authorized use of their own vehicles while traveling in an embedded status.”
- “[U]nit commanders may impose temporary restrictions on electronic transmissions for operational security reasons. Media will seek approval to use electronic devices in a combat/hostile environment.”

Before the invasion in 2003, former CNN anchor Bernard Shaw saw a problem with being beholden to the military as a reporter: “The idea of journalists allowing themselves to be taken under the wing of the United States military to me is very dangerous. I think journalists who agree to go with combat units effectively become hostages of the military.”¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Lt. Col. Margaret H. Belknap. “The CNN Effect: Strategic Enabler or Operational Risk?” *Parameters*. p.110.

¹¹¹ Cunningham and Bushell (2003). “Being There.”

Rumsfeld, in the PAG memo, also strove to demonstrate to the press that proximity to troops was not intended to be a proxy for censorship. “These ground rules recognize the right of the media to cover military operations and are in no way intended to prevent release of derogatory, embarrassing, negative, or uncomplimentary information.”¹¹² It was a recognition, at least on paper, that the military would have to cede some control over content for a greater scope of coverage. Torie Clarke’s Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs essentially said the same: “[T]here will be no specific rule to govern such things as civilian deaths or friendly fire incidents. Once again, then, it seems the decision is up to the unit commander.”¹¹³

Part of what Secretary Rumsfeld hoped for—a reporter-soldier bond that would make embeds think hard about printing negative information about the troops—came to pass. United Press International reporter Pamela Hess made a prescient comment on the issue to TomPaine.com writer Michael Ryan: “Reporters love troops. Put us with these eighteen-year-old kids and we just turn to jelly.” It was a rather candid and possibly unprofessional sound bite, but nonetheless true, Ryan wrote in his response on TomPaine.com:

“She's right, of course; I've committed the same professional sin myself, more than once. No human with an ounce of emotion can watch young kids under fire and not respect them, fear for them, feel for them ...The [Bush] Administration understands this all too well.”¹¹⁴

¹¹² Rumsfeld. “Public Affairs Guidance (PAG).” Sec. 4. 2003.

¹¹³ Cunningham and Bushell (2003). “Being There.”

¹¹⁴ Jeanne Carstensen. “‘Embed’ or ‘In Bed’?” War Blog, SFGate.com (*San Francisco Chronicle* online). Mar. 25, 2003. <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/gate/archive/2003/03/25/blog.DTL>.

However, Bushell and Cunningham’s concern about the role of the unit commander in deciding what would be released--and even how to treat the journalists who feel compelled to report negatively about the U.S. troops as well as positively—played a *much* larger role in limiting comprehensive coverage by individual embeds than emotional attachment to the troops ever did. The unit commanders were the officials who decided both that Brett Lieberman should be disembedded from his unit,¹¹⁵ and that William Branigin should be lauded for his “fair” coverage of a civilian shooting.¹¹⁶ Differing attitudes and decisions by commanding officers only comprised one of the factors that limited embedded reportorial scope during the first months of the Iraq War. As later sections of the paper will show, operational limitations like filing embargoes and lack of mobility outside the unit narrowed the view of embedded reporters. Post-9/11 nationalism and a lack of control over editorial decisions also served to prevent the individual embedded reporter from transmitting a complete and balanced view of the war effort to news consumers.

¹¹⁵ See note 37.

¹¹⁶ See note 35.

Chapter 3: New Restrictions, New Considerations

Luck of the Draw

The embedding program caused certain unforeseen blocks to the individual embedded reporter's access to combat operations. Certainly the embedding agreement between the military and journalists that prevented embeds from seeing more than a small slice of the war during their assignment.

One of the first stipulations in Rumsfeld's February 2003 memo was that "media will be embedded with unit personnel at air and ground forces bases and afloat to ensure a full understanding of all operations."¹¹⁷ This "full understanding," as the Defense Department saw it, was not to come from the individual reporters in each of these air, land, and sea assignments, but from the aggregate of reports by embeds. Retrospectives on the embedding program by journalists also acknowledged this point.¹¹⁸ Nicholas Kulish, who was embedded for *The Wall Street Journal* with a Marine Expeditionary Force light helicopter attack squadron, said the *Journal* wove together coverage by embeds, from Pentagon briefing centers in Qatar and Washington and from non-embedded reporters.¹¹⁹

For the individual embed, however, the subject and quality of reporting "from the front lines" often depended on how close to the front lines his or her unit was. Part

¹¹⁷ Rumsfeld (2003). "Public Affairs Guidance (PAG)."

¹¹⁸ "Lens Crafters." *The News Media & The Law*. Vol. 28, no. 2. (2004). p. 21. "'Nobody ever suggested that *the* story of the war would only be told through [the embeds'] inherently limited perspectives,' says Katherine Skiba, Washington, D.C., correspondent for the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*."

¹¹⁹ Nicholas Kulish. "Embed Cred: How close is too close for embedded reporters?" *Washington Monthly*. Dec. 1, 2003.

of what made the story of Chris Ayres, a London *Times* reporter embedded with the Second Battalion, 11th Marine artillery unit, was that he did end up seeing frontline action, including incoming fire, and was deafened by the huge tank-mounted howitzer guns that fired at times for more than six straight hours. While his colleague, Janine di Giovanni, was writing that reporters were “pulling out their hair with boredom” in Iraq’s mostly Kurdish North, Ayres’ unit was seeing almost constant “contact”—the Marines’ term for hostile engagement with the Iraqi military.¹²⁰

Though he did not necessarily think himself so, Ayres was what other embeds would have called “lucky” because of his proximity to the action. On the road to Baghdad from the South, Ayres’ Marine unit convoy was confronted by a group of modified Iraqi trucks with machine guns on top. The trucks did not even get within shooting range before the howitzer cannon rounds turned them into charred rubble, Ayres reported. Apparently, the Iraqi fighting unit had called for backup, though—an entire company of tanks. Having only gotten as far as Al-Diwaniyah, more than 20 kilometers south of Baghdad, Ayres elected to end his embedding two days after a squadron of American F-15 jets destroyed the oncoming tanks less than a half hour before they would have been engaged in a full-on battle with the 11th Marines, Ayres’ unit.¹²¹

CBS Evening News correspondent Jim Axelrod found himself in a position similar to Ayres’—his Army Third Infantry unit was the first to arrive at Saddam Hussein International Airport (later renamed Baghdad International) on Apr. 4, and the first to arrive in the city of Baghdad itself during the infantry’s so-called “Thunder

¹²⁰ Chris Ayres. *War Reporting for Cowards*. New York: Grove Press, 2005. p. 239.

¹²¹ *Ibid.* pp. 238-251.

Runs” into the capital:¹²² “What happened to me and my combat photographer Mario de Carvalho, was as much about dumb luck as anything else. We so happened to be assigned to a brigade...that was first across the berms and was the tip of the spear.”¹²³

Some of the print reporters felt that coverage may have suffered because of the Pentagon policy on single embedding slots. Television reporters and camera operators were always embedded as a pair, but print reporters were often embedded individually, without an accompanying photographer from their news organization. A few reporters felt that news agencies’ being forced to send one without the other was a mistake. John Koopman, a former Marine and writer for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, said: “[The Pentagon] did a few things that were not exactly conducive to the media. For example, they assigned single slots as embedding assignments, but a newspaper needs to have a reporter-photographer team working together.”¹²⁴

As a result, some individual writers teamed up with photographers in nearby units and brokered deals to send pictures and copy jointly to both reporters’ agencies. *Washington Times* photographer Joe Eddins, embedded with the Marine Expeditionary Force Forward Services Support Group, collaborated with another reporter who was traveling with another Marine combat support unit in the area. “We were then at Camp Viper, southeast of Nasiriyah. I would then hook up with Combat Service Support Group Eleven, where a reporter named John Bebow from the *Detroit News* and I had struck a deal with our foreign news desks. Because he did not have a

¹²² Vernon Loeb. “Thunder Run: Revisiting the Battle for Baghdad.” *The Washington Post*. Oct. 13, 2003.

¹²³ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 23.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 121.

photographer there, and I did not have a writer, we were going to trade pictures for stories, which made both of our desks very happy.”¹²⁵

True to the promise of the PAG memo, there were reporters embedded with nearly every military unit deployed in the region. The Defense Department provided for a total of 920 embed slots at the outset of the program. Twenty percent of the slots were reserved for international news organizations, while 80 percent would go to U.S. domestic news media (including 10 percent to local and regional outlets).¹²⁶ News organizations submitted around 775 names, but some of these included reporter-camera operator pairs who filled only one “slot.”¹²⁷ In total, 628 of the final slots were taken.¹²⁸ U.S. national media (such as CBS or NBC) took the most slots, with 212, while sub-national/regional media (i.e.: *The Washington Post*, the *Chicago Tribune*) took 176. International news sources (Reuters, Agence France-Presse) filled 153 slots, and foreign non-international media outlets (Al-Jazeera, Philippines TV) had 87. Twenty-seven individual news organizations had more than four embedded reporters in the field, with the highest number—around 25—going to Reuters News Service and the Associated Press.¹²⁹

Almost half of the embed slots assigned, 46 percent, were with Army units; 28.1 percent embedded with Marine units. An additional 14.9 percent were placed with Navy units, 9.2 percent with the Air Force, and 1.8 percent with Special Operations. These placements ensure that about three-quarters of embed slots were

¹²⁵ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 66.

¹²⁶ Cortell, Eisinger, and Althaus. “Why Embed?” p. 24.

¹²⁷ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 208.

¹²⁸ Cortell, Eisinger, and Althaus. “Why Embed?” DASD(PA) Bryan Whitman did not have final numbers of accepted slots on hand, but noted that the final count was “approximately 600.” Cortell, Althaus, and Eisinger counted the individual slots assigned for the purposes of their research, and came up with 628.

¹²⁹ Ibid. Fig. 1 and 2.

with troops on the ground, while the remaining 24.3 percent of reporters were placed with aerial assault units of these forces or at command hubs such as United States Central Command (CENTCOM).¹³⁰

Janine Zacharia, a correspondent with the *Jerusalem Post*, was one of two of the paper's embedded reporters in Iraq—and one of the embeds assigned to a Naval air assault unit. The *Post* had been offered two spots for embedded print reporters by the office of the DASD (PA), Victoria Clarke. The PAG memo stipulated that while Clarke would assign a number of slots to a particular news agency, it would be up to the contact person at that news agency to decide which reporters took which assignments.¹³¹ As it turned out, her colleague was placed with ground troops, while Zacharia was embedded aboard the Navy aircraft carrier USS *Theodore Roosevelt* in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea off the island of Cyprus. There were 102 naval aviators onboard—with maintenance and ship's crew rounding out the total number of people on the “floating city” at 5,000—and absolutely no enemy fire.¹³² The Syrian coast is around 500 miles from Baghdad; the high-powered F/A-18 fighter jets could make the distance in no time, but there seemed to be little interest or capability from even the Iraqi-Syrian border in attacking aircraft carriers.

The stories Zacharia filed before the beginning of combat operations had a mundane aspect to them, but also a very human angle because she had much more of a chance to get to know the troops on the *Roosevelt* in a social setting. To pass the

¹³⁰ Cortell, Eisinger, and Althaus. “Why Embed?” pp. 24-25.

¹³¹ Rumsfeld (2003). “Public Affairs Guidance (PAG).” Sec. 3.A.: “Embed opportunities will be assigned to media organizations, not to individual reporters. The decision as to which media representative will fill assigned embed slots will be made by the designated POC (Point of Contact) for each news organization.”

¹³² Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. pp. 235-240.

time, the crew and pilots had pizza nights with non-alcoholic beer, since the ship was officially “dry.” They had karaoke events and ice cream socials. Zacharia wrote about the strict rules against physical contact between male and female personnel, about how the F/A-18 pilots were treated like royalty, and about watching the fighter jets come in from dummy bomb runs and landing with 400 feet of artificial “runway” on the deck of the aircraft carrier. Zacharia said she had no idea upon taking the embed assignment about what to expect on board the ship, let alone suspected that she would not witness any of the effects of the combat missions the F/A-18 pilots carried out. She wrote that the fighter pilots had even been scheduled to make a few pre-ground invasion bombing passes, but that the Defense Department decided against it at the last minute, limiting them to practice runs until the beginning of the ground assault.

“Once the actual war started, the ship shifted to this night schedule, but life changed very little for the people on board. They were putting real bombs on the planes as opposed to dummies and they were carrying out real missions.”

Zacharia wrote that toward the end of her 24-day embed, when she felt the stories were becoming repetitive, it was time to leave.¹³³

Another writer embedded with an airborne unit was *Los Angeles Times* writer David Zucchino. Zucchino started with the Army’s 101st Airborne division, but after their first mission—an aerial assault at the Saddam Hussein International Airport—had been scuttled because there was too high a risk that other forces hadn’t taken out all of the anti-aircraft missiles around the Baghdad-based airport, he reported the unit was basically stuck “guarding the gas station.” It was difficult, he reported, for the officers to keep morale up among the troops, who were bored and frustrated.

¹³³ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. pp. 235-240.

Zucchini did not get to find out whether the unit got to fly its mission to Baghdad. He and another reporter from *USA Today*, Gregg Zoroya, whose satellite phone he had been using since his own was lost when his jeep flipped into a canal, spoke to another Army division, a Third Infantry unit that had been briefly sitting on the 101st air base tarmac. The unit had done the first run through Baghdad. They agreed to let Zoroya and Zucchini “re-embed” with the unit and ride along in the Bradley fighting vehicles to Baghdad.¹³⁴

Peter Baker, a *Washington Post* correspondent, was one of a four-reporter crew invited to view the war from the headquarters of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force—the central hub known as “Camp Commando” for the 60,000 Marines and 26,000 British troops who would be fighting the war—at an undisclosed location just outside of Iraq. It was a vantage point entirely unlike Ayres’ or Zacharia’s. Baker and the other three reporters were allowed access to the Combat Operations Center (COC) to watch satellite images of the aerial and ground campaigns as they unfolded. And, unlike Ayres and Zacharia, Baker was allowed to see much more than a narrow observable slice of the war. All of the conflicting reports from each Marine unit in the field were bottlenecked into the war room at the COC; Baker had difficulty distinguishing true reports from mistaken initial impressions as the commanders handing down orders. In fact, he said he was bombarded with too much information. “The military commanders who always used to tell us that the initial reports are nearly always wrong turn out to be right.”¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. pp. 143-145.

¹³⁵ Baker (2003). “Inside View.”

Baker's experiences at the central command hub served to highlight the vast differences between military observation and censorship at home base as compared to in the field. The ground rules set out in the PAG memo stipulated that if members of the press are allowed access to sensitive information that might go beyond the scope of what might be included in a briefing or debriefing, the military commanders reserve the right to conduct a "security review" of any article the press representatives plan to file. In other words, access to sensitive information would be countered by a World War II-style system of submission to a censor.¹³⁶ Admittance to the COC fell under this provision, but the public affairs officer's comfort with the policy of "why not release?" described by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld in the PAG memo, had a rocky start, Baker reported.¹³⁷

"The morning the war started—just hours after we had been reassured the beginning of the conflict was still at least a day away—we felt misled. A nasty shouting match ensued with the chief public affairs officer, who offered to throw us out if we were so dissatisfied." Shortly after their argument, though, Baker said both the team of reporters and the Marine commanders made concessions. The four reporters were offered access to the top-secret COC inside the expeditionary forces' headquarters—which was moved inside Iraq's borders shortly after combat operations began—on the condition that they submit stories to a security review.

Baker said that he was initially leery, but that the experience was unexpectedly positive. A high-ranking Marine strategist, or the PAO, would read the stories and prune sensitive information, but it turned out that very few information

¹³⁶ Rumsfeld (2003). "Public Affairs Guidance (PAG)." Sec. 6.A.1.

¹³⁷ Ibid. Sec. 3.Q. "The standard for release of information should be to ask 'why not release' [versus] 'why release.' Decisions should be made ASAP, preferably in minutes, not hours."

embargoes were necessary. “They might ask that we take out a particular location of a unit or delete a radio call sign that they wanted to keep secret, but they were incredibly professional and made no substantive changes to the files we sent in.”¹³⁸

A placement at a major command post did not necessarily come with the same kind of information surfeit experienced by Baker. *New York Magazine* media critic Michael Wolff was based at the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) outpost in Doha, Qatar during the invasion. “The profoundly interesting thing about Doha is that nothing happened,” Wolff said. “I have never been in a situation where there were so many reporters so far from anything that was happening.”¹³⁹ The way Wolff describes it, an embed slot at CENTCOM was not unlike the pool system during the first Gulf War—reporters would get up in the morning, attend press briefings, and file stories based on those briefings. For an average reporter, he imagined, the assignment could be tedious and terrible. For a press critic, however, he said that he saw things somewhat differently: “I had an unfair advantage in that I was not there in Doha covering the war. I had a certain amount of cover, and my cover was uncovering the media. I was able to talk about things that they were really not in the purview of so many other reporters to talk about.” Despite the fact that “nothing happened,” Wolff said he was happy with his embed slot, for reasons that differed quite a bit from many straight-on war reporters. He imagined that an embed slot on the front lines with a mechanized or infantry division would be claustrophobic,

¹³⁸ Baker (2003). “Inside View.”

¹³⁹ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 40.

trapping the reporter inside a Bradley fighting vehicle or tank for long periods of time.¹⁴⁰

Outside of the COC or CENTCOM, individual embeds found that the degree of control imposed varied wildly—from tight and suspicious to none at all. Often, reporters closer to the front lines experienced looser—or no—control, as opposed to those who were further away from the center of the action.¹⁴¹

To the credit of the military establishment, access was not outright denied to those reporters who rarely or never saw public affairs officials, a tenet of the program which was stipulated in the PAG memo.¹⁴² As the Pentagon had little or no control over press access outside of the hypotheticals detailed in the memo, though, some embeds found the commanders and public affairs officers in their units more permissive than did others. Often, consistency of access and censorship depended on the proximity of the public affairs officer to the reporter in question. That is to say, the less often that a PAO was available in the unit to mediate between commanding officer and embedded reporter, the more likely it was that reporters were subject to the caprice of the commanding officer.

Washington Post reporter Lyndsey Layton, who was stationed on the USS *Abraham Lincoln* in the Persian Gulf, was required to give every interview in the presence of a Navy “minder.” The officer noted every one of her questions and each of her subject’s replies. She was also banned from the general mess deck, preventing

¹⁴⁰ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. pp. 40-43.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. p. 191. “There was no apparent PAO watching over my shoulder to see what I said. I just talked about what I saw, and what I heard, and what was happening around me. I did a lot of interviews with Marines, and asked them whatever I felt like asking them. It was wonderful to be able to have the freedom to do that daily.”

¹⁴² Rumsfeld (2003). “Public Affairs Guidance (PAG).” Sec. 3.F. “[T]he absence of a PA escort is not a reason to preclude media access to operations.”

casual interaction with sailors. After five days, Layton complained to Navy headquarters in the tiny Persian Gulf island country of Bahrain, managing to get the commanding officer onboard to ease the constant monitoring. Even still, when one of the *Abraham Lincoln's* FA-18 Hornet jets was lost over Iraq, the first reporters notified were those at CENTCOM headquarters in Qatar, not the journalists aboard the *Lincoln*.¹⁴³

Despite the Navy officer's attempts to limit Layton's reported content, *San Francisco Chronicle* TV critic Tim Goodman argues that it was not physically possible to entirely control the information coming from embedded reporters.¹⁴⁴ Col. Guy Shields, a public affairs officer for the Army, concurs: "There was absolutely no way to place any spin control. The media were right there. They were reporting."¹⁴⁵

Whether there was anything to report depended in large part on which unit reporters were placed with, and—as many journalists assigned to units on the ground, the attitude of the unit commander toward press representatives. With a lenient and forthcoming unit commander, reporters had incredible freedom—at least in terms of access to the activities of the unit and the opinions of the troops therein. Thus, Rick Leventhal, a Fox News reporter who had a very accommodating commander and an open unit, said: "There was no apparent PAO watching over my shoulder to see what I said. I just talked about what I saw, and what I heard, and what was happening around me. I did a lot of interviews with Marines, and asked them whatever I felt like

¹⁴³ Jack Shafer. "Embeds and Unilaterals: The press dun good in Iraq. But they could have dun better." May 1, 2003. <http://www.slate.com/id/2082412/>. "When they boarded the ship, Rear Adm. John M. Kelly forced them to agree to ground rules that were more restrictive than the Pentagon-imposed rules."

¹⁴⁴ Carstensen (2003). "'Embed' or 'In Bed'?"

¹⁴⁵ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 75.

asking them. It was wonderful to be able to have the freedom to do that daily.”¹⁴⁶

Geoffrey Mohan of the *Los Angeles Times* similarly reported never having even seen a PAO during his embedment, even joking with fellow reporters that the PAOs didn’t want to be as close to the front lines as he was, with the Army Third Infantry Division’s Second Brigade.¹⁴⁷

The Washington Post’s William Branigin was with the Army’s Third Infantry Division when soldiers failed to heed an officer’s command to fire warning shots at a speeding civilian vehicle at a checkpoint. The brigade had been forced to open fire with a 25 mm cannon. Ten of the Land Rover’s fifteen civilian passengers, including five children, were killed. According to Branigin, the division’s captain, Ronny Johnson, yelled over the radio to the soldiers who had shot up the van, “You just [expletive] killed a family because you didn’t fire a warning shot soon enough!”¹⁴⁸ Branigin reported exactly what he saw, despite Pentagon reports to the contrary. “The only comment I got from the battalion commander was, ‘I read your story.’” That was all he said.”¹⁴⁹

Covering military mistakes could be a harrowing experience for those journalists, like Joe Eddins of *The Washington Times* whose unit commanders were more hostile to press presence. Eddins documented the drowning of four Marines that had tried to cross the Saddam Hussein Canal in full uniform and without a safety line. When Eddins began taking pictures of the recovery operation in the canal, his point of contact, Capt. Kevin Coughlin, ordered Eddins back into the Humvee. When they

¹⁴⁶ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 191.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 262.

¹⁴⁸ William Branigin. “A Gruesome Scene on Hwy. 9: Ten Dead After Vehicle Shelled at Checkpoint.” *The Washington Post*. Apr. 1, 2003.

¹⁴⁹ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 234.

returned to base camp after the incident, Eddins phoned his bureau chief and told them what had happened. He told the *Times* he had pictures, though he said he would respect the requirement that reporters wait to identify wounded or killed soldiers until next of kin could be notified.

Nevertheless, the paper's Pentagon affairs reporter began to call the Defense Department, asking questions about the incident. Later, Captain Coughlin approached Eddins with the story that the *Times* had run. He told Eddins that he had been advised by the command center not to talk to him or to let anyone else speak to him, either. It was clear, Eddins said, that he was being "blackballed." After the fall of Baghdad, when the suspicious commander released Eddins from the unit, he took up with a battalion of Marine combat troops who let him take pictures of whatever he chose.¹⁵⁰

Ordinary soldiers were much more disposed to appreciating the work of the embeds than were the commanding officers. Brett Lieberman, who was ejected from his embed slot with a Marine unit over reports of strained supply lines and understaffed humanitarian missions, said that the low-ranking Marine grunts were upset that he had been forced to leave the unit. "They kept saying things about freedom of the press. They thought it was bogus."¹⁵¹ Lieberman ended up being back in Kuwait along with Geraldo Rivera. Rivera was a former correspondent for Fox News who was being disembedded from the Army's 101st Airborne Division for drawing a map of the area the troops were occupying while broadcasting live.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. pp. 68-71.

¹⁵¹ Ibid. pp. 317-320.

¹⁵² Chris Plante. "Military kicks Geraldo out of Iraq." CNN.com. Mar. 31, 2003.
<http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/03/31/sprj.irq.geraldo/>.

A couple of reporters found themselves either granted more access or denied it because of their affiliation with a particular news organization, though by and large this was not the rule. Rick Levanthal, also of Fox News, found the attitude of the Second Battalion, 23rd Marines to be particularly welcoming because of the station's reputation for on-air support of the war effort and of the troops. Of course, network affiliation was not a guarantee of free rein, as demonstrated by Rivera's actions, but many young soldiers told Levanthal they identified with the tone of coverage embraced by Fox. For instance, the network used "Operation Iraqi Freedom"—the U.S. government's name for the conflict, and used an American flag as a backdrop for reports by correspondents and for footage of the troops in action, journalist Jacqueline E. Sharkey said. "Fox anchors and correspondents expressed their views about many aspects of the conflict. One anchor reporting on the search for Saddam Hussein asked, 'Did we get him?' Commentators made disparaging remarks about guests and news organizations that raised questions about the conflict."¹⁵³ This reputation did not bother Levanthal. "I'd rather have [U.S. soldiers] like us than dislike us. I mean, if I have a choice of being with a network they didn't want around versus a network that they did, I think I'd choose being with a network they did want because we're going to get better access."¹⁵⁴

Correspondent Mercedes Gallego, who filed both for the Bilbao (Spain)-based newspaper *El Correo* and Telecinco—a news station based in the Basque region of the country—said that the soldiers in her unit, the First Marine Battalion, Headquarters Unit, were just generally intolerant of any statement they perceived as

¹⁵³ Jacqueline E. Sharkey. "The Television War." *American Journalism Review*. May 2003. http://ajr.org/article_printable.asp?id=2988.

¹⁵⁴ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 192.

being “liberal.” “That was the key word for [the Marines]. A liberal was like a demon.”¹⁵⁵

News organizations with a reputation—either perceived or real—of being hostile to the American war effort, sometimes saw their embedded reporters denied access to critical briefings. Amr El-Kakhy, a reporter for the Arabic-language news service Al-Jazeera, said he was denied access to a briefing due to his network affiliation. He and his cameraman were excluded from a briefing on future operations, he said, while reporters from Reuters, the Associated Press, and CNN were allowed into the briefing room. When he asked duty officer why he was excluded from the meeting, the soldier told El-Kakhy that the unit colonel excluded him because of the station’s reputation.¹⁵⁶

Al-Jazeera did become known from the first days of the war for its willingness to show footage of casualties—even shots of American wounded and dead that the U.S. networks declined to show, even after the 72-hour embargo period on releasing the identities of slain soldiers was over. According to a study of TV broadcasts during the first few weeks of the war, Al-Jazeera aired more stories about Iraqi civilian casualties and war protests than the three domestic U.S. news networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC), as well as CNN and Fox News Channel.¹⁵⁷ Al Jazeera’s former spokesman—now communications director for the Dubai-based and Saudi-owned TV channel Al-Arabiya—Jihad Ali Ballout, told National Public Radio that television

¹⁵⁵ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 88.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p. 182.

¹⁵⁷ Aday, Livingston, and Hebert (2005). “Embedding the Truth.” pp. 13-14. pp 13, 14. “Much of Al-Jazeera’s critical coverage revolved around stories about civilian casualties.” Also, Table 2: 4.5 percent of Al-Jazeera stories centered on civilian casualties, compared to 4.4 percent for ABC, 4.6 percent for NBC, 3.1 percent for CBS, and, 0.6 percent for Fox News. For the purposes of the study, CNN viewing was divided into two evening prime-time slots—5:00-5:30 (3.4 percent), and 6:00 to 6:30 (1.4 percent).

“would be deceiving its audience” were it to censor “any of the information that actually makes people aware of all aspects.”¹⁵⁸ All in all, although the network aired more stories (10.6 percent) that were critical of military actions in Iraq than all of the other surveyed networks combined, the study says about 89 percent of news spots aired on Al-Jazeera were neutral in tone.¹⁵⁹

Regardless of network or newspaper affiliation, some reporters who enjoyed national name recognition tended—as they always have—to get better access and greater mobility because of that “star power.” The most prominent example, one noted by several reporters, was that of ABC News’ Ted Koppel, an anchor for the popular *Nightline* evening news program. Koppel was embedded with a unit of the Army’s Third Infantry Division, but by virtue of his famous name, some reporters said, he could essentially hitch a ride with any departing unit to get closer to the action. Fellow *Nightline* correspondent Mike Cerre said that attendant to Koppel’s relative fame was the opportunity to see the “big picture” of the war, rather than just the narrow slice afforded less well-known reporters.¹⁶⁰

The effect of Koppel’s star power was not lost on Jim Axelrod, who worked with *Nightline* rival program *CBS Evening News*:

“Ted Koppel was also with the Third Infantry. He had the run of the joint. The Third Infantry is divided into three combat brigades, so Koppel could sit at infantry headquarters and say, ‘Hey, you know the Second

¹⁵⁸ Sharkey (2003). “The Television War.”

¹⁵⁹ Aday, Livingston, and Hebert (2005). “Embedding the Truth.” Table 3: CBS and Fox News aired no critical stories during the sample time period (1,820 stories total from Mar. 20 to Apr. 20, 2003); 2.2 percent of ABC stories were critical of military actions, 1 percent of NBC’s, and 3.9 percent of CNN’s stories (between 5:00 and 5:30 p.m.) were critical in tone. Only 0.2 percent of Al-Jazeera stories were supportive of the war effort.

¹⁶⁰ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 98. “[Koppel] had more access to helicopters and vehicles to move around and see things. He could report on the grand scheme of things.”

Brigade seems to be taking on some good fighting for the next forty-eight hours. Let's go with them.' ...I was stapled to the First Brigade combat team."¹⁶¹

Practical Limitations

As embedding as a policy came into full force in the Iraq War, a number of on-the-ground practical limitations to coverage confronted reporters. Though some were due to the limits of technology or of circumstance, many others were unique to the Iraq conflict simply because of the structure of the embedding program. Many journalists found that despite the absence of a PAO or other potentially censoring human force, circumstances such as mode of transportation, the speed at which the unit moved—even the weather—became an impromptu censor.

Some embeds literally saw a small slice of the war—at least while within the confines of a Bradley armored vehicle and its almost medievally small slit-like viewing windows. David Zucchino wrote:

“Riding around in a Bradley is very claustrophobic and confusing ... it was incredibly loud, hot, stifling; there's just no air inside and your only view is through these little glass vision blocks that are maybe three inches high and six, seven, eight inches wide. It's a prison in there. It's hard to see what's going on with all the smoke and the craziness and speed.”¹⁶²

One of the more frustrating aspects of moving quickly toward the capital, many journalists said, was the inability to stop and assess the situation on the ground, or get an idea of the effect the troops' movements were having on the surrounding

¹⁶¹ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 24.

¹⁶² *Ibid.* p. 143.

villages on the road to Baghdad. Good journalism involves thinking, observing, and looking around, according to a communication scholar who insists that the luxury to stop and think, to observe comprehensively, was denied when military units moved too fast to allow reporters to gather the proper context.¹⁶³ *Newsday* reporter Graham Rayman, embedded with the Eighth Marine Corps Engineers, expressed frustration about the unrelenting pace of the missions: “I wish we could just stop for a minute, and I could ask around, but that was one of the bad things about the embedding process because you couldn’t do that. You were forced to be swept along with the unit.”¹⁶⁴

Since the PAG memo specifically bars journalists from traveling in civilian vehicles while they are embedded, there is no way to return to a village the unit has passed or to cross back over the border if the unit has returned to base camp outside Iraq.¹⁶⁵ “There were reporters I knew who were upset because they couldn’t get [military] transportation to go talk to other people about what was happening,” *Dallas Morning News* columnist Jim Landers said. “The commanding officers wanted us to let them know where we were, if we left the unit. It just didn’t seem that it was worth it to move about.”¹⁶⁶

Embeds saw the ordnance that their units fired at unknown enemy targets. They heard the relentless pounding of the guns and saw the mortars explode in flashes

¹⁶³ Katherine Skiba. “Journalists embodied realities of Iraq war.” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. Sept. 14, 2003.

¹⁶⁴ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 309.

¹⁶⁵ Rumsfeld (2003). “Public Affairs Guidance (PAG).” Sec. 2.C.1. “Embedded media are not authorized use of their own vehicles while traveling in an embedded status.”

¹⁶⁶ Sylvester and Huffman (2005). *Reporting from the Front*. p. 115.

of light on the horizon.¹⁶⁷ What was less visible—and sometimes invisible—was the *effect* of the U.S.-led coalition’s assault on the surrounding Iraqi countryside. A study by the Project for Excellence in Journalism that examined 40.5 hours of embedded coverage by five cable and network news channels found that about half of the reports from embedded journalists showed combat action, but none of the stories surveyed depicted people hit by weapons.¹⁶⁸ “That is the problem with a high-tech war,” said Peter Baker of the *Washington Post*. “In some ways it may seem more bloodless than it really is. In the end we saw a flash on the screen. We didn’t see a broken body or the incinerated corpse.”¹⁶⁹

Units’ relative detachment from their targets also provided military commanders with a convenient excuse to prevent embeds from covering Iraqi civilian casualties. Ron Harris of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, who was embedded with the Seventh Marine Division, said that one of the unit officers once forbade him to investigate the wreckage of a car on which the unit had opened fire a short time before. “A sergeant major specifically told us that if we went to look, he would leave us at the site.”¹⁷⁰

Limited movement and restrictive commanding officers were some of the reasons approximately 1,200 reporters opted out of the embedding program and decided to pursue stories outside of the purview of the military’s “ground rules.” The Pentagon only imposed ground rules and a limited number of slots on embedded

¹⁶⁷ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 196. “[P]eople are yelling ‘gas-gas-gas’ over the radio, the Marines are scrambling around trying to get their own guns set up so they can return fire, the huge oil well is burning in the distance.”

¹⁶⁸ Sharkey (2003). “The Television War.”

¹⁶⁹ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 291.

¹⁷⁰ Jennifer LaFleur. “Embed program worked, broader war coverage lagged.” *The News Media & the Law*. Vol. 27, no. 2. (Spring 2003) p. 4.

reporters; non-embedded journalists—or “unilaterals”—were much more like the reporters in Vietnam, who, with proper visa documentation, could come and go from the country as they pleased and travel where they wanted. Mohammed Fahmy, a translator and driver for reporter Mark Magnier and photographer Brian Walski of the *Los Angeles Times*, said his charges harbored a fierce pride in being unilateral rather than embedded: “[Magnier, Walski, and I] had more freedom. We got more humanitarian stories. We were able to go to the families’ houses. The embedded journalists were just covering the army and how the war was going on.”¹⁷¹

However, a number of military spokespeople and journalists said that some of the unilaterals’ pride evaporated after having been witness to combat situations.¹⁷² Unilaterals, unlike embeds, were allowed to use civilian vehicles to travel the country. However, Pentagon policy guidelines said that non-embedded media vehicles were not allowed to join military convoys.¹⁷³ Even though many large news organizations spent a great deal of money outfitting their civilian vehicles with the same paint jobs and markings as military Humvees in order to avoid being mistaken for Iraqi resistance fighters, they would still attempt to take cover with the fighting units during skirmishes. Some were allowed to follow the convoys, while others were turned away and forced to retreat because commanders did not want to be responsible

¹⁷¹ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 242.

¹⁷² Skiba (2003). “Journalists embodied realities of Iraq war.” “[N]o military bosses had fond memories of the estimated 1,200 unilaterals in the war zone, since more often than not, they turned to the military when they found themselves under fire and needed to be rescued.”

¹⁷³ Sylvester and Huffman (2005). *Reporting from the Front*. pp 58-59. “I can tell you from reading some of the reports from commanders on the ground and some of the public affairs officers who were managing the embeds for their units, even though we had guidelines out there that said no media vehicles, I can tell you that the media had vehicles that they took with them regardless of what our guidance from on high was. We definitely didn’t condone it—actually strongly didn’t condone it—and told the different commands not to have media vehicles.”

for the lives of reporters not embedded with their units.¹⁷⁴ The European Broadcasting Union even reported that British and U.S. forces in southern Iraq sometimes detained unilaterals or sent them out of the country for going unescorted into the war zone.¹⁷⁵

The advantage of safety was definitely on the side of the embeds in the conflict, though along with that guarantee came limits on access to possible stories.¹⁷⁶ (The advantage of increased protection did not guarantee a reporter's safe return. Nine embedded and unilateral journalists were killed in March and April of 2003, including ITN correspondent Terry Lloyd (unilateral)—who may have been the victim of U.S. friendly fire—Al-Jazeera correspondent Tareq Ayyoub (unilateral), and Christian Liebig (embedded) of Germany's *Focus* magazine. Photographer Taras Protsyuk (unilateral) was killed in a friendly-fire attack on Baghdad's Palestine Hotel, and the *Atlantic Monthly's* Michael Kelly (embedded) was killed in a car accident south of the Baghdad airport.¹⁷⁷) Even unilaterals who informally joined convoys for protection saw their flexibility to cover events diminished. James Hill, a contracted

¹⁷⁴ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 393. "Eventually the whole convoy stopped because the commander wanted to find out who these guys were who came along without their permission...the commanding officer comes over and says, 'You can't stay with our convoy. You have to leave at first light. If you try to follow us, then we'll...' He just trailed off."

¹⁷⁵ "EBU protests against reporting restrictions in southern Iraq." European Broadcasting Union. Apr. 2, 2003. www.ebu.ch/news/press_archive/press_info_22003_63_irak.php. "'US Central Command policy is now actively restricting independent newsgathering from Southern Iraq,' EBU Secretary General Jean Stock said in a statement. 'Reporters and camera crews who put their lives at risk have been detained by American and British troops and returned to Kuwait.' Mr. Stock said that this treatment appeared to be aimed in particular at organizations from countries which had chosen not to participate in the American-led coalition. 'As a result journalists are now exposed to a much greater risk and the coalition policy targets the quality of their reporting,' he said."

¹⁷⁶ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. pp. 73-78. "There was one young rookie photographer ... As I was walking by, he asked, 'Sir, can I talk to you? My editors have ordered me across the border tomorrow. What do I do?' I said, 'Shit, don't go!' He said, 'It's my job. I got to go.'" Also: pp. 1-10. "The unilaterals—a lot of them lost their *cojones* when they got up there. They wanted to be unilateral; they wanted to run around and have the freedom of unilaterals until they got into Baghdad, and then they jumped in [with the troops]."

¹⁷⁷ "Journalists Killed in 2003." Iraq: Journalists in Danger. Committee to Protect Journalists. http://www.cpj.org/deadly/2003_list.html#iraq.

freelance photographer for *The New York Times*, was technically not embedded, but he joined a Marine unit—in which he was allowed to ride in his own Jeep—three days after the official start of military operations. Hill was not injured while working as a unilateral, but noted that his options for independent excursions narrowed once he informally agreed to military protection by joining up with the unit.¹⁷⁸ *New Yorker* reporter Jeffrey Goldberg declined an embed slot, and instead chose a unilateral position because he believed that the slot offered him would not allow him to see anything of consequence. “The real danger is not being killed, but being seriously out of position.”¹⁷⁹ This mispositioning often resulted in reports from embeds with one branch of the military conflicting with those from another branch, said Mark Seibel, who worked as international managing editor at Knight Ridder news service’s Washington Bureau during the initial incursion into Iraq, said that reporters embedded with different branches of the military often reported different things. “The Marine reporter would be saying one thing, and the Army reporter would say another.”¹⁸⁰

Receiving conflicted reports from journalists in the field did not necessarily mean that the reports were wrong. Both the Army and the Marine Corps after-operations assessments noted that embeds had provided the most accurate coverage of operations, at least on the battlefield.¹⁸¹ Embeds seemed to have a “line in” on

¹⁷⁸ Lori Robertson. “Images of War.” *American Journalism Review*. October/November 2004. http://ajr.org/article_printable.asp?id=3759. “If you’re in a convoy, you’re not saying, ‘Hey, that’s a good picture. Let’s stop and take it.’”

¹⁷⁹ Shafer (2003). “Embeds and Unilaterals.”

¹⁸⁰ “Lens Crafters.” (2004).

¹⁸¹ “Third Infantry Division (Mechanized) After Action Report: Operation Iraqi Freedom.” pp. 45-50. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2003/3id-aar-jul03.pdf>. First Marine Division Operation Iraqi Freedom: Lessons Learned. pp. 33-35. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oif-lessons-learned.htm>.

accurate battle reports that journalists working from the U.S. at the Pentagon or at CENTCOM did not have. When an enormous sandstorm enveloped Army troops around the Iraqi city of Najaf, only the embedded reporters knew—due to pre-war briefings—that the division planned to stop around that point to refit and refuel. “Media outside Iraq immediately began suggesting a ‘quagmire’ and flawed plan,” the Army’s Third Infantry Division (Mechanized) “After Action” report stated.¹⁸² Jim Crawley, a reporter embedded with a nearby Marine unit, confirmed the “operational pause,” with his paper, the *San Diego Union Tribune*, because his unit was also stopped at the time to allow the Army supply and fuel trucks to use the roads.¹⁸³

This is not to say that all of the reports emerging from embedded reporters in the field were accurate, either. Embeds were subject to spin from the military commanders in their units—and without a way to independently investigate the effects of the unit’s actions, officers’ accounts had to serve as verification. Todd Morman of the *Independent Weekly* wrote, “Embedded journalists ... skilled as they may be, have very little to work with aside from the data immediately in front of them or what they’re spoon-fed from nearby officials.”¹⁸⁴ For instance, journalists said the southern city of Basra, under siege by British troops, was taken on March 23, when in fact it took the coalition forces until two weeks after that date to subdue resistance.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² “Third Infantry Division (Mechanized) After Action Report.” p. 48. (2003).

¹⁸³ “Lens Crafters.” (2004).

¹⁸⁴ Todd Morman. “In bed with the embeds: Local journalists court danger—and military brass—with Pentagon-approved war reporting.” *Independent Weekly*. Apr. 2, 2003.

<http://www.indyweek.com/gyrobase/Content?oid=oid%3A19278>. Also see: “Tough Battle for Umm Qasr.” BBC News. Mar. 21, 2003. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2873311.stm. “Marines securing Iraqi port city.” CNN Online. Mar. 22, 2003.

<http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/03/21/sprj.irq.southern.iraq/index.html>.

¹⁸⁵ Smith (2003). “The Real-Time War: Defining News in the Middle East.”

National Public Radio's John Burnett himself told of seeing firsthand just how official reports given to embeds may differ from the actual situation on the ground. A week after the fall of Baghdad, he disembedded himself and hired a driver and translator to investigate the effects of a 500-pound precision-guided bomb on the village of Taniya, southeast of Baghdad. The after-mission reports had said that only tanks and tracked vehicles in the area had been destroyed, while Taniya residents told Burnett that 31 civilians had been killed in their beds by the bombing.¹⁸⁶ Burnett's experience served to demonstrate the military-created insulation from the larger picture that surrounded embedded reporters. Ironically, the effects of this insulation were most noticeable in connection with the flood of cutting-edge technology that reporters had at their disposal in order to cover the war. Even with real-time satellite television uplinks, satellite phones, e-mail filing, and portable "lipstick cameras" that could be mounted on the helmet of a soldier charging into battle, the structure of the embedding program put unforeseen limits on the use of technology that further precluded full coverage of the war.

As was the case with mobility, use of technology was often sacrificed to the cause of operational security. Per the PAG memo, embedded reporters were promised transportation of their communication gear.¹⁸⁷ This meant that the portable satellite dishes, cameras, tripods, laptops, battery packs, and backup cameras were all welcome. However, at least in the case of the embedded reporters and those unilaterals who chose to take up with convoys, equipment had to be both packed and

¹⁸⁶ John Burnett. "Embedded/Unembedded II (Dispatches: slices of the war)." *Columbia Journalism Review*. May/June 2003. pp. 43-44.

¹⁸⁷ Rumsfeld (2003). "Public Affairs Guidance (PAG)." Sec. 2.C.3.: "Units should plan lift and logistical support to assist in moving media products to and from the battlefield so as to tell our story in a timely manner."

unloaded at the pace at which the military unit moved. News crews traveled fast, but they did *not* travel light.¹⁸⁸ In the case that reporters could not transmit using their own equipment, the PAG memo stated that military communication equipment could be used, as long as filing stories did not interfere with critical communications.¹⁸⁹

The rules also stipulated, though, that a ban on electronic equipment use or transmission could be put into effect by unit commanders in order to avoid compromising operational security and tactical surprise.¹⁹⁰ Several embedded journalists told of having experienced frustrating filing delays and even a limit on the use of flashlights, non-uplinked laptops, or even reflective clothing in the interests of stealth.¹⁹¹ “When we opened our laptops and tried to write stories at night, the gunnery sergeant would bellow, ‘Turn that fucking light out before you get your [head] shot!’” reported NPR’s Burnett in the *Columbia Journalism Review*.¹⁹²

Even during hours in which the communication ban was lifted, *Boston Herald* reporter Jules Crittenden said, simple logistics often got in the way of being able to sit down and file a story—by laptop, phone, or otherwise. Crittenden wrote that his satellite phone got no reception through the thick walls of the Bradley Fighting

¹⁸⁸ Sylvester and Huffman (2005). *Reporting from the Front*. p. 212.

¹⁸⁹ Rumsfeld (2003). “Public Affairs Guidance (PAG).” Sec. 2.C.3.: “In the event of commercial communications difficulties, media are authorized to file stories via expeditious military signal/communications capabilities.”

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.” Sec. 2.C.4.: “[U]nit commanders may impose temporary restrictions on electronic transmissions for operational security reasons. Media will seek approval to use electronic devices in a combat/hostile environment, unless otherwise directed by the unit commander or his/her designated representative.”

¹⁹¹ Ayres (2005). *War Reporting for Cowards*.

¹⁹² Burnett (2003). “Embedded/unembedded II (Dispatches: slices of the war).”

Vehicle in which he was traveling, and that the refueling and rest stops were completely consumed by eating, stretching, and entrenching impromptu toilets.¹⁹³

A number of journalists lost use of their satellite phones because of a security snafu in the early days of the incursion. Phones manufactured by the United Arab Emirates-based satellite communication company Thuraya integrated a satellite-based global positioning feature. The military had received intelligence that some of the GPS codes had been sold to the Iraqis, and that they could use the phones to track the position of troops via the embedded reporter using the Thuraya phone. All handsets of that make were confiscated, leaving some of the journalists who used exclusively that brand in the lurch.¹⁹⁴ CNN correspondent Martin Savidge said that his news organization had had the foresight to outfit its reporters with three brands of satellite phone as well as “old-fashioned” videophones. Despite this seeming technological advantage, Savidge said that the First Battalion Marine unit’s restrictions on when and where he could film often clashed with the mission of his 24-hour news network.¹⁹⁵ Since the TV crew could only work in daylight for fear of Iraqi troops seeing the lights from cameras and monitors at night, Savidge said that his team often could not put together comprehensive, planned, and pre-written segments on the war’s progress, but were limited to a blow-by-blow account of the unit’s operations as they unfolded. “[W]hat you ended up with was just an of-the-moment what the unit was doing,” Savidge said. “What I thought was lacking in the coverage was that sort

¹⁹³ Jules Crittenden. “Embedded Journal: overnight Bradley toward Baghdad.” Poynter Online. Mar. 23, 2003. http://www.poynter.org/dg.lts/id.26369/content.content_view.htm.

¹⁹⁴ Tony Pugh. “Military officials ban use of phones with GPS technology.” Knight Ridder News Service. Apr. 1, 2003.

¹⁹⁵ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 274. “I work for a twenty-four-hour news network. The emphasis of our network is LIVE, LIVE, LIVE—as much live as possible ... [but] we were working under a number of restrictions in Iraq.”

of depth, putting it into perspective and adding the fabric of the story.”¹⁹⁶ Savidge’s complaint—especially as a television reporter—was echoed by former embeds and media scholars alike, and reflects on the larger context of the war as it was received by the viewing American public. “Some journalists believe technology led television to focus on images instead of information.”¹⁹⁷

There emerged an even more fierce debate over the *type* of images that were shown, even as early as the first days of the war. Many of the embedded reporters came to realize that their embed slots afforded them long periods of drudgery and confinement, punctuated by brief moments of utter terror. When not engaged in a firefight, London *Times* reporter Chris Ayres said that the commander briefing the press corps in Kuwait had been right in his assessment that the campaign would be “like the worst camping trip of your life.”¹⁹⁸ The reporters slept in ditches, crammed in vehicles, and behind the treads of huge tanks in the freezing desert night, ready to move at a moment’s notice. They ate calorie-laden packaged meals, dug trenches for toilets, and had sand ground into the keyboards of their laptops, their clothes, even the creases of their hands because of blinding sandstorms. These sandstorms disabled a number of military units and their embeds on the road to Baghdad in March 2003. Television reporter Dean Staley of the ABC News affiliate KSTP-TV in Minneapolis/St. Paul, who was embedded with another battalion of the Army’s 101st Airborne, told of the relentless storms that lashed the unit and kept its Black Hawk helicopters grounded. Adverse weather conditions did little to stifle the creativity of the reporter, though, Staley said. He filed a couple of stories on the storms

¹⁹⁶ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 274.

¹⁹⁷ Sharkey (2003). “The Television War.”

¹⁹⁸ Ayres (2005). *War Reporting for Cowards*. p. 151.

themselves, which aired on the Weather Channel, including one about the efforts to locate a patrol that went missing. It turned out they had been “lost” only about half a mile from base camp but couldn’t establish contact in the storm.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁹ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. pp. 137-138.

Chapter 4: Obstacles to Objectivity

Some caution and clarification is needed to proceed with the argument that objectivity by embedded reporters was threatened during the first several exhilarating weeks of the military incursion into Iraq. For the purposes of this paper, “objectivity” will be defined here as the ability of the individual reporter to recognize the presence of emotional ties to their subjects, propaganda on the part of the government, bias by their news organizations, and/or their own limited view of the war, and compensate to the best of her ability.

One of the greatest fears in the journalistic community about the embedding program before its inception was that the American news media would end up “in bed” with the military, happily going along with the official account of the war’s progress as the publicity branch.²⁰⁰ On the whole, though, journalists disagree over whether embedded reporters ended up entirely beholden to—and cowed by—military information and military might.²⁰¹ Still, a number of reporter accounts and studies of

²⁰⁰ Bliss (2003). “The Press Goes to War.” “The sagacity of [embedding] is that it is based on the basic tenet of PR: It’s all about relationships. The better the relationship with a journalist, the better the chance that journalist will pick up and report [a desired] message,” she says. “So now journalists were making dozens—if not hundreds—of new friends among the armed forces. And, if the bosses of their newfound buddies wanted to get a key message or two across about how sensitive the U.S. is being to humanitarian needs or how humanely they are treating Iraqis, what better way than through these embedded journalists? As a result, most—if not all—of the stories being filed contained key messages the Department of Defense wanted to communicate.”

²⁰¹ Todd Gitlin. “Embed or In Bed? The war, the media, and the truth.” *The American Prospect Online*. May 31, 2003. http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=embed_or_in_bed. “[I]n truth, many of these accusations were misplaced. Embedded reporters did reasonably well under what were surely confining circumstances. If most of the reporting was travelogue--desert expanses, puffs of smoke and occasional bang-bang, culminating in moments of toppled Saddam Hussein statuery--this was no fault of the embeds. They saw what they saw and couldn't see what they couldn't see.” Also: Zoe Heller. “‘Embedded’ reporters are far too close to the action.” *The Age*. Apr. 1, 2003. <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/03/31/1048962698037.html>. “[T]he real problem, in the American media at least, is the blatant and unembarrassed manner in which the reporters have become mouthpieces for the military. There was always a worry that close proximity to the American forces

(mainly broadcast) news reports from embedded journalists substantiate the idea that, at least in some respects, the intimacy of embedment precluded keeping a clear eye and a level head about coverage.

Anna Badhken of the *San Francisco Chronicle* said that one thing she fears about embedding is that it will become the “only way” for reporters to cover a war, which will inherently bias journalists toward the subjects they cover. “[I]t is hard for a reporter, any reporter, to be critical of people he or she travels with and shares his or her daily meals. In a war zone, your travel companion becomes your closest friend; can we be totally unbiased when our friends have accidentally ... shot a bunch of civilians in a bus and we have to cover the story?”²⁰²

While many news stories focused on the sometimes fatal errors of judgment by military personnel, the cumulative effect of traveling, eating, sleeping and commiserating with troops blurred the line of professionalism between source/soldier, and friend in at least a few instances.²⁰³ “Bonding may have taken place,” acknowledged U.S. Army Public Affairs Officer Col. Guy Shields. A 2006 study of 48 stories by six individual embedded print journalists showed that the tone of coverage overwhelmingly positive in reference to the daily lives and habits of the soldiers, and openly admiring of laudable traits like courage, optimism, and

would make objectivity a little tricky. But even so, it’s been shocking to see how swift and complete the process of going native has been.”

²⁰² Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 19.

²⁰³ Sylvester and Huffman (2005). *Reporting From the Front*. pp. 212-213. “Objectivity was feared to be the first casualty of war. In fact, the majority of the embeds said that they could not maintain objectivity. They were, after all, eating, sleeping, riding—and in a couple of cases dying—with the soldiers they were accompanying. Soldiers weren’t ‘subjects’ in the sense that the journalists interviewed them and then never saw them again.”

resilience.²⁰⁴ In only a couple of instances, though, did individual reporters say that their own objectivity was compromised.²⁰⁵ More often, journalists said that they had to be careful about how they framed their relationships with the soldiers in print or during a broadcast in order to refrain from *seeming* compromised.²⁰⁶ To this end, CNN senior editors warned their embedded reporters not to refer to the troops collectively as “we”—rather the more impersonal “they.”²⁰⁷

The effects of this policy were documented in an analysis of self-references—instances of “I” and “we”—in live battlefield coverage by embedded television network correspondents over the course of 16 broadcast hours on CNN from March 22 to March 25, 2003. Park and Fox demonstrated that embedded correspondents referred to themselves significantly more often during the course of a stand-up segment than did non-embedded reporters. “[Non-embedded] reporters referred to themselves on average once per story,” Fox and Park write. “This might be expected of a reporter in the field to establish his or her location, or in direct response to a question from the news anchor, but the repeated use of *I* by embedded reporters in

²⁰⁴ Mark Slagle. “Now to War: A Textual Analysis of Embedded Print Reporters in the Second Iraq War.” Master’s thesis submission, The University of Missouri, Columbia. August 2006. <http://edt.missouri.edu/Summer2006/Thesis/SlagleM-072406-T5655/research.pdf>. p. 87. “The stories written by the embedded print reporters in this study displayed subtle but frequent examples of pro-military bias...This trend was apparent from the earliest articles studied, but became more pronounced as the war progressed...This suggests...that the journalists had undergone a bonding process with the soldiers and marines they covered.”

²⁰⁵ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 53. “Well, I couldn’t look anybody in the eye and say, ‘Hey, I’m being completely objective,’ because I liked and respected these guys. I called them ‘my Marines.’” Also: Sylvester and Huffman (2005). *Reporting From the Front*. p. 112. ““Regardless of what any embedded reporter says, it was impossible not to lose some of your objectivity. These were the men and women who were feeding you, protecting you, and befriending you.”

²⁰⁶ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 87. “You’ve got to be careful what you say or write. You can’t be too much on the side of the Marines, because [readers] will question your objectivity as a journalist.”

²⁰⁷ Sylvester and Huffman (2005). *Reporting from the Front*. p. 68. Bruce Conover, senior international editor for CNN in Atlanta, said that the policy was to instruct embeds to use the word “they” rather than “we” to describe troop actions, especially in live reports when stress was highest.

their stories indicates that they not only established themselves in the field but placed themselves in the story itself.”²⁰⁸ Conversely, though, the authors found that the network’s non-embedded reporters—who had not received the same caution about the use of collective personal pronouns—more often used the “we” in reference to the troops and reporters as a whole than did CNN embeds.²⁰⁹

Among the accounts of the embedded experience surveyed for this paper, far more reporters expressed concerns with the ethical dilemmas of living “as a soldier”—albeit unarmed—while embedded with a fighting unit than expressed doubt about their ability to effectively cover the events they observed. One of the ambiguities faced by embedded reporters—though largely seen by these reporters as ethically non-threatening—was the use of their communication equipment by the soldiers in their units. Nicholas Kulish of *The Wall Street Journal* told of his e-mail inbox being flooded with greetings from friends and family for Marines after the unit had imposed a communication cut-off shortly before the beginning of the invasion in March 2003:

“[T]he messages I received were rarely about the stories ... Instead it was personal. ‘Is my husband okay?’ ‘Say hello to Bob.’ ‘Can you tell me how he’s doing?’ ‘Is everyone safe?’ ‘Please give him a hug for me.’ I wasn’t sure what would have happened if I’d tried to give a macho Cobra helicopter pilot a hug, so I didn’t follow through on that one, but a lot of the other messages were answered and greetings passed on. I sometimes felt like the squadron’s designated Red Cross representative.”²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ Fox and Park (2006). “The ‘I’ of Embedded reporting: An Analysis of CNN Coverage of the ‘Shock and Awe’ Campaign.” p. 45.

²⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 47.

²¹⁰ Kulish (2003). “Embed Cred: How Close is too Close for Embedded reporters?”

Gerry Barker and Chris Kelley, editors at Belo Interactive Media—which administers a number of local television station-affiliated Web sites nationwide—said that a project set up by the *Dallas Morning News* allowed members of the military to post photos and messages for friends and family via the paper’s online site.²¹¹

Several reporters also said they faced tough decisions as to how involved they could get in the activities of the unit before they felt their journalistic integrity was compromised. Jim Landers, an embedded reporter for the *Dallas Morning News*, said that he had to mentally catalogue the possible ethical ramifications when asked to relieve the soldier holding the IV bag for a wounded Iraqi. In the end, Landers decided to take over holding the bag so that the soldier who had been doing the job could return to his unit.²¹²

Dr. Sanjay Gupta, a neurosurgeon and health correspondent for CNN, had media ethicists questioning his choice when he elected to operate on a two-year-old Iraqi child who had received a grave head wound after U.S. troops fired on the taxi in which the child rode at a checkpoint.²¹³ Dismissing the criticism outright, Gupta declared that he was “medically and morally obligated to help” because the medical team did not have a resident neurosurgeon.²¹⁴

Perhaps the most pronounced instances of getting caught up in soldierly life happened when embeds were confronted with the ethical ambiguity of handling

²¹¹ Sylvester and Huffman (2005). *Reporting From the Front*. p. 87.

²¹² Ibid. p. 213.

²¹³ Bob Steele. “Journalist/Physician: Can He Be Both?” Talk About Ethics, Poynter Online. Apr. 4, 2003. <http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=36&aid=28574>. “But this situation with Sanjay Gupta the physician and Sanjay Gupta the journalist is not as black and white as it might appear...How does Gupta the reporter and Gupta the doctor reconcile his competing roles and competing obligations? Does the Hippocratic oath duty always trump the journalistic responsibility to gather information and report stories?”

²¹⁴ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 33.

weapons when in life-threatening situations. St. Louis-based radio journalist Charlie Brennan, who was embedded with the U.S. Army V Corps, reported that he had a sergeant major attempt to hand him semi-automatic pistol during an incursion into Nasiriyah during the second full day of combat operations.²¹⁵ Brennan, citing the PAG memo's ground rules, which stipulated that "[m]edia embedded with U.S. forces are not permitted to carry personal firearms," rebuffed the soldier's repeated offering of the firearm.²¹⁶ After the incident, the immediacy of the danger and his ethical obligations to his family made Brennan reconsider and terminate his embed assignment when the V Corps was still 100 miles from Baghdad. "Most embedded journalists found very quickly that they had no ability to control the level of jeopardy to which they were exposed."²¹⁷

Gordon Dillow of the *Orange County Register* admitted that he accepted a weapon from one of Alpha Company, First Battalion, Fifth Marine Regiment's members. During a skirmish with rocket-propelled grenade-carrying Iraqis on the outskirts of Baghdad, Dillow said, a Marine handed him a hand grenade. "I would rather have had an M-16," he said. Though he never deployed it, Dillow said he held onto the grenade until it became clear that he could not write and hold the weapon at the same time. Again, Dillow was one of the few embeds who readily admitted a situational bias stemming from living with the troops. "It always amuses me when reporters say, 'Oh, you know, I have no feelings about an issue,' or 'I'm totally

²¹⁵ Charlie Brennan. "Upon reflection: the war in Iraq." *The American Editor*. May/June 2003. posted online at the American Society of Newspaper Editors. July 1, 2003.

<http://www.asne.org/index.cfm?ID=4753>.

²¹⁶ "Public Affairs Guidance (PAG)." Sec. 4.C.

²¹⁷ Brennan (2003). "Upon reflection: the war in Iraq."

objective,” he said. “I don’t see how anybody can do it. That’s what editors are for—to make sure that your copy comes out objective.”²¹⁸

Dillow’s reliance on editorial intervention was echoed by a number of embeds and analysts of the embedding program. As it happened, the haphazard contextualizing of raw information from embeds “at the tip of the spear” by editors in both the print and broadcast media proved to be one of the greatest ideological impediments to comprehensive coverage by embedded reporters during the war, which will be demonstrated in the following section.

Editorial Inconsistency, Home-Front Bias, and the “9/11 Effect”

Despite the relatively objective—though limited—observations of embedded reporters being transmitted to television news stations and editorial desks throughout the world, the inconsistency of editorial treatment and tone when the reports had passed out of embeds’ hands proved an enormous obstacle to the American public receiving the full scope of war coverage. The inability of Washington sources to combat Pentagon spin combined with jingoism informed in part by the attacks of September 11, 2001 further limited the scope and reach of the reporting done by embeds.

²¹⁸ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 53.

Print Embeds

One factor that allowed print reporting to come away from its Iraq coverage with fewer accusations of bias or blatant cheerleading was that reporting in newspapers and magazines was able to offer more in-depth coverage of the war. Stephen Hess, a former war correspondent now with the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., said that “the war has been superbly reported by newspapers. The stories have been rich in variety, coming at this from so many different angles.”²¹⁹

However, the print medium as a whole was not exempt from the propagandism that scholars accused news organizations of perpetrating, as evidenced by a military press officer speaking to NPR’s John Burnett. Standing by the mess hall, the PAO said to Burnett while scanning a color spread on preparations for battle in *Time* magazine, “Money can’t buy this kind of recruitment campaign.”²²⁰ *New York Times* correspondent Chris Hedges contended that the supportive tone of newspaper coverage came from print embeds’ inability to look at Iraq through any other lens than that of the military: “That’s a very distorted and self-serving view.”²²¹ After major combat operations ceased, the *Times* acknowledged as much, publishing a front-page admission on May 26, 2003 that balanced coverage had been sorely lacking during the buildup to, and in the first few weeks of, the Iraq War.²²² “I think all the media ... we went with the wave of trying to tell the story, but we weren’t going against the American authorities,” said Michel DuCille, picture editor for *The*

²¹⁹ Sherry Ricchiardi. “Close to the Action.” *American Journalism Review*. May 2003. <http://www.ajr.org/Article.asp?id=2991>.

²²⁰ Burnett (2003). “Embedded/Unembedded II (Dispatches: slices of the war).”

²²¹ cited in Poynter Online. Apr. 3, 2003. <http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=60&aid=28205>.

²²² “The Times and Iraq.” (Editorial staff). May 26, 2004.

Washington Post. Much like the *New York Times*, the *Post* published a front-page acknowledgement in August 2004 that it had not given fair treatment to stories that openly criticized the Bush administration's reasons for initiating the conflict in Iraq.²²³

Because the embedded reporters knew that they could only provide a narrow slice of the war from a limited vantage point, said Knight-Ridder managing international editor Mark Seibel, editors were at the mercy of reporters in Washington to give stories context.²²⁴ However, reporters in both Washington and Qatar said that bureaucracy and Pentagon spin often hampered their ability to verify reports from embedded journalists on the ground. Alicia C. Shepard said that Pentagon correspondents were often “stonewalled by military officials who promised to get back to them in a few hours, or even a few days, about a skirmish just reported by an embedded colleague.” Shepard also noted that many journalists working away from the front lines were frustrated with the seeming unwillingness of Army Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks—who often conducted CENTCOM press briefings in lieu of the then-commander Gen. Tommy Franks—to elaborate on reports by embeds in the field.²²⁵ “Editors had to decide who was right,” said *San Diego Union-Tribune* embed Jim Crawley. “Do they believe the reporter talking to the Pentagon, or do they believe the reporter on the ground being shot at?” Because of ground-level spin and distortion, though, not even the embeds' accounts could be relied upon entirely.²²⁶

²²³ Robertson (2004). “Images of War.”

²²⁴ “Lens Crafters.” (2004).

²²⁵ Alicia C Shepard. *Narrowing the Gap*. Chicago: McCormick Tribune Foundation. 2004.

²²⁶ Burnett (2003). “Embedded/Unembedded II (Dispatches: slices of the war).” A week after the fall of Baghdad, Burnett disembedded himself and hired a driver and translator to investigate the effects of a 500-pound precision-guided bomb on the village of Taniya, southeast of Baghdad. The after-mission

The “9/11 Effect”

The problem with the embedding program, argues one scholar, was not that the embedded reporters were “looking through a soda straw,” or seeing the war from a very narrow point of view informed only by direct interaction with soldiers and action reports from unit commanders. Fisher contends that the embeds were looking through a distinctly “American soda straw.”²²⁷ Many embedded reporters said that they were able to identify inherent bias toward the U.S. and American activities.²²⁸ *Newsweek* reporter Kevin Peraino said that the magazine has a staff of senior writers and editors who were good at rooting out bias in embedded reporters’ copy. “The writers we have in Washington...are very effective in crafting pieces in a way where they’re not casting a one-sided light on it.”²²⁹ By positing a “9/11” effect, I do not aim to disprove a pro-American slant among embeds, but to argue that they were shortchanged by an amplification of pro-Americanism—contrary to Peraino’s assertion—exhibited by news organizations, most specifically national network and cable news outlets. What is essentially a discounting of embedded reporters already challenged clear-sightedness proved to be another way in which the individual embed’s coverage failed to provide a wide view of the war.

reports had said that only tanks and tracked vehicles in the area had been destroyed, while Taniya residents told Burnett that 31 civilians had been killed in their beds by the bombing.

²²⁷ Skiba (2003). “Journalists embodied realities of Iraq war.”

²²⁸ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 43. “[B]ecause these wars are so short, the idea that this is going to play out and that you’re going to get the other side doesn’t happen. All you get is this kind of initial rah-rah side...There is this built-in bias. Okay, let’s just accept that.”

²²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 265.

It is difficult not to notice some of the glaring “misses” in coverage made by the American press in the months leading up to the start of the Iraq War, such as the fact that the International Atomic Energy Agency’s refuted a report that both President Bush and Britain’s Prime Minister Tony Blair cited, supposedly disclosing that the Hussein regime was six months away from developing a nuclear weapon, a story which got play in the United Kingdom press but produced one “buried” story in the United States.²³⁰ Or the 2000 report by the neoconservative group Project for a New American Century, picked up by some online sources and by the *Scottish Daily Herald* but largely ignored by the American mainstream press, declaring that one of the new administration’s goals was to “fight and decisively win multiple, simultaneous major theater wars” and “perform the ‘constabulary’ duties associated with shaping the security environment in critical regions (like the Middle East).”²³¹

Overt press patriotism is not a new phenomenon, however. Historian Geoffrey Stone says that after the enactment of the Alien and Sedition acts of 1798, newspaper writers held back from criticizing the administration of then-President John Adams for fear of being tried under the strict seditious libel law as the country hovered on the edge of a possible war with France. Those who were vehemently opposed to the Adams administration, the Federalist government that enacted the law, were often reduced to pamphleteering—and even then not safe from prison time and fines.²³²

Polarization in a protectionist society can be ascribed to the framework journalism

²³⁰ Deepa Kumar. “Media, War, and Propaganda: Strategies of Information Management During the 2003 Iraq War.” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*. Vol. 3, no. 1. (Mar. 2006). p. 57.

²³¹ “Rebuilding America’s Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century.” Project for a New American Century, <http://www.newamericancentury.org/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf>.

²³² Stone (2004). *Perilous Times: Free Speech in Wartime from the Sedition Act of 1798 to the War on Terrorism*.” pp. 33-61.

critic Walter Lippmann said in 1922 that it is necessary to establish in wartime: the idea of an “us” and a “them” in order to allow the public to grasp the situations about which they must make vital life decisions.²³³

With regard to the atmosphere in which the Iraq War was launched, Gina Barton and Beverly L. Campbell posit that the contagious jingoism after September 11, 2001—which compelled some television reporters to wear flag pins or ribbons on their lapels—forced self-censorship in a climate of almost mandatory national solidarity.²³⁴ A preexisting air of national pride, in turn, makes the citizens—in whose number journalists are included—more susceptible to propaganda, argues media theorist Nancy Snow. “The warriors and those who profit from war try to persuade us that we’re one big happy family. It’s always ‘our’ national interest, national security, national defense, instead of ‘somebody’s’ security and interest.”²³⁵

A country’s citizens are subject to a “scripting” of large-scale tragic events, set in motion by media reports, which cue participants as to what to say and what to expect, said author Thomas de Zengotita. De Zengotita mentioned not only 9/11, but the school shootings at Columbine High School and the Oklahoma City federal building bombing. Because of media saturation, we feel as though we are present at all of these tragic events and are emotionally impacted accordingly, de Zengotita said.²³⁶

²³³ Lippmann (1922.) *Public Opinion*. p. 16. “We are not equipped to deal with so much subtlety, so much variety, so many permutations and combinations. And although we have to act in that environment, we have to reconstruct it on a simpler model before we can manage with it.”

²³⁴ Gina Barton and Beverly L. Campbell. “How ‘American’ should the American press be?” *Quill*. Vol. 89, issue 10. (Dec. 2001). pp. 18-21.

²³⁵ Snow (2003). *Information War: American Propaganda, Free Speech, and Opinion Control Since 9-11*. (introduction.)

²³⁶ “Me is For Media.” *On the Media*. National Public Radio. Apr. 22, 2007.

One of the greatest mistakes made by critics of media response to 9/11 is the automatic presumption that due to the nature of their job that journalists are should be unaffected by the happenings they cover. Were a veteran news anchor like Dan Rather unaffected by the events of September 11, 2001, he likely would not have declared, “George Bush is the President, he makes the decisions and, you know, as just one American, he wants me to line up, just tell me where.” Rather also said that journalists were afraid of being too critical of the government post-9/11.²³⁷ His assertion was borne out by at least two instances in which journalists were rebuked by their respective news organizations for voicing dissent. MSNBC reporter Ashleigh Banfield said at a 2003 lecture at Kansas State University that America tends to disregard the First Amendment when it becomes “unpalatable.” Parent company NBC released a public statement saying “Ms. Banfield does not speak for NBC News.”²³⁸ CNN’s Christiane Amanpour was similarly taken to task for saying the press “was muzzled and...self-muzzled” after 9/11. CNN Newsgroup president Jim Walton said “her comments do not reflect the reality of our coverage.”²³⁹

The climate of unquestioning support combined with fear of reprisal for criticism helped to create the timid, pro-American news organizations that embedded their reporters with U.S. troops at the start of the Iraq War in 2003, said Rutgers University Professor Deepa Kumar. “With titles and logos that in no uncertain terms

²³⁷ Matthew Engel. “US media cowed by patriotic fever, says CBS star.” *The Guardian* (London). May 17, 2002. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2002/may/17/terrorismandthemediabroadcasting>. “There was a time in South Africa that people would put flaming tires around people’s necks if they dissented. And in some ways the fear is that you will be necklaced [in America], you will have a flaming tire of lack of patriotism put around your neck. Now it is that fear that keeps journalists from asking the toughest of the tough questions.”

²³⁸ *Into the Buzzsaw*. Kristina Borjesson, ed. p. 16

²³⁹ *Into the Buzzsaw*. p. 16

establish “us” and “them” in news coverage, it was almost a foregone conclusion which side would receive favorable coverage and which would not.”²⁴⁰

Broadcast Embeds

Embedded television reporters seemed to delight in presiding over the confusion and chaos of bombings and gun battles on-screen, narrating every ear-shattering mortar explosion with the dedicated ferocity of a weather reporter standing in a hurricane.²⁴¹

Terence Smith captures this breathless feeling with an account of CNN’s Martin Savidge reporting on a foray into Baghdad on Apr. 9, 2003. The picture, as Smith describes it, is grainy but distinguishable—showing blossoms of light silhouetting Savidge. He describes the sounds in the vignette, tries to inform viewers of what the unit is doing as he shouts over the rattle of small-arms fire at Paula Zahn back in the CNN studios.²⁴²

A number of broadcast embeds testified that they did not have control over their reports once they had finished shooting. “Everyone at home saw more of the war than I did,” Rick Levanthal of Fox News said. “[W]hen people talk about different networks and how they did and all that, I can’t really talk about that, and I can’t compare the tone of the coverage because I honestly didn’t see it.”²⁴³ Describing an incident in which he happened upon a barber shop in a village near Najaf with a picture of the New York skyline—including the World Trade Center towers—in its

²⁴⁰ Kumar (2006). “Media, War and Propaganda: Strategies of Information Management During the 2003 Iraq War.” p. 53.

²⁴¹ Robertson (2004). “Images of War.” “Hardly half an hour goes by without some embedded ace breathlessly reporting, in real time, from the front.”

²⁴² Smith (2003). “The Real-Time War: Defining news in the Middle East.”

²⁴³ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 192.

window, CBS Evening News correspondent Jim Axelrod said he took footage of both the barbershop window and several mutilated bodies nearby, but he does not know what was cut and what was left in. “I still haven’t seen a lick of video; I haven’t seen a frame of what we produced.”²⁴⁴

Editorial decisions with regard to footage once it left embeds’ hands became a major argument used by media scholars to argue that coverage of the war had been “sanitized” for an American audience that was both squeamish and unwilling to look at the human costs of war. Both broadcast and print embeds faced decisions by editors not to run photographs or footage of gruesome images, but the effect is more pronounced when examining the purely visual medium of television. According to Aday, Livingston, and Hebert, none of the U.S. channels observed in their studies paid much attention to U.S. or British casualties, Iraqi casualties, or civilian casualties, and coverage of these topics was conspicuously absent on the Fox News Channel evening shows and on CNN’s *Lou Dobbs Show*, an analysis program.

CNN correspondent Martin Savidge describes an episode in which several Iraqi fighters in an industrial complex were gunned down by American forces after they refused to stop advancing. Savidge and his camera operator, Scott McWhinnie, filmed part of the aftermath of this episode, some of which was graphic and bloody in nature. They warned CNN of some of the content when transmitting the story. “I’ve heard talk that it will air someday, but it has not yet.” He also mentioned the killing of two American civilian contractors in Kuwait. The *Kuwait Press* ran a photograph of

²⁴⁴ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 27.

one of the dead men on the front page, while U.S. news sources ran “sanitized” pictures of a bullet-riddled truck.²⁴⁵

CBS White House correspondent John Roberts agreed. “I couldn’t walk up to a bus that had been hit by 25-mm cannon fire and see all the dead Iraqis lying around, blown up into bits and pieces, headless bodies or whatever—I can report on that—but I certainly can’t show those pictures on television. You have to sanitize your coverage somewhat for American sensibilities, but really it’s just the pictures that were sanitized. It certainly wasn’t the words.”²⁴⁶

That wasn’t the experience of National Public Radio reporter Eric Westervelt. A listener had written in to the Washington-based network complaining that the sounds of tanks and guns in the background had been “sensationalist.” Westervelt fired back angrily, saying it was realistic, and it wasn’t a gruesome picture of a mutilated corpse or injured child. “Sensationalist?” he said. “What would they like instead? A story about war with people drinking tea?”²⁴⁷

There is significant evidence that *network* presentation proved detrimental to what the Aday, Livingston, and Hebert claim was largely balanced coverage by embeds in the field.²⁴⁸ The 2005 study further supports my assertion that the narrowness of embedded-reporter coverage was amplified by overt jingoism on the part of the news organization. Across stories by 205 unembedded, domestically-based “beat” reporters and 398 news anchors, 11.1 percent of reports by domestic journalists adopted a tone supportive of the U.S. effort in Iraq. 11.9 percent of stories

²⁴⁵ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 277.

²⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 173.

²⁴⁷ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 324.

²⁴⁸ Aday, Livingston, and Hebert (2005). “Embedding the Truth.” p. 15. “[E]mbedded reporters had among the highest percentage of neutral stories (91 percent) of any type of reporter.”

by network anchors had a pro-American tone during the sample period from March 20 to April 20, 2003.²⁴⁹ Of the guests invited by networks to give opinions, or chosen as interview subjects, retired military officials spoke positively of the war in 34 percent of stories, while U.S. political officials did so in 11.6 percent. Those who spoke positively least often about the war effort were current U.S. military officials (with 6.6 percent) and soldiers on the ground. Embedded reporters and soldiers interviewed in the field adopted a positive or supportive tone toward the war effort in the same percentage of stories (9 percent).²⁵⁰

One particular channel, Fox News, made no bones about its pro-American stance. Fox News president Roger Ailes said on the air that there was nothing wrong with supporting the U.S. troops and U.S. effort in Iraq.²⁵¹ Fox contributed significantly to the pro-war slant on coverage, hosting the preponderance of the stories in which news anchors interviewed retired military officials. And 60 percent of stories in which an anchor (rather than an embedded reporter or a beat reporter) led a discussion with a retired military official were positive in tone over the course of the sample period.²⁵²

The jingoistic tone of coverage and decisions by the Fox News higher-ups caused viewership of the cable news channel to soar to 3 million after Sept. 11 and into the first three months of the invasion, *The New York Times* reported. In order to make up for lagging viewership, Jim Rutenberg claimed in the *Times*, MSNBC and—to an extent—CNN tried to capture more of the politically conservative viewing

²⁴⁹ Aday, Livingston, and Hebert (2005). “Embedding the Truth.” Table 3.

²⁵⁰ Ibid. Table 5. Domestic “beat” reporters and news anchors had 88.9 percent and 88.7 percent neutral stories over the sample period, respectively.

²⁵¹ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 192.

²⁵² Aday, Livingston, and Hebert (2005). “Embedding the Truth.” p. 14.

audience that had facilitated Fox's meteoric ratings rise. Both networks succeeded somewhat in claiming a larger slice of the conservative audience than they had had before, with CNN and MSNBC viewership rising to 2.65 million and 1.4 million average daily viewers, respectively.²⁵³

Another factor contributing to ratings growth, especially in cable news, was the intense, theatrical live coverage of "Shock and Awe"—the aerial bombardment of Baghdad—and skirmishes between armed forces units and Iraqi soldiers on the road to the capital.²⁵⁴ A *Los Angeles Times* poll in Apr. 2003 showed that around 70 percent of Americans were getting most of their news about the war from cable networks such as MSNBC, Fox News Channel, and CNN.²⁵⁵ Mark Effron, MSNBC's vice president for live news programming, opined that this was because print news sources such as newspapers were "obsolete" by the time they reached the reader's doorstep, whereas live 24-hour cable television coverage had its finger on the pulse of the war constantly. Not only did it show "vivid" reports from television embeds in the field, but tempered them with central command and Pentagon briefings and interspersed them with the musings and insights of hired consultants and guests such as retired, high-ranking military personnel.²⁵⁶

²⁵³ Jim Rutenberg. "Cable's war coverage suggests a new "Fox Effect" on television." *The New York Times*. Apr. 16, 2003.

²⁵⁴ Michiko Kakutani. "Iraq War coverage: blurring the lines between movies and real life." *the New York Times*. Mar. 25, 2003. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/25/arts/television/25SHOW.html>. "The start of the war caused business at movie theaters to drop by 25 percent on Wednesday as people stayed home to watch the war, and snack-food sales and restaurant deliveries thrived. The opening salvos of the war had taken the place of prime-time entertainment, and television stations did their best to serve up gaudily produced coverage: the war in Iraq as the ultimate in reality television, as the apotheosis of every favorite Hollywood genre, from the combat thriller to the coming-of-age tale to the blow-'em-up, special-effects extravaganza."

²⁵⁵ Sharkey (2003). "The Television War."

²⁵⁶ Rachel Smolkin. "Media Mood Swings." *American Journalism Review*. June 2003. http://ajr.org/article_printable.asp?id=3040.

Jack Shafer argued that TV news inflated embeds' footage of intermittent small-arms fire into tense shootouts, and minor skirmishes became full-bore battles on the screen.²⁵⁷ *Detroit News* reporter John Bebow reflected on what he also perceived as TV news outlets' tendency to overhype combat situations. "If you're watching the fear channels, it's easy imagining that the war zone must be this hellish place filled with an unbelievable amount of gunfire ... it's just not like that. It was definitely zany, but it wasn't every-minute dangerous."²⁵⁸ In the instance of intense viewership, according to the director of the Program on International Policy Attitudes, it is even more heavily incumbent on news programs to correct for existent bias and provide balanced coverage wherever possible. "If there are misperceptions emerging, if there are biases ... if the goal is to end up with an informed citizenry or electorate, then one has to compensate for these tendencies."²⁵⁹

Perhaps the 2003 Iraq War and the consequent fallout with regard to objective coverage will prove a lesson to U.S. media outlets, suggests David Elstein, a BBC Veteran who helped found BBC Channel Five in 1997 and has worked for the British-based satellite television network Sky. Elstein writes for OpenDemocracy.net that the BBC has grown even stricter in its insistence upon objectivity since the Thatcher government called the network out for its lack of visible nationalistic support during the 1982 Falklands War. For their insistence upon casting a cold eye on coalition activities in Iraq, Elstein said, BBC reporters were accused of having a leftward political slant.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁷ Shafer (2003). "Embeds and Unilaterals: The press dun good in Iraq. But they could have dun better."

²⁵⁸ Katovsky and Carlson (2003). *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. p. 2.

²⁵⁹ Lori Robertson. "Baghdad Urban Legends." *American Journalism Review*. October/November 2003. http://ajr.org/article_printable.asp?id=3408.

²⁶⁰ David Elstein. "Caught in the crossfire: broadcasting in wartime." June 24, 2003. OpenDemocracy.net. http://www.opendemocracy.net/media-journalismwar/article_1312.jsp.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

As with many conflicts since Grenada, lack of access appears to have been the presiding factor depriving embedded reporters of the possibility of balanced, wide-scope coverage at the beginning of the 2003 Iraq War. Beholden to some sort of military intervention, news organizations had little control over how reporters would be deployed in overseas conflict situations following the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Moving with military units, embeds could not control how quickly or slowly they moved, where they stopped, and with whom they could conduct interviews. Embedded reporters depended on military officials for access both to military operations and to the troops themselves—access which was spotty at best, and dependent on the temperament of the presiding officer. Certain reporters were shunned or even disembedded for producing coverage that was unsavory to the military or to the government.

Reporters who embedded with troops were limited by operational protocols as to when and where they could film, photograph, or transmit stories. Embeds depended upon the military for safety, provisions, and comradeship, an arrangement some said was not conducive to the maintenance of a level head or a clear eye. Additionally, embedded reporters were limited by their own patriotic affiliations, and even more so by the suppressive actions of news organizations unwilling to challenge nationalistic sentiment, or vying for ratings. All of these factors whittled away at the capacity of the individual embedded reporter to produce a contextualized, meaningful, and inclusive picture of U.S. operations in Iraq in mid-2003. The

capacity for broad-scope coverage by *any* group of reporters—embedded or not—was limited in the second Iraq War. With embeds, the Defense Department created a class of sanctioned reporters. This came in stark contrast to the free-ranging unilaterals, who were sometimes denied contact with soldiers on the ground and, at worst, denied protection from military forces in the midst of hostilities. As a result, unilaterals lost out on the intimate access to U.S. forces that was the purview of the embeds.

Abetted by parent organizations ranging from uncritical to jingoistic—though some critics argue that aggregate coverage captured the essence of U.S. efforts in the war—embedded reporters’ own coverage was limited. It remains to be seen, if the embedding program is continued in future U.S. conflicts abroad, whether coverage will lag despite individual good intentions, professionalism, objectivity, and technological advances. All that can follow is press negotiations with the government toward a better and more satisfactory system. Whether or not embedding is the best system to date since Vietnam—and the best in the twenty-first century—is irrelevant; the system will no doubt bear a re-evaluation from both the news media and the military in the case that the U.S. goes to war against a foreign nation in the future. Perhaps this will mean a revision of the “Statement of Principles” to reflect the strengths and shortcomings of the embedding program. Most journalists on whose accounts of the program this paper is based were in agreement that truly comprehensive foreign war coverage requires reporting from all angles: inside the military units, from the perspective of national governments, and among the citizens of the country affected by the assault. Moving forward with refinements to military-

media relations may entail an acceptance by journalists that no one perspective—
embedded, unilateral, or otherwise—can provide the complete picture of a war.

Appendices

Appendix I: **Public Affairs Guidance on Embedding Media During Possible Future Operations/Deployments in the U.S. Central Commands Area of Responsibility (AOR).**

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NSC WASHINGTON DC
WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM
INFO SECDEF WASHINGTON DC//OASD-PA/DPO//
UNCLAS

SUBJECT: PUBLIC AFFAIRS GUIDANCE (PAG) ON EMBEDDING MEDIA DURING POSSIBLE FUTURE OPERATIONS/DEPLOYMENTS IN THE U.S. CENTRAL COMMANDS (CENTCOM) AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (AOR).
REFERENCES: REF. A. SECDEF MSG, DTG 172200Z JAN 03, SUBJ: PUBLIC AFFAIRS GUIDANCE (PAG) FOR MOVEMENT OF FORCES INTO THE CENTCOM AOR FOR POSSIBLE FUTURE OPERATIONS.

1. PURPOSE. THIS MESSAGE PROVIDES GUIDANCE, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES ON EMBEDDING NEWS MEDIA DURING POSSIBLE FUTURE OPERATIONS/DEPLOYMENTS IN THE CENTCOM AOR. IT CAN BE ADAPTED FOR USE IN OTHER UNIFIED COMMAND AORS AS NECESSARY.

2. POLICY.

2.A. THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD) POLICY ON MEDIA COVERAGE

OF FUTURE MILITARY OPERATIONS IS THAT MEDIA WILL HAVE LONG-TERM, MINIMALLY RESTRICTIVE ACCESS TO U.S. AIR, GROUND AND NAVAL FORCES THROUGH EMBEDDING. MEDIA COVERAGE OF ANY FUTURE OPERATION WILL, TO A LARGE EXTENT, SHAPE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT NOW AND IN THE YEARS AHEAD. THIS HOLDS TRUE FOR THE U.S. PUBLIC; THE PUBLIC IN ALLIED COUNTRIES WHOSE OPINION CAN AFFECT THE

DURABILITY OF OUR COALITION; AND PUBLICS IN COUNTRIES WHERE WE CONDUCT OPERATIONS, WHOSE PERCEPTIONS OF US CAN AFFECT THE COST AND DURATION OF OUR INVOLVEMENT. OUR ULTIMATE STRATEGIC SUCCESS IN BRINGING PEACE AND SECURITY TO THIS REGION WILL COME IN OUR LONG-TERM COMMITMENT TO SUPPORTING OUR DEMOCRATIC IDEALS. WE NEED TO TELL THE FACTUAL STORY - GOOD OR BAD - BEFORE OTHERS SEED THE MEDIA WITH DISINFORMATION AND DISTORTIONS, AS THEY MOST CERTAINLY WILL CONTINUE TO DO. OUR PEOPLE IN THE FIELD NEED TO TELL OUR STORY – ONLY COMMANDERS CAN ENSURE THE MEDIA GET TO THE STORY ALONGSIDE THE TROOPS. WE MUST ORGANIZE FOR AND FACILITATE ACCESS OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA TO OUR FORCES, INCLUDING THOSE FORCES ENGAGED IN GROUND OPERATIONS, WITH THE GOAL OF DOING SO RIGHT FROM THE START. TO ACCOMPLISH THIS, WE WILL EMBED MEDIA WITH OUR UNITS. THESE EMBEDDED MEDIA WILL LIVE, WORK AND TRAVEL AS PART OF THE UNITS WITH WHICH THEY ARE EMBEDDED TO FACILITATE MAXIMUM, IN-DEPTH COVERAGE OF U.S. FORCES IN COMBAT AND RELATED OPERATIONS. COMMANDERS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICERS MUST WORK TOGETHER TO BALANCE THE NEED FOR MEDIA ACCESS WITH THE NEED FOR OPERATIONAL SECURITY.

2.B. MEDIA WILL BE EMBEDDED WITH UNIT PERSONNEL AT AIR AND GROUND FORCES BASES AND AFLOAT TO ENSURE A FULL UNDERSTANDING OF ALL OPERATIONS. MEDIA WILL BE GIVEN ACCESS TO OPERATIONAL COMBAT MISSIONS, INCLUDING MISSION PREPARATION AND DEBRIEFING, WHENEVER POSSIBLE.

2.C. A MEDIA EMBED IS DEFINED AS A MEDIA REPRESENTATIVE REMAINING WITH A UNIT ON AN EXTENDED BASIS - PERHAPS A PERIOD OF WEEKS OR EVEN MONTHS. COMMANDERS WILL PROVIDE BILLETING, RATIONS AND MEDICAL ATTENTION, IF NEEDED, TO THE EMBEDDED MEDIA COMMENSURATE WITH THAT PROVIDED TO MEMBERS OF THE UNIT, AS WELL AS ACCESS TO MILITARY TRANSPORTATION AND ASSISTANCE WITH COMMUNICATIONS FILING/TRANSMITTING MEDIA PRODUCTS, IF REQUIRED.

2.C.1. EMBEDDED MEDIA ARE NOT AUTHORIZED USE OF THEIR OWN VEHICLES WHILE TRAVELING IN AN EMBEDDED STATUS.

2.C.2. TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, SPACE ON MILITARY TRANSPORTATION WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR MEDIA EQUIPMENT NECESSARY TO COVER A PARTICULAR OPERATION. THE MEDIA IS RESPONSIBLE FOR LOADING AND CARRYING THEIR OWN EQUIPMENT AT ALL TIMES. USE

OF PRIORITY INTER-THEATER AIRLIFT FOR EMBEDDED MEDIA TO COVER STORIES, AS WELL AS TO FILE STORIES, IS HIGHLY ENCOURAGED. SEATS ABOARD VEHICLES, AIRCRAFT AND NAVAL SHIPS WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE TO ALLOW MAXIMUM COVERAGE OF U.S. TROOPS IN THE FIELD.

2.C.3. UNITS SHOULD PLAN LIFT AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT TO ASSIST IN MOVING MEDIA PRODUCTS TO AND FROM THE BATTLEFIELD SO AS TO TELL OUR STORY IN A TIMELY MANNER. IN THE EVENT OF COMMERCIAL COMMUNICATIONS DIFFICULTIES, MEDIA ARE AUTHORIZED TO FILE STORIES VIA EXPEDITIOUS MILITARY SIGNAL/COMMUNICATIONS CAPABILITIES.

2.C.4. NO COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT FOR USE BY MEDIA IN THE CONDUCT OF THEIR DUTIES WILL BE SPECIFICALLY PROHIBITED. HOWEVER, UNIT COMMANDERS MAY IMPOSE TEMPORARY RESTRICTIONS ON ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSIONS FOR OPERATIONAL SECURITY REASONS. MEDIA WILL SEEK APPROVAL TO USE ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN A COMBAT/HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT, UNLESS OTHERWISE DIRECTED BY THE UNIT COMMANDER OR HIS/HER DESIGNATED REPRESENTATIVE. THE USE OF COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT WILL BE DISCUSSED IN FULL WHEN THE MEDIA ARRIVE AT THEIR ASSIGNED UNIT.

3. PROCEDURES.

3.A. THE OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS (OASD(PA)) IS THE CENTRAL AGENCY FOR MANAGING AND VETTING MEDIA EMBEDS TO INCLUDE ALLOCATING EMBED SLOTS TO MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS. EMBED AUTHORITY MAY BE DELEGATED TO SUBORDINATE ELEMENTS AFTER THE COMMENCEMENT OF HOSTILITIES AND AT THE DISCRETION OF OASD(PA). EMBED OPPORTUNITIES WILL BE ASSIGNED TO MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS, NOT TO INDIVIDUAL REPORTERS. THE DECISION AS TO WHICH MEDIA REPRESENTATIVE WILL FILL ASSIGNED EMBED SLOTS WILL BE MADE BY THE DESIGNATED POC FOR EACH NEWS ORGANIZATION.

3.A.1. IAW REF. A, COMMANDERS OF UNITS IN RECEIPT OF A DEPLOYMENT ORDER MAY EMBED REGIONAL/LOCAL MEDIA DURING PREPARATIONS FOR DEPLOYMENT, DEPLOYMENT AND ARRIVAL IN THEATER UPON RECEIPT OF THEATER CLEARANCE FROM CENTCOM AND APPROVAL OF THE COMPONENT COMMAND. COMMANDERS WILL

INFORM THESE MEDIA, PRIOR TO THE DEPLOYING EMBED, THAT OASD(PA) IS THE APPROVAL AUTHORITY FOR ALL COMBAT EMBEDS AND THAT THEIR PARTICULAR EMBED MAY END AFTER THE UNIT'S ARRIVAL IN THEATER. THE MEDIA ORGANIZATION MAY APPLY TO OASD(PA) FOR CONTINUED EMBEDDING, BUT THERE IS NO GUARANTEE AND THE MEDIA ORGANIZATION WILL HAVE TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR AND PAY FOR THE JOURNALISTS' RETURN TRIP.

3.B. WITHOUT MAKING COMMITMENTS TO MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS, DEPLOYING UNITS WILL IDENTIFY LOCAL MEDIA FOR POTENTIAL EMBEDS

AND NOMINATE THEM THROUGH PA CHANNELS TO OASD(PA) (POC: MAJ TIM BLAIR, DSN 227-1253; COMM. 703-697-1253; EMAIL TIMOTHY.BLAIR@OSD.MIL). INFORMATION REQUIRED TO BE FORWARDED

INCLUDES MEDIA ORGANIZATION, TYPE OF MEDIA AND CONTACT INFORMATION INCLUDING BUREAU CHIEF/MANAGING EDITOR/NEWS DIRECTOR'S NAME; OFFICE, HOME AND CELL PHONE NUMBERS; PAGER NUMBERS AND EMAIL ADDRESSES. SUBMISSIONS FOR EMBEDS WITH SPECIFIC UNITS SHOULD INCLUDE AN UNIT'S RECOMMENDATION AS TO WHETHER THE REQUEST SHOULD BE HONORED.

3.C. UNIT COMMANDERS SHOULD ALSO EXPRESS, THROUGH THEIR CHAIN OF COMMAND AND PA CHANNELS TO OASD(PA), THEIR DESIRE AND CAPABILITY TO SUPPORT ADDITIONAL MEDIA EMBEDS BEYOND THOSE ASSIGNED.

3.D. FREELANCE MEDIA WILL BE AUTHORIZED TO EMBED IF THEY ARE SELECTED BY A NEWS ORGANIZATION AS THEIR EMBED REPRESENTATIVE.

3.E. UNITS WILL BE AUTHORIZED DIRECT COORDINATION WITH MEDIA AFTER ASSIGNMENT AND APPROVAL BY OASD(PA).

3.E.1. UNITS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING THAT ALL EMBEDDED MEDIA AND THEIR NEWS ORGANIZATIONS HAVE SIGNED THE "RELEASE, INDEMNIFICATION, AND HOLD HARMLESS AGREEMENT AND AGREEMENT NOT TO SUE", FOUND AT [HTTP://WWW.DEFENSELINK.MIL/NEWS/FEB2003/D20030210EMBED.PDF](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/feb2003/d20030210embed.pdf). UNITS MUST MAINTAIN A COPY OF THIS AGREEMENT FOR ALL MEDIA EMBEDDED WITH THEIR UNIT.

3.F. EMBEDDED MEDIA OPERATE AS PART OF THEIR ASSIGNED UNIT. AN

ESCORT MAY BE ASSIGNED AT THE DISCRETION OF THE UNIT COMMANDER. THE ABSENCE OF A PA ESCORT IS NOT A REASON TO PRECLUDE MEDIA ACCESS TO OPERATIONS.

3.G. COMMANDERS WILL ENSURE THE MEDIA ARE PROVIDED WITH EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE ACTUAL COMBAT OPERATIONS. THE PERSONAL SAFETY OF CORRESPONDENTS IS NOT A REASON TO EXCLUDE THEM FROM COMBAT AREAS.

3.H. IF, IN THE OPINION OF THE UNIT COMMANDER, A MEDIA REPRESENTATIVE IS UNABLE TO WITHSTAND THE RIGOROUS CONDITIONS REQUIRED TO OPERATE WITH THE FORWARD DEPLOYED FORCES, THE COMMANDER OR HIS/HER REPRESENTATIVE MAY LIMIT THE REPRESENTATIVES PARTICIPATION WITH OPERATIONAL FORCES TO ENSURE UNIT SAFETY AND INFORM OASD(PA) THROUGH PA CHANNELS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. GENDER WILL NOT BE AN EXCLUDING FACTOR UNDER ANYCIRCUMSTANCE.

3.I. IF FOR ANY REASON A MEDIA REPRESENTATIVE CANNOT PARTICIPATE IN AN OPERATION, THEY WILL BE TRANSPORTED TO THE NEXT HIGHER HEADQUARTERS FOR THE DURATION OF THE OPERATION.

3.J. COMMANDERS WILL OBTAIN THEATER CLEARANCE FROM CENTCOM/PA FOR MEDIA EMBARKING ON MILITARY CONVEYANCE FOR PURPOSES OF EMBEDDING.

3.K. UNITS HOSTING EMBEDDED MEDIA WILL ISSUE INVITATIONAL TRAVEL ORDERS, AND NUCLEAR, BIOLOGICAL AND CHEMICAL (NBC) GEAR. SEE PARA. 5. FOR DETAILS ON WHICH ITEMS ARE ISSUED AND WHICH ITEMS THE MEDIA ARE RESPONSIBLE TO PROVIDE FOR THEMSELVES.

3.L. MEDIA ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OBTAINING THEIR OWN PASSPORTS AND VISAS.

3.M. MEDIA WILL AGREE TO ABIDE BY THE CENTCOM/OASD(PA) GROUND RULES STATED IN PARA. 4 OF THIS MESSAGE IN EXCHANGE FOR COMMAND/UNIT-PROVIDED SUPPORT AND ACCESS TO SERVICE MEMBERS, INFORMATION AND OTHER PREVIOUSLY-STATED PRIVILEGES. ANY VIOLATION OF THE GROUND RULES COULD RESULT IN TERMINATION OF

THAT MEDIA'S EMBED OPPORTUNITY.

3.N. DISPUTES/DIFFICULTIES. ISSUES, QUESTIONS, DIFFICULTIES OR DISPUTES ASSOCIATED WITH GROUND RULES OR OTHER ASPECTS OF EMBEDDING MEDIA THAT CANNOT BE RESOLVED AT THE UNIT LEVEL, OR THROUGH THE CHAIN OF COMMAND, WILL BE FORWARDED THROUGH PA CHANNELS FOR RESOLUTION. COMMANDERS WHO WISH TO TERMINATE AN EMBED FOR CAUSE MUST NOTIFY CENTCOM/PA PRIOR TO TERMINATION. IF A DISPUTE CANNOT BE RESOLVED AT A LOWER LEVEL, OASD(PA) WILL BE THE FINAL RESOLUTION AUTHORITY. IN ALL CASES, THIS SHOULD BE DONE AS EXPEDITIOUSLY AS POSSIBLE TO PRESERVE THE NEWS VALUE OF THE SITUATION.

3.O. MEDIA WILL PAY THEIR OWN BILLETING EXPENSES IF BILLETED IN A COMMERCIAL FACILITY.

3.P. MEDIA WILL DEPLOY WITH THE NECESSARY EQUIPMENT TO COLLECT AND TRANSMIT THEIR STORIES.

3.Q. THE STANDARD FOR RELEASE OF INFORMATION SHOULD BE TO ASK "WHY NOT RELEASE" VICE "WHY RELEASE." DECISIONS SHOULD BE MADE ASAP, PREFERABLY IN MINUTES, NOT HOURS.

3.R. THERE IS NO GENERAL REVIEW PROCESS FOR MEDIA PRODUCTS. SEE PARA 6.A. FOR FURTHER DETAIL CONCERNING SECURITY AT THE SOURCE.

3.S. MEDIA WILL ONLY BE GRANTED ACCESS TO DETAINEES OR EPWS WITHIN THE PROVISIONS OF THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS OF 1949. SEE PARA. 4.G.17. FOR THE GROUND RULE.

3.T. HAVING EMBEDDED MEDIA DOES NOT PRECLUDE CONTACT WITH OTHER MEDIA. EMBEDDED MEDIA, AS A RESULT OF TIME INVESTED WITH THE UNIT AND GROUND RULES AGREEMENT, MAY HAVE A DIFFERENT LEVEL OF ACCESS.

3.U. CENTCOM/PA WILL ACCOUNT FOR EMBEDDED MEDIA DURING THE TIME THE MEDIA IS EMBEDDED IN THEATER. CENTCOM/PA WILL REPORT CHANGES IN EMBED STATUS TO OASD(PA) AS THEY OCCUR.

3.V. IF A MEDIA REPRESENTATIVE IS KILLED OR INJURED IN THE

COURSE OF MILITARY OPERATIONS, THE UNIT WILL IMMEDIATELY NOTIFY OASD(PA), THROUGH PA CHANNELS. OASD(PA) WILL CONTACT THE RESPECTIVE MEDIA ORGANIZATION(S), WHICH WILL MAKE NEXT OF KIN NOTIFICATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE INDIVIDUAL'S WISHES.

3.W. MEDIA MAY TERMINATE THEIR EMBED OPPORTUNITY AT ANY TIME.

UNIT COMMANDERS WILL PROVIDE, AS THE TACTICAL SITUATION PERMITS AND BASED ON THE AVAILABILITY OF TRANSPORTATION, MOVEMENT BACK TO THE NEAREST LOCATION WITH COMMERCIAL TRANSPORTATION.

3.W.1. DEPARTING MEDIA WILL BE DEBRIEFED ON OPERATIONAL SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS AS APPLICABLE TO ONGOING AND FUTURE OPERATIONS WHICH THEY MAY NOW HAVE INFORMATION CONCERNING.

4. GROUND RULES. FOR THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF U.S. FORCES AND EMBEDDED MEDIA, MEDIA WILL ADHERE TO ESTABLISHED GROUND RULES. GROUND RULES WILL BE AGREED TO IN ADVANCE AND SIGNED BY MEDIA PRIOR TO EMBEDDING. VIOLATION OF THE GROUND RULES MAY RESULT IN THE IMMEDIATE TERMINATION OF THE EMBED AND REMOVAL FROM THE AOR. THESE GROUND RULES RECOGNIZE THE RIGHT OF THE MEDIA TO COVER MILITARY OPERATIONS AND ARE IN NO WAY INTENDED TO PREVENT RELEASE OF DEROGATORY, EMBARRASSING, NEGATIVE OR UNCOMPLIMENTARY INFORMATION. ANY MODIFICATION TO THE STANDARD GROUND RULES WILL BE FORWARDED THROUGH THE PA CHANNELS TO CENTCOM/PA FOR APPROVAL. STANDARD GROUND RULES ARE:

4.A. ALL INTERVIEWS WITH SERVICE MEMBERS WILL BE ON THE RECORD. SECURITY AT THE SOURCE IS THE POLICY. INTERVIEWS WITH PILOTS AND AIRCREW MEMBERS ARE AUTHORIZED UPON COMPLETION OF MISSIONS; HOWEVER, RELEASE OF INFORMATION MUST CONFORM TO THESE MEDIA GROUND RULES.

4.B. PRINT OR BROADCAST STORIES WILL BE DATELINED ACCORDING TO

LOCAL GROUND RULES. LOCAL GROUND RULES WILL BE COORDINATED THROUGH COMMAND CHANNELS WITH CENTCOM.

4.C. MEDIA EMBEDDED WITH U.S. FORCES ARE NOT PERMITTED TO CARRY PERSONAL FIREARMS.

4.D. LIGHT DISCIPLINE RESTRICTIONS WILL BE FOLLOWED. VISIBLE LIGHT SOURCES, INCLUDING FLASH OR TELEVISION LIGHTS, FLASH CAMERAS WILL NOT BE USED WHEN OPERATING WITH FORCES AT NIGHT UNLESS SPECIFICALLY APPROVED IN ADVANCE BY THE ON-SCENE COMMANDER.

4.E. EMBARGOES MAY BE IMPOSED TO PROTECT OPERATIONAL SECURITY. EMBARGOES WILL ONLY BE USED FOR OPERATIONAL SECURITY AND WILL BE LIFTED AS SOON AS THE OPERATIONAL SECURITY ISSUE HAS PASSED.

4.F. THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES OF INFORMATION ARE RELEASABLE.

4.F.1. APPROXIMATE FRIENDLY FORCE STRENGTH FIGURES.

4.F.2. APPROXIMATE FRIENDLY CASUALTY FIGURES BY SERVICE. EMBEDDED MEDIA MAY, WITHIN OPSEC LIMITS, CONFIRM UNIT CASUALTIES THEY HAVE WITNESSED.

4.F.3. CONFIRMED FIGURES OF ENEMY PERSONNEL DETAINED OR CAPTURED.

4.F.4. SIZE OF FRIENDLY FORCE PARTICIPATING IN AN ACTION OR OPERATION CAN BE DISCLOSED USING APPROXIMATE TERMS. SPECIFIC FORCE OR UNIT IDENTIFICATION MAY BE RELEASED WHEN IT NO LONGER WARRANTS SECURITY PROTECTION.

4.F.5. INFORMATION AND LOCATION OF MILITARY TARGETS AND OBJECTIVES PREVIOUSLY UNDER ATTACK.

4.F.6. GENERIC DESCRIPTION OF ORIGIN OF AIR OPERATIONS, SUCH AS "LAND-BASED."

4.F.7. DATE, TIME OR LOCATION OF PREVIOUS CONVENTIONAL MILITARY

MISSIONS AND ACTIONS, AS WELL AS MISSION RESULTS ARE
RELEASABLE
ONLY IF DESCRIBED IN GENERAL TERMS.

4.F.8. TYPES OF ORDNANCE EXPENDED IN GENERAL TERMS.

4.F.9. NUMBER OF AERIAL COMBAT OR RECONNAISSANCE MISSIONS OR
SORTIES FLOWN IN CENTCOM'S AREA OF OPERATION.

4.F.10. TYPE OF FORCES INVOLVED (E.G., AIR DEFENSE, INFANTRY,
ARMOR, MARINES).

4.F.11. ALLIED PARTICIPATION BY TYPE OF OPERATION (SHIPS,
AIRCRAFT, GROUND UNITS, ETC.) AFTER APPROVAL OF THE ALLIED
UNIT
COMMANDER.

4.F.12. OPERATION CODE NAMES.

4.F.13. NAMES AND HOMETOWNS OF U.S. MILITARY UNITS.

4.F.14. SERVICE MEMBERS' NAMES AND HOME TOWNS WITH THE
INDIVIDUALS' CONSENT.

4.G. THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES OF INFORMATION ARE NOT
RELEASABLE SINCE THEIR PUBLICATION OR BROADCAST COULD
JEOPARDIZE OPERATIONS AND ENDANGER LIVES.

4.G.1. SPECIFIC NUMBER OF TROOPS IN UNITS BELOW CORPS/MEF
LEVEL.

4.G.2. SPECIFIC NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT IN UNITS AT OR BELOW THE AIR
EXPEDITIONARY WING LEVEL.

4.G.3. SPECIFIC NUMBERS REGARDING OTHER EQUIPMENT OR CRITICAL
SUPPLIES (E.G. ARTILLERY, TANKS, LANDING CRAFT, RADARS, TRUCKS,
WATER, ETC.).

4.G.4. SPECIFIC NUMBERS OF SHIPS IN UNITS BELOW THE CARRIER
BATTLE GROUP LEVEL.

4.G.5. NAMES OF MILITARY INSTALLATIONS OR SPECIFIC GEOGRAPHIC
LOCATIONS OF MILITARY UNITS IN THE CENTCOM AREA OF
RESPONSIBILITY, UNLESS SPECIFICALLY RELEASED BY THE
DEPARTMENT

OF DEFENSE OR AUTHORIZED BY THE CENTCOM COMMANDER. NEWS AND IMAGERY PRODUCTS THAT IDENTIFY OR INCLUDE IDENTIFIABLE FEATURES OF THESE LOCATIONS ARE NOT AUTHORIZED FOR RELEASE.

4.G.6. INFORMATION REGARDING FUTURE OPERATIONS.

4.G.7. INFORMATION REGARDING FORCE PROTECTION MEASURES AT MILITARY INSTALLATIONS OR ENCAMPMENTS (EXCEPT THOSE WHICH ARE VISIBLE OR READILY APPARENT).

4.G.8. PHOTOGRAPHY SHOWING LEVEL OF SECURITY AT MILITARY INSTALLATIONS OR ENCAMPMENTS.

4.G.9. RULES OF ENGAGEMENT.

4.G.10. INFORMATION ON INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION ACTIVITIES COMPROMISING TACTICS, TECHNIQUES OR PROCEDURES.

4.G.11. EXTRA PRECAUTIONS IN REPORTING WILL BE REQUIRED AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF HOSTILITIES TO MAXIMIZE OPERATIONAL SURPRISE.

LIVE BROADCASTS FROM AIRFIELDS, ON THE GROUND OR AFLOAT, BY EMBEDDED MEDIA ARE PROHIBITED UNTIL THE SAFE RETURN OF THE INITIAL STRIKE PACKAGE OR UNTIL AUTHORIZED BY THE UNIT COMMANDER.

4.G.12. DURING AN OPERATION, SPECIFIC INFORMATION ON FRIENDLY FORCE TROOP MOVEMENTS, TACTICAL DEPLOYMENTS, AND DISPOSITIONS THAT WOULD JEOPARDIZE OPERATIONAL SECURITY OR LIVES. INFORMATION ON ON-GOING ENGAGEMENTS WILL NOT BE RELEASED UNLESS AUTHORIZED FOR RELEASE BY ON-SCENE COMMANDER.

4.G.13. INFORMATION ON SPECIAL OPERATIONS UNITS, UNIQUE OPERATIONS METHODOLOGY OR TACTICS, FOR EXAMPLE, AIR OPERATIONS, ANGLES OF ATTACK, AND SPEEDS; NAVAL TACTICAL OR EVASIVE MANEUVERS, ETC. GENERAL TERMS SUCH AS "LOW" OR "FAST" MAY BE USED.

4.G.14. INFORMATION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF ENEMY ELECTRONIC WARFARE.

4.G.15. INFORMATION IDENTIFYING POSTPONED OR CANCELED OPERATIONS.

4.G.16. INFORMATION ON MISSING OR DOWNED AIRCRAFT OR MISSING VESSELS WHILE SEARCH AND RESCUE AND RECOVERY OPERATIONS ARE BEING PLANNED OR UNDERWAY.

4.G.17. INFORMATION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF ENEMY CAMOUFLAGE, COVER, DECEPTION, TARGETING, DIRECT AND INDIRECT FIRE, INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION, OR SECURITY MEASURES.

4.G.18. NO PHOTOGRAPHS OR OTHER VISUAL MEDIA SHOWING AN ENEMY PRISONER OF WAR OR DETAINEE'S RECOGNIZABLE FACE, NAMETAG OR OTHER IDENTIFYING FEATURE OR ITEM MAY BE TAKEN.

4.G.19. STILL OR VIDEO IMAGERY OF CUSTODY OPERATIONS OR INTERVIEWS WITH PERSONS UNDER CUSTODY.

4.H. THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURES AND POLICIES APPLY TO COVERAGE OF WOUNDED, INJURED, AND ILL PERSONNEL:

4.H.1. MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES WILL BE REMINDED OF THE SENSITIVITY OF USING NAMES OF INDIVIDUAL CASUALTIES OR PHOTOGRAPHS THEY MAY HAVE TAKEN WHICH CLEARLY IDENTIFY CASUALTIES UNTIL AFTER NOTIFICATION OF THE NOK AND RELEASE BY OASD(PA).

4.H.2. BATTLEFIELD CASUALTIES MAY BE COVERED BY EMBEDDED MEDIA AS LONG AS THE SERVICE MEMBER'S IDENTITY IS PROTECTED FROM DISCLOSURE FOR 72 HOURS OR UPON VERIFICATION OF NOK NOTIFICATION, WHICHEVER IS FIRST.

4.H.3. MEDIA VISITS TO MEDICAL FACILITIES WILL BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH APPLICABLE REGULATIONS, STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES, OPERATIONS ORDERS AND INSTRUCTIONS BY ATTENDING PHYSICIANS. IF APPROVED, SERVICE OR MEDICAL FACILITY PERSONNEL MUST ESCORT MEDIA AT ALL TIMES.

4.H.4. PATIENT WELFARE, PATIENT PRIVACY, AND NEXT OF KIN/FAMILY CONSIDERATIONS ARE THE GOVERNING CONCERNS ABOUT NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE OF WOUNDED, INJURED, AND ILL PERSONNEL IN MEDICAL

TREATMENT FACILITIES OR OTHER CASUALTY COLLECTION AND TREATMENT LOCATIONS.

4.H.5. MEDIA VISITS ARE AUTHORIZED TO MEDICAL CARE FACILITIES, BUT MUST BE APPROVED BY THE MEDICAL FACILITY COMMANDER AND ATTENDING PHYSICIAN AND MUST NOT INTERFERE WITH MEDICAL TREATMENT. REQUESTS TO VISIT MEDICAL CARE FACILITIES OUTSIDE THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES WILL BE COORDINATED BY THE UNIFIED COMMAND PA.

4.H.6. REPORTERS MAY VISIT THOSE AREAS DESIGNATED BY THE FACILITY COMMANDER, BUT WILL NOT BE ALLOWED IN OPERATING ROOMS DURING OPERATING PROCEDURES.

4.H.7. PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW OR PHOTOGRAPH A PATIENT WILL BE GRANTED ONLY WITH THE CONSENT OF THE ATTENDING PHYSICIAN OR FACILITY COMMANDER AND WITH THE PATIENT'S INFORMED CONSENT, WITNESSED BY THE ESCORT.

4.H.8. "INFORMED CONSENT" MEANS THE PATIENT UNDERSTANDS HIS OR HER PICTURE AND COMMENTS ARE BEING COLLECTED FOR NEWS MEDIA PURPOSES AND THEY MAY APPEAR NATIONWIDE IN NEWS MEDIA REPORTS.

4.H.9. THE ATTENDING PHYSICIAN OR ESCORT SHOULD ADVISE THE SERVICE MEMBER IF NOK HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED.

5. IMMUNIZATIONS AND PERSONAL PROTECTIVE GEAR.

5.A. MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD ENSURE THAT MEDIA ARE PROPERLY IMMUNIZED BEFORE EMBEDDING WITH UNITS. THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL (CDC)-RECOMMENDED IMMUNIZATIONS FOR DEPLOYMENT TO THE MIDDLE EAST INCLUDE HEPATITIS A; HEPATITIS B; RABIES; TETANUS/DIPHTHERIA; AND TYPHOID. THE CDC RECOMMENDS MENINGOCOCCAL IMMUNIZATIONS FOR VISITORS TO MECCA. IF TRAVELING TO CERTAIN AREAS IN THE CENTCOM AOR, THE CDC RECOMMENDS TAKING PRESCRIPTION ANTIMALARIAL DRUGS. ANTHRAX AND SMALLPOX VACCINES WILL BE PROVIDED TO THE MEDIA AT NO EXPENSE TO THE GOVERNMENT (THE MEDIA OUTLET WILL BEAR THE EXPENSE). FOR MORE HEALTH

INFORMATION FOR TRAVELERS TO THE MIDDLE EAST, GO TO THE CDC WEB SITE AT [HTTP://WWW.CDC.GOV/TRAVEL/MIDEAST.HTM](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/mideast.htm).

5.B. BECAUSE THE USE OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE GEAR, SUCH AS HELMETS OR FLAK VESTS, IS BOTH A PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL CHOICE, MEDIA WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR PROCURING/USING SUCH EQUIPMENT. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE GEAR, AS WELL AS CLOTHING, WILL BE SUBDUED IN COLOR AND APPEARANCE.

5.C. EMBEDDED MEDIA ARE AUTHORIZED AND REQUIRED TO BE PROVIDED WITH, ON A TEMPORARY LOAN BASIS, NUCLEAR, BIOLOGICAL, CHEMICAL (NBC) PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT BY THE UNIT WITH WHICH THEY ARE EMBEDDED. UNIT PERSONNEL WILL PROVIDE BASIC INSTRUCTION IN THE PROPER WEAR, USE, AND MAINTENANCE OF THE EQUIPMENT. UPON TERMINATION OF THE EMBED, INITIATED BY EITHER PARTY, THE NBC EQUIPMENT SHALL BE RETURNED TO THE EMBEDDING UNIT. IF SUFFICIENT NBC PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT IS NOT AVAILABLE FOR EMBEDDED MEDIA, COMMANDERS MAY PURCHASE ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT, WITH FUNDS NORMALLY AVAILABLE FOR THAT PURPOSE, AND LOAN IT TO EMBEDDED MEDIA IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS PARAGRAPH.

6. SECURITY

6.A. MEDIA PRODUCTS WILL NOT BE SUBJECT TO SECURITY REVIEW OR CENSORSHIP EXCEPT AS INDICATED IN PARA. 6.A.1. SECURITY AT THE SOURCE WILL BE THE RULE. U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL SHALL PROTECT CLASSIFIED INFORMATION FROM UNAUTHORIZED OR INADVERTENT DISCLOSURE. MEDIA PROVIDED ACCESS TO SENSITIVE INFORMATION, INFORMATION WHICH IS NOT CLASSIFIED BUT WHICH MAY BE OF OPERATIONAL VALUE TO AN ADVERSARY OR WHEN COMBINED WITH OTHER UNCLASSIFIED INFORMATION MAY REVEAL CLASSIFIED INFORMATION, WILL BE INFORMED IN ADVANCE BY THE UNIT COMMANDER OR HIS/HER DESIGNATED REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RESTRICTIONS ON THE USE OR DISCLOSURE OF SUCH INFORMATION. WHEN IN DOUBT, MEDIA WILL CONSULT WITH THE UNIT COMMANDER OR HIS/HER DESIGNATED REPRESENTATIVE.

6.A.1. THE NATURE OF THE EMBEDDING PROCESS MAY INVOLVE OBSERVATION OF SENSITIVE INFORMATION, INCLUDING TROOP MOVEMENTS, BATTLE PREPARATIONS, MATERIEL CAPABILITIES AND VULNERABILITIES AND OTHER INFORMATION AS LISTED IN PARA. 4.G.

WHEN A COMMANDER OR HIS/HER DESIGNATED REPRESENTATIVE HAS REASON TO BELIEVE THAT A MEDIA MEMBER WILL HAVE ACCESS TO THIS TYPE OF SENSITIVE INFORMATION, PRIOR TO ALLOWING SUCH ACCESS, HE/SHE WILL TAKE PRUDENT PRECAUTIONS TO ENSURE THE SECURITY OF THAT INFORMATION. THE PRIMARY SAFEGUARD WILL BE TO BRIEF MEDIA IN ADVANCE ABOUT WHAT INFORMATION IS SENSITIVE AND WHAT THE PARAMETERS ARE FOR COVERING THIS TYPE OF INFORMATION. IF MEDIA ARE INADVERTENTLY EXPOSED TO SENSITIVE INFORMATION THEY SHOULD BE BRIEFED AFTER EXPOSURE ON WHAT INFORMATION THEY SHOULD AVOID COVERING. IN INSTANCES WHERE A UNIT COMMANDER OR THE DESIGNATED REPRESENTATIVE DETERMINES THAT COVERAGE OF A STORY WILL INVOLVE EXPOSURE TO SENSITIVE INFORMATION BEYOND THE SCOPE OF WHAT MAY BE PROTECTED BY PREBRIEFING OR DEBRIEFING, BUT COVERAGE OF WHICH IS IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE DOD, THE COMMANDER MAY OFFER ACCESS IF THE REPORTER AGREES TO A SECURITY REVIEW OF THEIR COVERAGE. AGREEMENT TO SECURITY REVIEW IN EXCHANGE FOR THIS TYPE OF ACCESS MUST BE STRICTLY VOLUNTARY AND IF THE REPORTER DOES NOT AGREE, THEN ACCESS MAY NOT BE GRANTED. IF A SECURITY REVIEW IS AGREED TO, IT WILL NOT INVOLVE ANY EDITORIAL CHANGES; IT WILL BE CONDUCTED SOLELY TO ENSURE THAT NO SENSITIVE OR CLASSIFIED INFORMATION IS INCLUDED IN THE PRODUCT. IF SUCH INFORMATION IS FOUND, THE MEDIA WILL BE ASKED TO REMOVE THAT INFORMATION FROM THE PRODUCT AND/OR EMBARGO THE PRODUCT UNTIL SUCH INFORMATION IS NO LONGER CLASSIFIED OR SENSITIVE. REVIEWS ARE TO BE DONE AS SOON AS PRACTICAL SO AS NOT TO INTERRUPT COMBAT OPERATIONS NOR DELAY REPORTING. IF THERE ARE DISPUTES RESULTING FROM THE SECURITY REVIEW PROCESS THEY MAY BE APPEALED THROUGH THE CHAIN OF COMMAND, OR THROUGH PA CHANNELS TO OASD/PA. THIS PARAGRAPH DOES NOT AUTHORIZE COMMANDERS TO ALLOW MEDIA ACCESS TO CLASSIFIED INFORMATION.

6.A.2. MEDIA PRODUCTS WILL NOT BE CONFISCATED OR OTHERWISE IMPOUNDED. IF IT IS BELIEVED THAT CLASSIFIED INFORMATION HAS BEEN COMPROMISED AND THE MEDIA REPRESENTATIVE REFUSES TO REMOVE THAT INFORMATION NOTIFY THE CPIC AND/OR OASD/PA AS SOON AS POSSIBLE SO THE ISSUE MAY BE ADDRESSED WITH THE MEDIA ORGANIZATION'S MANAGEMENT.

7. MISCELLANEOUS/COORDINATING INSTRUCTIONS:

7.A. OASD(PA) IS THE INITIAL EMBED AUTHORITY. EMBEDDING

PROCEDURES AND ASSIGNMENT AUTHORITY MAY BE TRANSFERRED TO CENTCOM PA AT A LATER DATE. THIS AUTHORITY MAY BE FURTHER DELEGATED AT CENTCOM'S DISCRETION.

7.B. THIS GUIDANCE AUTHORIZES BLANKET APPROVAL FOR NON-LOCAL AND LOCAL MEDIA TRAVEL ABOARD DOD AIRLIFT FOR ALL EMBEDDED MEDIA ON A NO-COST, SPACE AVAILABLE BASIS. NO ADDITIONAL COSTS SHALL BE INCURRED BY THE GOVERNMENT TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE IAW DODI 5410.15, PARA 3.4.

7.C. USE OF LIPSTICK AND HELMET-MOUNTED CAMERAS ON COMBAT SORTIES IS APPROVED AND ENCOURAGED TO THE GREATEST EXTENT POSSIBLE.

8. OASD(PA) POC FOR EMBEDDING MEDIA IS MAJ TIM BLAIR, DSN 227-1253, CMCL 703-697-1253, EMAIL TIMOTHY.BLAIR@OSD.MIL.

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