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AMERICAN MILITARY PUBLIC AFFAIRS GUIDANCE:
ON TARGET FOR MILITARY, MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN TELEVISION VIEWER

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Given the enormous amount of written data on the subjects of the U.S.

military – media relationship and the military's handling of journalists in the field, it is clear that

they have always been heated topics of debate throughout the history of American War coverage.

The military concerns itself with waging an effective battle against the nation's enemies with

campaigns designed to fully utilize the principles of war. In this process, secrecy,

professionalism, discipline and deception are not items willingly compromised by force

commanders. Those not responsible for conducting the campaign or supporting the troops could

be conceived of as a risk to themselves and combatants.   The media, on the other hand, has

stood behind their rights to freedom of the press, even in wartime, and "argued that the tradition

of journalists accompanying soldiers on the battlefield was a key pillar of American Democracy

– media presence serves the people's right to know."[1] Yet, "[c]ensorship in some form has

occurred in every major war the United States has fought," Jeffery A. Smith notes, and that in

times of war, the military and president create press restrictions not intended through the First

Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.[2] Given the above circumstances and views, the media and

military could be linked together as opposites with competing interests.

The issues of how to placate journalists, conduct military operations, meet national

interests and the public's need to know came to the fore after the Grenada Operation.   It was

then that the Pentagon embarked on the formulation of comprehensive guidelines concerning the

way in which the media can access the U.S. military in war. This public affairs policy was

originally based on the concept of the press pool, and it has been criticized as failing when the

pools were not allowed access to the front lines.[3]   Critics of the military policy have since

argued that the public's right to know is still suppressed and that the restrictions are un-

Constitutional.[4] But this argument does not consider what the viewing public wants most in time

of war. It is the author's opinion that the media's concern is not always about the Constitution

and press freedom, but about the media's ability to compete in the television marketplace, retain

high ratings and prosper. The U. S. military's public affairs guidelines are more than adequate to

meet national security interests. When America goes to war, the public affairs guidelines suffice

to meet the needs of the military and are a benefit to the media in serving their public.

FRAMEWORK AND BACKGROUND

In exploring this thesis, the author will draw from examples of the military's policy

toward media interests in conflicts of Vietnam, the Gulf War and America's new war on

terrorism. It was in the Gulf War that both media and military were challenged in adhering to a

new policy framework that still exists today. There has been ample time since the conflict to

analyze its credibility. The author will provude a basic overview of how the Public Affairs

policy is designed to function in the battle space and how this policy assists the military in

achieving its aims. In the section following that discussion, the benefits of this policy for the

media will be examined.

While considering the relationship between the military policy, media interests and public

interest and approval, it is important to note that the military-media relationship is linked in

another manner which influences both sides in the crafting of policy and conduct of operations.

Technology has allowed both groups to have far broader impact and effectiveness in their roles

than ever before. For the military, advances in weapons systems have historically increased the

distance between soldier and enemy. For both, advanced communications technologies, such as

the telegraph, brought to bear new issues of speed of information from the battlefield, operational security and a wider circle of influence for reporters reaching policy makers and the public. [5] Later, the radio entered the medium, but it was perhaps the changes in news generation techniques and perceived audience demands brought about by television technology that have made the most significant impact. In this discussion, the author will use predominantly television and cable news systems as examples. This is not to discount the impact of newsprint – from which more situational analysis can be obtained as a result of the editorial process – but to focus on television, the only medium which can bring instantaneous images of war to the American living–room.

The majority of material written about the influence of television on U.S. military policy includes significant discussion about the Vietnam War. Although television images from Vietnam were often two to three days old, they provided the viewing public contrasting views to what the political leadership implied was happening. In *Lights, Camera, War*, Neuman describes the impact of television's Vietnam coverage as having increased audience participation and thus enlarged public opinion, and further mentions that even though public opinion supported the war against communism, the powerful images arriving in living-rooms across America did not support what the government's voice implied as what the troops were doing in Southeast Asia. For military and political leaders at that time, especially President Johnson, the television medium became an obsession.[6] The lack of a clear government message concerning the war's strategic goals and end states on the same television sets in living rooms across America assisted in creating a fast-moving shift toward a lack of support for the war.[7] After withdrawal from Vietnam, Americans turned inward to determine how this had occurred. Political leaders may have blamed the media, and the media, in turn, the political and military

leaders. Robert Elegant, a correspondent during the period, wrote that "[f]or the first time in modern history, the outcome of a war was determined not on the battlefield, but on the printed page and, above all, on the television screen." [8] Ian Stewart draws the conclusion that the media coverage ultimately produced the "Vietnam syndrome," where distrust festered between military and media. [9] Even more damaging were conclusions that although television, alone, did not win or lose the war, it was a significant factor − a lesson which the military took onboard in future operations.

Much has changed since the Vietnam War relative to the speed and volume of information, thanks to new communications technologies. Through the use of satellite uplinks, phone lines and digital technologies, television's ability to bring images into the household has changed the dynamic between decision makers and the setting of policy, particularly when on−scene journalists cover military and international events as they are happening. [10] An examination of *The Penguin Atlas of Media and Information* reveals startling data.   In 1990, 96 to 100 percent of all Americans had a television set in their homes. Between 1998 and 1999 there was an average of 847 television sets per 100 persons, with 98.1 percent of all households having at least one television. By 1999, 76 percent of American households had cable television and over 70 percent had satellite television. [11] A recent Pew Research Center survey conducted after the 9/11 disaster reveals that nine out of ten Americans received their news from television, that cable television was watched for news more so than broadcast network stations, and that only eleven percent used newspapers as a regular source for news.[12]

Television is a primary source of information for Americans. This fact has not eluded the military in planning policy guidance. Television has changed war and politics in a way no other technology could in the past. In a recent lecture, Robert MacNeil drew the conclusion that

television's images link public opinion and national interest: "[i]n issues that touch foreign affairs, the public witnesses the same apparent reality as their leaders. The public is no longer a mass to be sold a policy after it is decided. It is now active in seeing policy made, one might say *getting* policy made."[13] After Vietnam, the military embarked on a quest to find a media policy that could satisfy its need for operational security and when deemed appropriate, allow the independent media reporting needed to retain public approval. It has found such a policy in public affairs guidance.

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The U. S. Department of Defense – Military Public Affairs Policy:

How It Benefits the Military

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The U.S. military has grasped the significance of the capabilities that journalists bring to the battlefield. In considering the advanced information transmission technologies that reporters have available, military leaders understand that, in war, they will be in the eyes of the media and that, if unprepared, they may fall victim to what Neuman describes as the "CNN curve." To fall victim to this curve implies that, when breaking news items are placed instantaneously on television sets across America, political and military leaders may have no option but to immediately invest their energies in justifying, evaluating or commenting upon the crisis or report.[14] For military leaders in operations, the alternatives of either press exclusion or full-time censorship of journalists have been deemed unacceptable after lessons learned from the political fallout after the 1983 Invasion of Grenada.[15] The issue of media control, however, is not completely resolved without a framework of public affairs policy. After examining the military's policies, critics still contend that the military's guidance as a lesser form of censorship.[16]

Current U.S. military public affairs guidance stems from the heated political debate generated after the Grenada invasion. The Sidle Panel, chaired by US Army General Winant Sidle, met in February of 1984 with press representatives to find a common plan that would satisfy the military and the nation's press. [17] Later, after the Gulf War, media representatives met with military representatives to reverse what they termed "damage done by creation of the press pool" and develop principles of war coverage.[18] These principles are, for the most part, the foundation for the latest Joint Chiefs of Staff Public Affairs Doctrine. This policy is intended to serve the security needs of the military while allowing the media to deliver what, in reality, the public wants to view in times of war. It should be noted that it advises the commander on techniques and issues when the decision from national command authority is given to allow media access to the battlefield. In the interest of national security, this decision usually results in specific tailoring of policy based on the operational environment.

The key tenants of the joint policy are that "[t]he military is accountable and responsible to the public for performing its mission of national defense," that "[t]he news media are the principle means of communicating information about the military to the general public," that "PA operations should be consistent with security concerns," and above all "[a]ccuracy and timeliness of information made available to the public is essential in establishing and maintaining credibility." [19] The policy, as written, is quite generous in the extent of structure it promulgates for commanders to deliver to the media representatives. Rather than focus on the details of the guidance, this discussion will focus on ways in which the military uses the policy to get its job accomplished.

The military policy provides a framework for strategic planning and operational leaders. It also offers a chance for journalists to gain an understanding of the nature of specific conflicts.

This has often created a friction of its own, as journalists in a competitive industry struggle to get new information to their networks before their competition. There were also lessons for the military during press briefings in the Gulf War. Military leaders quickly learned how little the media understood military jargon, and how little the media understood real capabilities, such as obtaining accurate bomb damage assessments immediately following a strike.[20] Public affairs guidance encourages assigning journalists to operational units because it is an effective technique in helping the American viewing public better understand the situation that exists for the troops in theater. "Journalists who are assigned to operational units bring to life the dry facts of the news conference by providing the texture, explanation, and context of what is going on. Further, they communicate a human face by telling stories of those directly involved with the mission."[21] The two most significant elements of this policy are the use of media pools and press briefings in the combat theater.

The use of pooling of media talent, that is, allowing a restricted number of journalists access to the battlespace to cover conflict was first used during World War II.[22] Then, journalists were often war correspondents who wore uniforms and participated in combat side-by-side with allied forces. Most commentary related to the modern concept of press pools this author found evaluates those used in the Gulf War of 1991. There, journalists were required to submit their reports to public affairs personnel to screen for breaches of operational security, and then share their experiences with other journalists who could not participate. For the media industry, this pool concept was the only cost-effective method of gaining news in a war that was difficult to reach. "During 'Desert Storm', an astonishing 1,500 journalists swarmed into Saudi Arabia, which was more than the troop contributions by most Coalition members, and three

times the number present on D–Day in 1944; another 1,500 journalists were waiting for accreditation by the time the war ended."[23]

The media pool concept is now designed to function during the first 24 to 36 hours of conflict. However, based on the remoteness of a conflict and security concerns for journalists, this pool concept may last far longer.   Journalists must be accredited by the military, and after returning from operations with designated units, they must share their observations with other media at Joint Information Bureaus. The use of the pool system creates a controlled, secure environment for the press, and an information security environment for the military. But current instructions highlight that the pools are temporary – yielding to more open reporting after the initial few days of a conflict. Even then, journalists are to still have access to all major units, transportation and a means to file their reports, including riding on military vehicles and aircraft.[24]   Implicit in this transportation agreement is the security of journalists in the field, a point worth considering based on the risks for journalists in areas where media are not esteemed in the same manner as in the western nations.

Pools offer another advantage to the military which has received much criticism from the press. Military leaders can allow press pool members to report on selected operations, even if they are not used in the conflict. A well known example remains the amphibious assault exercises conducted offshore Kuwait prior to Operation DESERT STORM. [25] Press pool members were allowed to witness the exercises and reached their own conclusions as to how the war would unfold. This, of course, made television news and ultimately bluffed Iraqi leaders into allocating significant resources to defending that geographic area. Perhaps the amphibious assault could have been a branch plan, but media representatives' articles and books still describe this type of act as disinformation, exploitation and propaganda. [26] The military cannot be

faulted for leaking stories to an information-hungry press. The point here is that the press feels

the need for this level of information. Had the assault actually been planned as the exercise

depicted, there would have been significant American (and Coalition) casualties – thanks to the

press' perceived need to get a breaking, newsworthy story.   Perhaps, as Patrick O'Heffernan

points out, had the media been more understanding in military tactics, they would have retained

an overall better situational awareness of events in the Gulf War.[27]

The public affairs guidance allows for briefings to the press at all levels of command.

Briefings have served the military in a number of ways. It is through the Joint Information

Bureaus created through the public affairs guidance, or the Pentagon newsroom, that media

briefs reach journalists and their audience. With Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (the

Coalition's war on terrorism), the Pentagon serves as the briefing location because it has been

deemed too dangerous to develop Joint Information Bureaus in the Afghanistan theater. During

the Gulf War, briefings were critical for "getting the strategic message out" not only to viewers

in America, but throughout the world. These briefings were tremendously successful and had a

world television audience. A recent analysis of network news reports revealed that more than

half of the news coverage during the conflict were derived from official spokespersons, and that

the contrasting theme of American technological might versus the evil of the Iraqi military

leadership were the primary issues reported. [28]

Military briefings earned their success in the Gulf War by creating unprecedented

linkages between the viewing public and the military.   Military briefers were delivering their

messages through the TV medium – directly to the living rooms and offices of Americans. They

were capable of reaching anyone in the world with a television, including the enemy. The

briefings, which were the only legitimate method reporters could receive information updates

from the strategic and operation levels, actually removed journalistic interpretations of the message as it was delivered when transmitted to television sets in real-time. The public could decide for itself what the message was from the military, and opinion polls at the time revealed tremendous confidence in the military – more so than with the media. [29] From this assessment, it is likely that the public's lack of confidence with the media at this time may have stemmed from journalist's questions during briefings. Based on some of the journalists' poor lines of questioning, it is likely that viewers in their homes could ask the briefers better questions themselves.[30] This public affairs policy is a success for America's military.

The success in this process has fostered a new type of relationship between the military and the media. In the Gulf War, Kosovo Campaign and today, the media needs the briefings to gain information. By the same logic, the military needed the media – particularly worldwide television media – to get the message out to the world.[31] The importance of these briefings cannot be underestimated. In "The Kosovo Crisis and the Media," Dr. Shea underscores the need to have briefers repeat their objectives, reiterate that the alliance or coalition has the moral high ground, use television and shift briefing times to meet media timelines, and have a story ready when breaking events occur. [32] Getting the message out to the world is a key capability of this policy today.

The concept of getting a message to the world can also be accomplished through the military public affairs system through the use of military supplied videotapes and interviews. Vincent adds that "[w]hen it comes to the use of 'packaged' videotapes, the embedded messages can be highly refined, polished, public relations vehicles in which the potential effect has been maximized by the message creator." [33] The strongest memory that this essay's author retains of the Gulf War on American television is the endless stream of aircraft targeting cameras and

optical seekers on missiles that showed successful precision strikes on Iraqi targets. The footage

was aired constantly, on every channel that broadcast news. These images were popular,

bolstered the military's approval ratings and provided television networks imagery to air when

little new was happening on the ground.[34]   Although information is tightly held regarding

coalition operations in the new war in Afghanistan, on October 21, 2001 the Pentagon released

video footage of Special Forces parachuting into a location in Afghanistan. The video, with its

grainy 'night-vision-stealth' feel, bolstered the view of highly capable, technologically superior

forces; alone it could do far more than words in indicating America's response against

terrorism.[35]

The public affairs policy still benefits both military and media with the "new" war – the

asymmetrical war brought about by terrorism.   In the latest conflict stemming from the terrorist

attacks of 9/11, the public affairs policy as described in the JP 3–61 has not been fully put into

effect. This has created controversy within media circles. However, open, independent coverage

is indeed available to those wishing to travel to Afghanistan at their own risk. After three

months of fighting, journalists found that "it was the Taliban that proved the main obstacle to

newsgathering, and as it collapsed, journalists were able to fan out throughout Afghanistan and

have filed many sparkling reports. To date, their reporting on the U.S. Campaign has been very

positive." [36] Drawing from experience during NATO's air campaign in Kosovo, briefers learned

that the military must to decide what's restricted information, not the media. A strike against a

Bosnian Serb missile battery was cancelled after it was reported on television and the Serbs

simply moved its location. [37]   The linkages of media reporting and operational security in the

electronic age have created challenges in allowing unrestricted access to information.

To assist with information flow, briefings are available from the Secretary of Defense at the Pentagon, but it was not until November 2002 that any form of press pool operation was temporarily authorized. [38] Based on security concerns and the covert nature of the war, journalists are viewing this new conflict as perhaps the most restricted in history.[39] But withholding information is a key element in military policy in what started as covert operations in Afghanistan. This new war – instigated by terrorists with highly sophisticated information gathering capabilities - cannot suffer the risk of failure due to press reporting or official leaks, such as those which have already occurred. [40]

The intent of the military policy is to be open to press inquiry and hide nothing. But global information technology has made it a risk to reveal as much about operations as journalists had access to in wars of the past. Recently, correspondent Robert Pritchard noted that, even with heightened restrictions, the media now have access to all but exclusive combat situations; that trends for the future will most likely be more restrictions on information flow concerning the military; and that the military public affairs guidelines continue to support the public's need for information. [41]

The military policy was not designed to foster positive public opinion as an objective, but to provide honest information on operations. It is a success in its current form whether fully implemented or not. By November 2002, a Gallup poll reported extremely high ratings for President Bush's and Secretary Rumsfeld's policies (80 percent); a Pew research Center poll indicated that the military's handling of the information could even be more restrictive (50 percent); and 82 percent of those polled thought that the military was revealing as much as possible about the operation. [42] Apparently, the America's public supports the way in which its government is handling the issues of public affairs guidance and the media

HOW THE POLICY SUPPORTS THE MEDIA

In *War and the Media*, Taylor asserts that the when entering the Gulf conflict, the United States had finally learned how to control an information war based on the lessons of Vietnam, Panama and Grenada. It was necessary to retain not only American public opinion, but also necessary to retain world opinion as coalition forces were tasked to deter and expel Iraqi forces. [43] The military's public affairs policy delivers the information that the media needs to perform this task. In this discussion, the author will illustrate how the policy helps the media in the combat theater. But an even greater significance of the military's policy is its framework linked to changes in the television media empires that deliver information to the American audience. Simply stated, the requirement for high television ratings and the need to profit have transformed the television news industry into a patriotic, entertainment-based military information delivery system that Americans approve of.

The military pool and briefing system acts as immediate compensation for journalists' lack of familiarity with the local combat environment. American journalists have entered conflicts with a limited understanding of the geography, the enemy and the culture in theater. When journalists arrived in Iraq in 1990, there was little background information from which they could draw upon, despite the lengthy Iran–Iraq war. As Sean McKnight reveals, journalists' failure to understand events early in the Gulf War was linked to failures in the academic community in providing useful information about Iraq. This, in turn, led to a high dependence on official sources, what he terms the "information vacuum."[44] Ultimately the media are

dependent upon the military in many situations to gain context and information about what is happening in war.

The military pool system has remained a valuable resource for media; particularly television broadcasts geared at delivering breaking news events, despite repeated criticism. Even after discussions resulting from the exclusion of journalists at the onset of the invasion of Grenada and further dialog after the Gulf War, journalists often indicated unhappiness with the arrangements of pooling reporters, perhaps because they did not want to adhere to the stipulation of sharing information with other media sources. It is interesting to note the shift in priorities when situations preclude the use of pool systems used in the past. In both Bosnia and Kosovo, media members hounded the U.S. to establish a pool system so that they could remain informed.[45] With the current war on terrorism underway and no official pool established in Afghanistan, the press is once again requesting that the government "activate pool coverage of combat operations if that is, under current circumstances, the most likely method of putting reporters close to such operations."[46] Journalists are free to travel to Afghanistan on their own, and many have. That the media needs the security of the pools and the content of the messages in briefings is not a matter to be disregarded.

Perhaps the greatest risk to media in theater without pool support is personal safety. By definition, the military's policy of press pools and integration with troops provides an element of protection that may have been taken for granted during the Gulf War. In an article penned two years after the Gulf War ended, Charles Ricks indicated that threats to journalists were high. Since 1991, over 30 journalists were killed in Yugoslavia and four others in Somalia. Journalists accepting the military public affairs policy were likely to have the protection needed to cover the complete story.[47] The competitive nature of media reporting may force journalists to take undue

risks. As Martin Bell recalls from Bosnia: "The pressure on today's losers to become tomorrow's winner, by venturing that half block further where the fighting was thickest, was clear and unconscionable. Head office was urging them on to greater heroics." [48]

In America's latest war on terrorism, the press pools have not been implemented due to security risks associated with the asymmetric nature of this conflict. From an American viewpoint, the enemy is hidden in the population, wearing civilian attire and possibly changing sides in the conflict as deemed fit for survival. The enemy is not structured in the traditional military sense – with uniforms and services branches that perform operations for the state with a view to keeping within the boundaries of the Law of Armed Conflict and Geneva Convention. The borders are not closed in Afghanistan. Journalists have been free to enter Afghanistan by their own methods and report as they see fit. It is becoming clear to America's media that the right of freedom to the press and unrestricted access may not be values–based consideration held in high regard in such third–world countries. A *USA Today* article of March 2002 notes that nine journalists have been killed in the first six months of fighting in Afghanistan, and that many news reporters were attending "survival" training to increase their chances of avoiding attack.[49] Simply stated, a major benefit to the media within the context of the military's public affairs guidance is the reduced risk to media personnel.

The linkages between journalists, networks, parent companies, advertisers and public opinion have the greatest bearing on the value of the military's public affairs policy. By way of television, viewers become participants in war through their preferred network, and viewership means higher ratings and the potential for more profit. The American public's opinion about what they see has dramatic effects on what television networks will air. Taylor offers an insightful view of public opinion regarding the military's policy during the Gulf War in a

discussion of several public surveys in 1991.   These surveys indicated that the public were more inclined to believe military spokespersons in briefs viewed on live television than that reported by print media sources, and that the public would allow increased censorship of war reporting if it would reduce casualties. [50]   It is likely that media industry owners are more than aware of this fact. The issue of media control in the Gulf through military policies may be interpreted as denying freedom of the press, as most criticisms of the policy will remind us. But the value Americans hold to this ideal in times of war is a more significant issue – it was less important than controlling the press in their reporting. American values were reflected in what the press ultimately reported "As the nation went to war, the press increasingly played up 'yellow ribbon' images, and featured themes of home, community, and military might: core elements of the political culture."[51]

To best analyze the linkages between public affairs designed to allow media access to reporters and why it is so successful in the United States, the recent changes in the media industry should be examined. Media ownership has undergone a significant trend in mergers in the last fifteen years.   The mergers of Turner Broadcasting, Time Warner and AOL bring together newspapers, broadcast stations and entertainment industries. Viacom mergers put it in control of CBS, MTV and Paramount studios. Disney has built an empire from entertainment but now owns the ABC television network.   General Electric, once known for appliances and aircraft systems, owns NBC Broadcasting. "In the anxious world of twenty-first century television both commercial networks and public broadcasters face a long–term, and apparently irreversible, decline in audience numbers. Free–to–air networks in the USA are losing market share - to cable television and to other media markets. Competition for audience share is

becoming more complex and fierce. With an estimated 102.2 million television households in the USA, a single ratings point equals 1.02 million households – a prize worth fighting for." [52]

The bottom line for these organizations is that news performance influences the market share of ratings and ultimately advertising dollars. The few companies that own most of America's media – such as AOL Time Warner, Disney and Viacom – cannot afford to loose money in this highly competitive sector. The media's credibility has a significant influence on viewer ship and advertising dollars. A recent article in *Advertising Age* indicates that advertisers are unlikely to support news programming for which consumers suspect the information to be biased, false or erroneous. [53] Thus, the linkage between media credibility and viewers is established. But this also implies that these organizations will need to air the types of programs that the American public wants to see.

Media mergers and competitiveness have a price. In the highly competitive world of today's journalism, networks have merged to preserve profits, and the news industry has suffered. Most networks have closed international offices where they once had correspondents working. The new model for covering overseas events, particularly when U.S. troops are involved, is what Stephen Hess calls "parachute journalism," where journalists cover a story heavily for a short period of time and then drop coverage. Hess cites such examples with the stories of starvation in Ethiopia in the mid-eighties. "What is needed to retain media attention," Hess notes, "are stories that "sizzle" and also have U.S. troops involvement."[54] The military's public affairs guidance offers these types of journalists the information and context they need to succeed as recent visitors to a conflict.

The competition and pressure to make money is enormous – so much so that the conglomerate owners of television networks are now considering dropping a significant share of

their news coverage during the prime–time hours of 6:30p.m. to 7:00 p.m.. A recent *New York Times* article accentuated the bottom line for network owners, such as Disney, which owns ABC stations. The article highlighted that over $50 million in revenue could be garnered by eliminating the evening news during the times mentioned above. The same article reveals an admission by the CBS network television president that, should he show figure skater Tonya Harding boxing during prime time (as Fox Cable Network has done), it would produce better profits than Dan Rather's evening news. [55]

Meanwhile, competition within the cable news environment remains strong. An article in *Advertising Age* notes that CNN beat all competitors in profit and ratings when the Gulf War erupted, but in "America's New War on Terrorism," CNN has been trounced by the Fox Cable Network, the new leader in the number of households that view cable news. In the meantime, ABC has been considering replacing Ted Koppel's *Nightline* with the comedian David Letterman's show. The value of news stories to media companies is lower than ever. The thinking in this program change was motivated by the idea that viewers would already gone through a full 24-hour news cycle by the time *Nightline* aired – thus making it "old news."[56]

Old news is not good enough in this digital age of broadcasting events as they occur. In *CNN: Selling NATO's War Globally*, authors Herman and Peterson find that the television news media, such as CNN, must attract viewers and retain them in order to stay profitable. This media's emphasis remains "breaking news" stories, speed of transmission without analysis, and a heavy reliance on linkages with government sources. The authors argue that this creates an uncritical media. [57] But the review of public opinion and ratings has shown that this is what the majority of the American public wants to view, and most important of all, that the American public apparently wants to view a phenomenon on their televisions called patriotic journalism.

Patriotic journalism happens because American media empires follow the government line when it comes to war. Despite the self–criticism of the press in all conflicts since Vietnam, the trend is not changing. This trend is strongly depicted now in America's war on terrorism. Broadcasters "sugarcoat" their stories to show support for the President, the military and the new war. [58] Recently, the Fox Network became the new cable leader, featuring a format that epitomizes patriotic journalism. Fox's news formats include "unabashed and vehement support of a war effort, carried in tough–guy declarations often expressing thirst for revenge." [59] Author Bruce Cummings expresses the situation in America exactly:

> [i]magine a war in which the daily horror of modern warfare is kept from the screen, in which the television anchorpeople function as patriots and guardians of military secrets, cheerlead for Presidential and Pentagon policy, and focus on the courage and professionalism of our boys in action or the infallible accuracy of our high-tech weapons, in which the enemy is demonized as cruel and fanatical, in which dissent from the war is represented as miniscule or unpatriotic or both, and in which the war seems mysteriously to be part of some widely shared community feeling, deeply colored by images of good and evil: which war was that?

Cummings's description is not only accurate assessment of the American situation after 9/11, but was a valid description during both the Gulf War and early years of the Vietnam War. [60]

American public opinion, it can be seen, has rallied around the military perspective in conflicts since then, including Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. Patriotic journalism is popular because it fits the linkages needed for media companies to sell news and advertising.

The military policy, with press pools, briefings and gun-camera supplied video, provides the framework from which patriotic journalism can prosper. The linkage between patriotic journalism and ratings does not miss companies wishing to promote their products. McAllister notes that, as in both World Wars, advertisers linked their products with " the use of patriotism, emotionalism, claims of wide support among the populace, and portrayals of the enemy as evil." [61] The linkages are now complete. By following the military policy and procedures, media broadcasters are increasing their profit lines because they are delivering the types of stories that most Americans want to see. It is a powerful force that tends to overtake the discussion about First Amendment Rights and the press' freedom to cover stories independently.

But what happens when the press reports another side of the story? A telling example rests with the Peter Arnett saga during the Gulf War. Arnett was working for CNN and was eventually the sole American reporter in Baghdad able to report live during the war. CNN had the technical capability and political clout to keep Arnett broadcasting while other networks were either expelled or shut down by Iraqi leadership. Taylor suggests that perhaps the funding of $15,000 per week that CNN had channeled to the Iraqi government since November of 1990 to lease two dedicated, independent transmission channels was a motive.[62] That Saddam Hussein understood the value of a media source, which had worldwide coverage to show the horrors of the attacks, is also worth consideration. On two separate occasions, Arnett was taken to bombed sites and then filed reports indicating that Coalition attacks near Baghdad had destroyed a civilian bomb shelter, a baby milk formula factory, and other key civilian infrastructure. Although CNN was astute enough to warn viewers that Arnett's reports at the time were under Iraqi censorship, Arnett delivered the horrors of the attacks to the public exactly as Iraqi forces described them to him and later defended his views despite the military's insistence that they had

been Iraqi military sites. [63] Here, at last, was the television media delivering another perspective, and the results were disastrous for the network. Cummings relates that thousands of letters of protest arrived at CNN seeking to stop the coverage and that a Wyoming senator was considering filing charges of treason for Arnett's views.[64]

Patriotic journalism is a format requirement that most Americans seek from their news channels. But it is not the only requirement. The trend in news coverage in America in the last two decades has changed from what could be considered best for the society as a whole, to what serves corporate owners and shareholders. "More and more, the policy became focused on selecting news that would escalate the ratings. More and more the news content became infotainment – the mix of information and entertainment." [65]   A recent article in the *Columbia Journalism Review* detailed the trends that many television news anchors, such as Dan Rather and Peter Jennings, have witnessed in coverage over the last few decades. These trends include a transition from fact to "softer" television; more discussion on air with less fact; more news channels available to consumers, who tend to change them if uninterested in a story; and an increase in audio, video and imagery to bolster a story. [66] A striking example of network priorities occurred on the 8th of November 2001, when President Bush addressed the nation on television to discuss his policy on the war against terrorism. Two of the three major TV networks chose to air entertainment rather than preempt coverage for the President of the United States.[67]

American television media has indeed worked toward creating war as a form of entertainment. Sean McKnight relates that the value people place on news stories has much to do with their capacity to entertain: "[a] newspaper or television channel that attempted just to educate its customers, rather than entertain them, would quickly discover its ratings declining,

and the Western media – especially in the USA – are exceptionally competitive." [68]   Thus the Western media focused on the threat of the Iraqi Scud missile, overestimated the strength of Iraqi land and air power, and nutured a fear for their potential use of chemical weapons.[69] None of these exaggerations harmed the military; however, as they only rationalized a more robust force requirement and helped justify the huge expense of the operation in the Gulf.

Taken further, an examination of the public's approval for the military public affairs policy, or the military's handling of media, may be linked with the success of the media as a form of entertainment in America. James Combs asserts that the two most popular formats for news today are the "breaking news" events and the "instant documentaries." Given the military policy's formats for direct press pool exposure and briefings, the military briefer has transitioned from spokesperson to narrator of a script that plays in real time before the public. War reaches American viewers as it happens, without the critical analysis and questioning of values. [70] It is a positive and patriotic story - one which American public opinion shows is desired.

Perhaps the moist striking indicator of the American media's priorities is the American networks' failure to win the George Polk Award for investigative journalism after the 9/1 attacks. The Polk committee chose the BBC World Service. [71]   At the time of this writing, the U.S. Federal Court is challenging the Federal Communications Commission to readdress its regulations concerning ownership of media print and broadcasting in any given area. This would ultimately allow the one media corporation owner to control numerous local stations in an area.[72] It is important to note the ramifications of this deregulation. Fewer independent, local stations will have the control to decide what they wish to air. Moreover, the content of news journalism will remain patriotic, "infotainment," no matter which station is selected. Again, in the model of patriotic and entertainment journalism, this is another benefit the media will have attained by

following the guidelines of the military policy when in theater.   How does the national policy

regarding media involvement in war stand in the American mind now that the war against

terrorism is underway? Paul K. McMasters cites a survey conducted by The Freedom Forum's

First Amendment Center that indicates that 70 percent still feel that the government should

restrain the press.[73]   The media, it seems, will be likely to follow military public affairs policy

for a long time to come.

The U. S. military's public affairs guidelines are an excellent framework from which to

meet national security interests in time of war. They also serve as a framework that provides the

media with information, experience and context in an unfamiliar environment. As regulations,

they are more than adequate when situations permit their full use. However, even in the most

restrictive media environments, such as is the case during America's current war on terrorism,

the public affairs policy still allows media the type of access they really need. The media

challenge of First Amendment rights and a free press are worthy of discussion, but are

superceded not only by national security, but also pragmatically by the needs of the media's

parent organizations to garner public support, ratings and advertising dollars to survive. The

argument is academic. In times of war, most Americans are willing to have the press muzzled

and want patriotic journalism.   In summary, Johana Neuman offers her prediction for the future

of press reporting in war:

> There will be war in the time of digital technology, real war that kills people and leaves
>
> battle scars among soldiers and generals both. But the military will seek more than ever
>
> to contain information about war, to restrict the length of war, the better to fight war
>
> off–screen. In the computer age, the public is a group of 'users', because they will use
>
> technology to ferret out information. Journalists like to gloat that digital technology will

make them independent of the military in wartime, giving them an ability to broadcast live from the war zone, freeing them from the military's control over transportation and dissemination of their copy. [74]

Digital technology is, however, already upon us, and the American media has opted to stay with the military's public affairs guidance.

ENDNOTES

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2 Jeffery A. Smith, *War & Press Freedom: The Problem of Prerogative Power*, New York, N. Y.: Oxford University Press, 1999. (p 27).

3 Bernard E. Trainor, 'The Military and the Media: A Troubled Embrace," *Parameters*, Volume XX, No. 4, December 1990. (pp 9-11).

4 John R. MacArthur, "Unleash The Press," *The Nation*, New York, N.Y., November 19, 2001, Available from http://proquest.umi.com, [03 March 2002].

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6 Ibid**,** (pp 169–183).
        Neuman argues that television wasn't responsible for losing the war in Vietnam, but that it put a number of issues in front of the American public, particularly a disconnect between what information was provided by political leadership and what people interpreted from their televisions and other media. Additionally, political leadership, particularly President Johnson, wasn't familiar with the benefits of using the same medium to bolster the public. " Johnson was obsessed with television – he was the first president to line up three TV sets in his office so he could watch all the network news shows at once–but it was not kind to him. The new medium vexed him, defying his best efforts to reach the public and mocking his intentions by highlighting the hound–dog look of his face." (p 175) , and,
        "Lyndon Johnson's presidency was destroyed not by television pictures of the Vietnam War but by his own inability to sell the policy–on television and in other ways–to the public. Perhaps the war was unsaleable, but it is not television's fault that it was unpopular." (p 177).

7 Ibid, (pp 173-177).

8 Robert Elegant, cited in *War & Press Freedom: The Problem of Prerogative Power*, Jeffery A. Smith, author, New York, N. Y. : Oxford University Press, 1999. (p 198).

9 Ian Stewart, "Reporting Conflicts: Who Calls The Shots?" in *The Media And International Security*, Stephen Badsey and Matthew Midlane, eds., Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers. 2000. (pp 66–67).
        "The negative tone of media coverage, it has been argued, dissolved the support for the war in the United States. Even more damaging, military commanders in theater, increasingly aware of the coverage their actions might engender on the small screen, were inhibited militarily. This is the Vietnam syndrome, a cultural legacy that has colored attitudes towards the media coverage of war ever since."

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25 Jeffery A. Smith, *War & Press Freedom: The Problem of Prerogative Power*, New York, N. Y.: Oxford University Press, 1999. (p 205).
        "Schwartzkopf, meanwhile, kept the press expecting an amphibious assault on Kuwait City, a feint that fooled both Iraq, which kept ten divisions looking the wrong way, and the news media, which kept twenty-two of the fifty-three marine pool reporters waiting offshore for an attack that never occurred. Reporters were not watching movements to the west, where soldiers and supplies were being taken for the flanking maneuver." (p 205).

26 Heikki Luostarinen, "Innovations of Moral Policy," in *Triumph of the Image,* Hamid Mowlana, George Gerbner and Herbert I. Schiller, eds., San Francisco, CA: Westview Press 1992. (p 130).

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Also: "Above all, however, perhaps the most important lesson to be learned form the Gulf War is the need to redefine the relationship between the media and their audience. When the authorities can speak directly to the audience via live television, rather than indirectly via the interpretations with which journalists have traditionally informed their readers and viewers of what was going on, the gap between government and governed is narrowed substantially." (p 272).

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        "That the public sympathized in large part with Pentagon briefers attempting to win a war rather than pesky reporters asking banal questions is not a surprise. What was unexpected is the depth of public anger at the press. In the Persian Gulf, reporters' actions seemed to infuriate the public, which saw in questions at briefings a cerain arrogance, and dullness." (p 214).

[31] Richard C. Vincent, " CNN: Elites Talking To Elites, ", in *Triumph of the Image,* Hamid Mowlana, George Gerbner and Herbert I. Schiller, eds., San Francisco, CA: Westview Press 1992. (p 181).
        "At the time of the war, CNN was legally received in more than one hundred countries. Unlike other news networks, CNN enjoyed a more lucrative financial situation because it collected advertising and cable fee revenues in addition to news service fees.   Its worldwide visibility had also given CNN extremely good access to world leaders for stories and interviews. While CNN depended on these elites for its news and information, elites also relied on CNN." (p 181).

[32] Dr. Jamie P. Shea, "The Kosovo Crisis and the Media," in *Compendium of Readings, Volume V – Communications and Media Relations,* Toronto, Canada: Canadian Forces College. 2001. (pp 52–54).

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