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MEDIA AS THE DOMINANT FACTOR IN MODERN CONFLICT

Maj C.A. Gillis

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> *Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets – Napoleon Bonaparte*
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> *I found the most challenging duties in Iraq to be the press room in Baghdad – Lt. Gen William Caldwell IV, Commander, NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan*

The Canadian population is bombarded daily with images, reports and "breaking news" clips of conflicts from all over the globe. Images and reports are broadcast by media in near "real-time" through a myriad of outlets including traditional television, but more commonly through the internet. Warfare has continued to evolve, passing through the epochs of total warfare and nuclear warfare in the 20th century and morphing into a new era of warfare, characterized by the dominant importance of information and public support for any military operation. This public support is a vulnerability of western militaries and always being targeted. Military thinkers refer to this current state of warfare as "fourth generation warfare".[1]

In fourth generation warfare, western militaries no longer face a foe dug in along defensive positions or grouped in recognizable formations. In recent conflicts such as Afghanistan or current conflicts such as the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq in the Levant (ISIL) western militaries face an internet savvy, social media savvy foe that operates as comfortably in the media and cyberspace as they do on the physical

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[1] "Irregular Warfare: After Smart Weapons, Smart Soldiers," *The Economist ,* (Oct 25th, 2007) : 1, http://www.economist.com/node/10015844.

battlefield. These non-state actors and religious ideologues know no boundaries or conventions of war. They target public support and the will of the western nation to continue to fight as much as the actual armed forces they face in physical combat.

U.S. doctrine recognizes that current and future adversaries will continue to operate in relatively unregulated spaces such as cyberspace, coordinating their efforts with complex information campaigns designed to magnify the impact of relatively small actions in combat.[2] The advent of the Internet means war is now a click away for the average citizen and therefore, for the military, managing as much of the message that is flowing back to the domestic population during operations is of significant importance.

The media has always had a significant impact in Post-1945 conflict. This paper argues that the U.S. military's mismanagement of the media was the dominant factor in the U.S. defeat in Vietnam, and similar mismanagement of the media by the Canadian military had a significant negative impact on recent Canadian operations in Afghanistan. It will be further demonstrated that in today's fourth generation warfare, the media continues to play a decisive role in garnering and maintaining public support and thus, political will for military operations. Poor management of the media by western militaries has proven catastrophic in certain conflicts and the media must remain a critical component of military planning in any future operation.

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[2]   United States. Department of Defense. *Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats Joint Operating Concept (JOC) v. 2.0*, US DoD, (17 May 2010) 12-13.

This paper addresses the complex relationship between the military and the media. First, a review of the evolution of this enigmatic relationship, tracing the increased role media has played in conflict will provide important context for this paper's analysis. The media's effect on U.S. military operations in Vietnam will next be examined and coupled briefly with an overview of its incorporation of lessons learned in Iraq 1991 and 2003. Finally, this paper examines the Canadian military-media relationship during operations in Kandahar, Afghanistan, demonstrating that the challenges in managing the media faced by the U.S. in Vietnam resonate today, despite the advent of technology and near "real-time" reporting. Without doubt, the importance of the media cannot be overlooked in today's modern battle-space and any commander who fails to manage the message of the media does so at his own peril.

Evolution of the Military-Media Relationship

To understand the media's importance to military operations, one must understand the symbiotic nature of the military-media relationship and the media's role in society. Clausewitz wrote that war did not exist independently, but was heavily influenced by social and political factors.[3] Clausewitz described the nation-state in terms of a trinity consisting of the military, the population and the government. Successful

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[3] Antulio Echevarria *Clausewitz & Contemporary war*, (Oxford:Oxford University Press, 2007), 69.

nations in war relied on the artful military commander to harness the population's angers and passions to achieve the goals of the nation as directed by the government.[4] This too is a concept that one can see in fourth generation warfare as the media links social motive and political will. If the public likes the information it sees, it will lend its support to the mission and likewise political support for the mission will be increased. Managing the media is inherently important to the military as the media is the primary mechanism through which the military garners public support for its pursuit of the nation's goals.

Traditionally, as nations entered conflict, the role of the media was to *maintain* national morale and public support.[5] This was easily accomplished during the World Wars of the 20th Century as virtually no dissent existed amongst the populations of the Allied nations. Information was controlled via government sponsored propaganda and censorship in conjunction with a supportive media who *believed* that its role was to support the cause of the nation.[6] However, these traditional conflicts dealt with large scale, existential national threats, which are no longer seen in modern conflict. Today, the

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[4] Sebastian Gorka, "The Age of Irregular Warfare: So What?" *Joint Force Quarterly* (July 2010), 36, http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jfq/jfq-58.pdf.

[5] Maj P.W.D. Edwards, "The military-media relationship- A time to redress the balance?" *The RUSI Journal* , 143, no.5 (Oct 1998): 43. http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03071849808446309#abstract.

[6] Robin Brown, "Clausewitz in the Age of CNN: Re-thinking the Military-Media Relationship" In *Framing Terrorism: The News Media, The Government & The Public* (New York: Taylor And Franci Books, Inc, 2003), 46.

media does not hold such strong loyalties to the military or the government but exercises greater influence in society and access to information on the battlefield than it has ever had. If the military cannot influence the message its public is receiving, it will be significantly challenged to succeed against media savvy opponents such as ISIL.

Post-Cold War, western governments have required the public to support conflicts that pose no true existential threat to the nation, such as interventions in Bosnia, Iraq, Afghanistan and ISIL. With no clear existential threat to the nation, the stakes simply are not as high. The public is more open to question and criticize the ongoing conflict, receiving its information through mass media and the Internet while simultaneously voicing its opinions and concerns through the same outlets. This change in dynamic has altered the military-media relationship as the military can no longer count on a blindly supportive media, nor the time to plan strategic responses.[7] It is in the military's interest to monitor and influence the message before it reaches the public as the military will have little time to react in today's environment.

The creation of the 24 hour news cycle combined with advances in technology, has also altered the military-media relationship. Media can react to changing situations quicker, gather information and transmit this data back to waiting societies faster than governments and the military can.[8] As Major General Mark Hertling of the US Army, noted " …We're sharing the area of operation with journalists…and a host of others…

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[7]   Edwards, *The Military-Media relatoionship…. 43.*
[8]   Brown, *Clausewitz in the Age of CNN…*, 46.

my soldiers and I have been amazed at reporters' ability to file quickly from the most

austere conditions."[9] The actual conduct of war often now holds greater importance than

the outcome, as the *public* knows how its military is conducting operations soon after, or

even at the same time as politicians and military officials find out. This gives the public

unparalleled influence in military operations as politicians and military leadership can no

longer ignore or completely control the media spin on military operations.[10]

Media response, driven by an increased access to technology, has produced near

"real-time" reporting capability. This poses significant perils for militaries in fourth

generation warfare as they cannot control the flow of information or situate the

information in a favorable context. The speed of reporting has come to often outpace the

action of actual war. Without major news events on a daily basis to feed the 24 hour news

cycle, small events are over analyzed and commented on, significantly influencing both

public and political perception of how the conflict is transpiring.[11] As noted scholar

Robin Brown points out, " … the modern political class is highly sensitive to media

commentary,… shaping how war is presented and analyzed is an inescapable requirement

[for the military]."[12] Failure to manage how war is presented has led to a public

consumed by images of graphic violence with minimal context and a sense that if a

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[9]   Thom Shanker, "The Military-Media Relationship A Dysfunctional Marriage?" *Military Review,*(September-October 2009): 5.
http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/milreview/shanker_mil_media.pdf
[10]   Edwards, *The military-media relationship…* 44.
[11]   Brown, *Clausewitz in the Age of CNN…* 48.
[12]   *Ibid.*, 48.

conflict is not on CNN or other mass media outlets, then the conflict is not a genuine conflict.[13]

Politicians are often confronted by controversial images provided by the mass media as the pace of broadcasting in the media outstrips the military's capacity to brief its political leaders. President George Bush's press secretary remarked during Gulf War I; "In most of these International crises now, we virtually cut out the State department and the desk officers … Their reports are still important, but don't get here in time for the decisions to be made."[14]

If the political leadership is being informed by the media regarding military operations before the military is able to, political interventions can take place which threaten military freedom of movement and place limits on weapon use and troop deployments that adversely impact tactical decisions.[15] An example of this was seen in Kosovo in 1999 where the UK Royal Air Force was forced by political policy to operate at 15,000 feet above ground in complete contravention of tested tactics of flying at 50 feet above ground, in order to maximize safety and achieve better visibility.[16] For an organization such as the military that manages risk and human lives, political

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[13]   Frank Stech, "Winning CNN Wars", *Parameters,* (Autumn 1994): 38.
http://www.peace.ca/winningcnnwars.htm
[14]   *Ibid.* 38.
[15]   Sarah Maltby, "The mediatization of the military", *Media War & Conflict,* 5, no. 3, (2012): 261.
[16]   *Ibid.*, 261.

interventions that affect tactical decisions are more than an annoyance, they risk operational effectiveness.

The lack of a true existential threat, the advent of the 24 hour news cycle and the advanced speed of reporting have contributed to the altered military-media relationship. The media's role in society has changed from a loyal supporter of political will and the military, to a neutral observer of events with minimal loyalties. The desire for 24 hour reporting, fueled by technological advances has spurred media reporting to outpace the military in processing and passing information to the public and political leaders. In fourth generation warfare which values information and messaging so dearly, this is an unacceptable situation for western militaries. However, the military's inability to manage the media message is not a new phenomenon based solely on technological advances. It has been a challenge for the military dating back to the Vietnam War. The mismanagement of media in Vietnam contributed significantly in creating a strategic defeat for the U.S., despite numerous tactical military victories.

The U.S. Military-Media Relationship in Vietnam

The war in Vietnam ushered in a new era in the military-media relationship. "The most notable new source of national power in 1970, as opposed to 1950, was the national media, meaning here the national TV networks, … magazines … and the major

newspapers …"[17] Throughout the war, a significant transition occurred as mass media,

primarily Television, gained significant prominence. Media's influence grew, as much of

the North American public rated Television media higher than the U.S. government in the

"…amount of influence they had on decisions or actions affecting the nation as a

whole".[18] In the latter half of the war, the media became the key significant adversary for

the military, not the North Vietnamese. Journalist Robert Elegant asserts; "For 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."[19]

At its outset, the public, via the media, had a supportive view of the war. At the

end of 1965, 59% of US citizens felt that sending combat troops to Vietnam was not a

mistake.[20] The military was successfully balancing Operational security with the media's

need to know. This was easily accomplished early in the war as there was limited media

coverage. However, as the war progressed, the military would find it increasingly

difficult to manage the media as numbers swelled. In 1964 there was 40 media

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[17]   Samuel Huntington, Michel Crozier and Joji Watanuki, " The United States", in *The Crisis of Democracy Report on the Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission* (New York, New York University Press, 1975), 98.

[18]   *Ibid.*, 98 This quote is taken from a Survey published in the U.S. News and World Report, 22Apr 1974 .

[19]   Robert Elegant, "How to lose a War.", *Reprinted from Encounter (London)*, 57, no. 2(August 1981) 73. http://academics.wellesley.edu/Polisci/wj/Vietnam/Readings/elegant.htm

[20]   William Hammond, *Public Affairs, The Military and the Media, 1962-1968,* (Washington: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1990), 227.

correspondents grouped in Saigon and by 1966 that number had risen to 282

correspondents.[21] This rapid rise in media interest in the war forced the military to deal

with the press seriously. However, the military struggled to understand the importance of

perception and media spin on their actions and did not know how to mitigate it.

Slowly, distrust began to build between the media and the military. As journalists

fought for every scrap of information in order to feed a voracious appetite back home

regarding the war, a feeling of irritation developed between the press corps and the

Military Assistance Command- Vietnam (MACV) which was responsible for dealing

with the media.[22] The MACV's daily media briefings, known as the "5 O'Clock follies",

were not always viewed credibly by the media as the military often placed a Junior

Officer lacking combat experience in front of reporters to deliver a stock briefing.[23] This

began to erode the credibility of the military in the media's eyes.

The military's changing dynamic with the media is exemplified in General

Westmoreland's response to media coverage of operations in the Ia Drang Valley in

1965. The U.S. military had deliberately expressed a victorious interpretation of the

events, but journalists' questioned whether a great victory had truly occurred, and

suggested that MACV was glossing over less desirable details. Westmoreland accused

the media of informing the enemy of American vulnerabilities and lowering morale of

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[21]   *Ibid.,* 197.

[22]   *Ibid.,* 198.
[23]   *Ibid.,* 240.

troops in Vietnam and American families back in the United States.[24] MACV did not

realize that access to information in Vietnam had improved in conjunction with the

numbers of media present. Glowing accounts of victories could easily be verified and the

military's failure to include less desirable facts amongst its press releases gave an

impression of propaganda rather than honesty for the media. In trying to control the

message, the military had lost the strategic effect of its tactical victory.

The discord in the military-media relationship translated into critical reporting of

events in Vietnam, and by 1966, the public's view of military operations had become

wary. An article in the *Nation* quoted a Justice of the Peace in Auburn, Washington who

held a popular view amongst the public; " I only know what I deduce from the

newspapers on Vietnam … the way they censor the news [on Television] nowadays,

how'n hell can you know anything?"[25] Military leaders in Vietnam compounded the

growing distrust. In efforts to control the release of disparaging information, General

Westmoreland stated; "Since the press has no way of finding out about [Air] strikes in

North Vietnam until we announce them … an error in target can be protected until I feel

it is to our advantage to notify the press."[26] This strategy could only be successful if the

press did not find out about the Air strikes before they were briefed. Westmoreland was

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[24]   *Ibid.* 213.

[25]   Robert S. Johnson, "To get the Truth…. I Just Don't Know",*The Nation*, November 14, 1966, 503.
[26]   Hammond, *Public Affairs…* 206.

playing a dangerous game with credibility, as media had wide access to sources of information including leaks, embedded journalists and of course, U.S. troops.

The U.S. military handled embedded journalists just as poorly as the press corps. Some may point out that since war was never officially declared, the military could not invoke stringent regulations to censor the media.[27] Yet the military had successfully controlled the message early in the war, unaffected by its lack of authority to censor the media. The absence of authority to impose complete censorship on the media did not demand that the military do virtually nothing to influence the message. However, the military ultimately requested that embedded journalists simply use self-imposed, voluntary censorship in the absence of regulations.[28] Thus, there was no controls placed on embedded journalists and they had significant scope to report with minimal military control over the content. It is here that the military-media relationship truly degraded.

Following the Tet Offensive in 1968, which was viewed as a defeat at home and by the press in Vietnam, the media began to openly challenge America's involvement in the conflict.[29] As the embedded journalists continued to report on the futility of the fighting in Vietnam, the military began to view the media as an adversary, blaming them

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[27] Kylie Tuosto, " The "Grunt Truth" of Embedded Journalism: The New Media/Military Relationship", *The Stanford Journal of International Relations,* 10, no.1, (Fall/Winter 2008): 21, https://web.stanford.edu/group/sjir/pdf/journalism_real_final_v2.pdf.
[28] *Ibid.*
[29] *Ibid.*

for contributing to the growing stalemate.[30] There is some empirical evidence to support

the military's position. Before Tet, positive television reports on the military's progress in

Vietnam outnumbered negative ones 10 to 1, however after Tet, that ratio had balanced.[31]

In the next section, it will become clear that it was not the tactical defeat of Tet, but rather

the military's lack of control on report content and degraded relationship with journalists

that created this adversarial dynamic.

Popular amongst journalists is the argument that the press was simply "mirroring"

the dissent back in the U.S., recognized academically as the "Mirror theory of news".[32]

However, this explanation is oversimplified, as many journalists were guilty of selective

reporting in Vietnam. Robert Elegant, having seen the numerous corpses of civilian

adults and children executed by the Viet Cong, questioned; "Why … did we not report

about North Vietnamese strategy at least as extensively as of the My Lai massacre and

other … incidents that were definitely not part of the U.S. policy in Vietnam?"[33] A better

question may ask why the military *allowed* selective reporting to happen? The mutual

lack of trust between the military and the media created journalists that were motivated to

oppose the war, choosing to report stories that fueled dissent back in the U.S. It being too

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[30]   *Ibid.*
[31]   Daniel C. Hallin, The Media, the War in Vietnam, and Political Support: A Critique of the Thesis
of Oppositional Media, *The Journal of Politics*, 46 (1984), 9.

[32]   *Ibid.,* 9.
[33]   Elegant, *How to lose a War… 73-90*

late to repair the relationship and with no controls in place to stop it, the military could do little about selective, critical reporting.

By the 1970's, the military and government had grown distrustful of the media. Even President Nixon viewed the media as oppositional stating; "Media seems to be our greatest enemy!"[34] The war coverage was extensively focused on body counts, reporting weekly scores of killed, wounded and missing U.S. troops.[35] The military had lost complete control over the message. No longer were media outlets reporting on positive tactical results of U.S. forces. Rather, constant images of violence and aggression were being broadcast into U.S. homes nightly in sharp contrast to the early stages of the war, causing "serious prejudice to the American Army is [*sic*] the eyes of its population."[36] The tactical fight still progressed, but strategically, the fight was lost at home.

Clearly, as the Vietnam War progressed, the military mismanaged the media covering the war. It would be too strong to say that mismanagement of the media was the sole cause of the U.S. defeat in Vietnam, but poor management of the media led to plummeting public support for the war. Low public support created Political exhaustion in the conflict. The war simply was no longer tenable for the U.S. government in the

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[34]   Andreea Rinceanu and Cristiana Niculescu, "The relationship between military and mass media", *Bulletin scientifique en langues etrangeres appliques,* Online, no.2 (2013): 2, http://revues-eco.refer.org/BSLEA/index.php?id=461.

[35]   Oscar Patterson III, "If the Vietnam War had been Reported under Gulf War Rules", *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media,* 39, no.1 (Winter 1995): 27, http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/08838159509364286

[36]   Rinceanu and Niculescu, *The relationship between …*3.

domestic political climate of the 1970's;" … the political pressures built up by the media had made it quite impossible for Washington to maintain even the minimal material and moral support that would have enabled the Saigon regime to continue effective resistance.[37]

The Clausewitzian trinity of Military, public (the governed) and the Government had been undone by a media that was no longer a conduit of public support for military operations in Vietnam. The lack of controls on media access and reporting, the lack of credible reporting by the military and the deliberate withholding of negative information by the military destroyed the trust of the media. This created an adversarial dynamic that led to a sharp decline in media support for the war, eroding public support and ultimately political will to carry on the war. The mismanagement of the media was the most significant factor that led to the U.S. defeat.[38]

Lessons Learned applied in Iraq 1991 & 2003

The mistrust between military and media in the U.S. lingered in the decades that followed Vietnam. However, valuable lessons were learned in Vietnam by the U.S. military regarding the media. The 1991 Gulf War provides a good example of management of the military-media relationship. In the Gulf War, the U.S. military

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[37]   Elegant, *How to lose a war…*, 73-90.

[38]   Patterson III, *If the Vietnam War…,* 20

instituted 12 rules for media, regulating their reporting.[39] These regulations did much to repair the military-media relationship, allowing for clear application of control by the military without irritating the media with confusing policies. Unlike in Vietnam, the public received sterile televised images emphasizing highly precise targeting with minimal collateral damage, a far cry from the violent images portrayed on television during the Vietnam War.[40] Public support for the war, albeit a significantly shorter conflict than Vietnam, remained highly favorable throughout. Public approval of both the media and the military soared with 80% of the public rating media coverage as good or excellent and favorable opinions of the military increasing by 60%.[41] The U.S. military had found a way to balance managing the media without being accused of propaganda.

In Iraq 2003, the U.S. military again faced a changing relationship with the media. The development of technology, particularly the internet, made managing the media in theatre extremely difficult. Rather than pooling media under the "12 rules" of 1991, the U.S. military decided to place embedded reporters in ground units for extended periods. The decision was made to place over 600 journalists within individual military units.[42] This was an effort to recognize the symbiotic nature of the military-media relationship.

The military needs favorable media support to maintain or increase public support and the media needs the military to allow it to fulfill its mission and inform the

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[39]   *Ibid.*
[40]   Rinceanu and Niculescu, *The relationship between…*, 3.

[41]   *Ibid.*, 21.
[42]   *Ibid.* 657.

public.[43] The purpose of the embed policy was two-fold. First, the military wanted to "facilitate maximum, in-depth coverage of U.S. forces", and secondly, to influence public perception by telling the "story" before it could be distorted or placed in a larger context.[44] On the surface, this policy looked to simply be an efficient way to ensure transparent reporting, but in reality, it provided the military with an excellent method to manage the media message.

Embedded journalists are so involved in small unit tactical operations, that they cannot see larger contexts for their reports, and have a tie to the troops they are moving with. This tends to impose a natural level of self-censorship as the embedded journalist develops ties to the individual soldiers.[45] In an era of "real-time" reporting, the embedded journalist is an attractive option for both the military and the media alike. The media reap the benefits of instantaneous reporting that is desired by 24 hour news channels and an increasingly Internet driven society. The military gain distinct control over that message without appearing to be dictating the message to the media. The hostility of the post-Vietnam War era was soothed significantly as the media not only participated in the

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[43] Andrew Cortell, Robert Eisinger and Scott Althaus, Why Embed? Explaining the Bush Administration's Decision to Embed Reporters in the 2003 Invasion of Iraq", *American Behavioural Scientist*, 52, no.5, (January, 2009), 659, http://abs.sagepub.com/content/52/5/657.refs

[44] Tuosto, "*The "Grunt Truth"*...21-22.

[45] *Ibid.*, 22-23.

program but helped develop and implement it.[46] The embed program in Iraq 2003 was a

resounding success for the U.S. military in managing the military-media relationship.

Canada's Military-Media Relationship in Kandahar, Afghanistan

Canada has faced many of the same challenges that the U.S. military has faced in

managing the military-media relationship. Both militaries have had sour experiences in

the past with media, the U.S. military in Vietnam and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF)

endured the Somalia Affair in the 1990's. Like the U.S. military, the CAF recognizes the

importance of the media in modern conflict. The CAF has incorporated the media in its

comprehensive approach to military operations, using the JIMP model (Joint,

Interagency, Multinational, Public) to define key elements that drive operations in

modern warfare.[47] The "public" aspect of JIMP focuses on public trust and support, and

asserts that all Canadian military operations must account for public support and elements

of the media to have success in modern warfare.[48] This recognition of the media's

importance drove the CAF's treatment of media in Kandahar, Afghanistan and affected

their training for troops deploying to Kandahar. The CAF instilled a media training

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[46]   Cortell et al, *Why Embed…*, 672-673.

[47]   Lgen Andrew Leslie, Peter Gizewski and Lcol Michael Rostek, "Developing a Comprehensive Approach to Canadian Forces" *Canadian Military Journal,* 9, no. 1, (2009): 12-14, http://www.journal.dnd.ca/vo9/no1/doc/04-leslie-eng.pdf

[48]   *Ibid. 14-15.*

program in Canada, incorporating it into the collective training event that all CAF

personnel underwent before deployment, in order to better prepare Canadian troops for

dealing with the media.[49]

Although Canada's troop commitment in Kandahar was microscopic in

comparison to the U.S. in Vietnam or Iraq, similar key challenges confronted the CAF in

managing its relationship with the media. Controlling access to information, limiting the

content of media reports and lacking a full understanding of second-order effects of its

media policies were key challenges for the CAF, as they were for the U.S. military in

Vietnam. Overarching these challenges was maintaining public support for the mission,

as discussed in the first section of this paper and reinforced through the examination of

the U.S. experience in Vietnam. Unlike in Vietnam, the CAF was now dealing with a

media that could truly report from anywhere anytime. This advanced capability only

reinforced the importance of the military-media relationship as opposed to altering the

relevance of any of those key challenges. The challenges the U.S. military faced in

Vietnam remained just as credible in Kandahar, despite the advanced technology of the

21st Century.

When the CAF took over responsibility for Kandahar province in 2006, they did

so with lethargic interest in the Kandahar mission at home.[50] The CAF-media relationship

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[49]   Robert Bergen, "Censorship; the Canadian News Media and Afghanistan: A historical
Comparison with Case Studies", *Calgary Papers in Military and Strategic Studies,* Occasional Paper, no.3,
(2009): 35, http://cpmss.journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/cpmss/article/view/40

in Kandahar was in its infancy after a quiet period of deployment in Kabul. Less than 10

media outlets were in Kandahar in early 2006 and only one embedded journalist from the

Toronto Star newspaper was deployed with Canadian forces.[51] The CAF developed a

"hybrid" approach to managing the media as interest grew. The Canadian military relied

heavily on embedded journalists in a style similar to the U.S. military in Iraq 2003 while

also maintaining traditional media pools reporting unilaterally back to affiliated networks

or newspapers.[52] As the security situation in Kandahar deteriorated, embedding

journalists with frontline Canadian units became the norm as journalists signed up to the

Canadian Forces Media Embedding Program (CFMEP).[53]

The CFMEP was designed to ensure that Canadians got " … the great story of the

activities and achievements of their soldiers…"[54] This plan was critical to the CAF's

ability to manage journalists in Kandahar. By November 2009, media interest had grown

in the Canadian mission with over 60 media organizations represented and the CAF

accommodating on average 14 embedded journalists at any given time.[55] The CFMEP,

enforced a set of "ground rules" that journalists had to agree to, designed to protect key

types of information from reports while assuring journalists that derogatory or negative

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50   Capt(N) Chris Henderson, "Reporting Live from Kandahar", *Canadian Military Journal*, 7, no. 2, (Summer, 2006): 85. http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vo7/no2/views-vues-eng.asp
51   *Ibid.,* 85.
52   *Ibid.,* 86.
53   Allan Thompson, "Outside the Wire", *Media*, 12, no.3 (Winter 2007): 9, http://caj.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/mediamag/winter2007/mediawinter2007.pdf

54   Email: from Maj Andre Salloum to Maj Cory Gillis, *FW: Media Embeds - FY 09/10 and FY10/11*, dated 0935hrs, 4/9/2015
55   *Ibid.*

information would not be censored without operational need.[56] The CAF avoided the

mistake of unfettered embedded journalism that plagued the U.S. military in Vietnam,

incorporating the lessons learned in Iraq in 1991 by creating a Canadian version of the

U.S. Military's "12 rules" in the CFMEP.

Canadian media were based in large installations such as Kandahar airfield and.

their movement was also restricted. They were shuttled out to units for fixed periods of

time, with the caveat that operational reasons could trump the journalist's right to

deploy.[57] Unfortunately, the CAF did not foresee that its heavy emphasis on embedded

journalism, would reduce the media focus to strictly reporting through the lens of the

front line soldier. The result was the loss of any context regarding other non-kinetic

efforts by the CAF in Afghanistan and the inception of a body count focused media, a

problem that the U.S. military also faced in Vietnam.

One of the biggest challenges of today's fourth generation warfare is the disdain

the general public has for large numbers of casualties. Unlike the U.S. experience in

Vietnam, every individual casualty is reported through the 24 hour news cycle, as soon as

possible. As Jan Rosender remarked; "The public knows immediately that a NATO

soldier has been killed in Afghanistan; soon after, we know the nationality. Hopefully we

do not find out the name until family has been notified."[58] The media's intense focus on

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[56]   "Media Response Lines", CEFCOM, 28 July 2010, electronic document contained in Email: from Maj Andre Salloum to Maj Cory Gillis, *FW: Media Embeds - FY 09/10 and FY10/11*, dated 0935hrs, 4/9/2015.
[57]   *Ibid.*

Canadian casualties led to near instant reporting of fatalities and made known the

personal details of every Canadian casualty, a situation not encountered before in Canada.

With Canadian media focus becoming increasingly set on Canadian casualties in

the Kandahar conflict, a problem arose for the CAF. The media became known as the

"death watch" for their incessant focus on Canadian casualty lists and minimal reporting

on other key issues such as development spending and women's rights in Afghanistan.[59]

The focus on casualties continued throughout the conflict in Kandahar and stifled public

support for the mission as it heard little else surrounding the mission. The public was not

privy to any context for the combat it was seeing, only exposed to an endless flow of

"breaking news", names and repatriation ceremonies. Exemplifying this media obsession,

the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) maintained an updated list of all Canadian

casualties, as part of their "CBC News In Depth: Afghanistan" page on their website

throughout the conflict and it remains available now, well after the termination of the

combat mission in 2011.[60]

The obsession with Canadian casualties was an unforeseen consequence of the

CAF's management of the media. Public support faltered and political will to support the

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[58]   Jan Rosender, "War Casualties, the Media and the Internet", *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies,* 9, no.1 (Fall, 2006):5, 10, http://www.jmss.org/jmss/index.php/jmss/article/view/122
[59]   David McKie, "Getting beyond the Death Watch", *Media,* 12,no.3 (Winter, 2007): 4, http://caj.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/mediamag/winter2007/mediawinter2007.pdf

[60]   CBC News, "CBC News In Depth: Afghanistan, In the Line of Duty: Canada's Casualties." Last modified 31 October,2011. Accessed 6 May, 2015. http://www.cbc.ca/news2/background/afghanistan/casualties/list.html

mission also wavered. In 2007, the continued coverage of returning fallen Canadians and overwhelming media focus on casualties spurred the Opposition leader, Jack Layton to demand a Canadian withdrawal from the mission.[61] Likewise in 2007, public support for the war dipped to 51% amongst the Canadian public with 65% of Canadians stating that they felt Canada was shouldering too much of the burden in Afghanistan.[62] This mirrored the political discomfort with Canadian casualties and public support for the conflict remained tepid throughout the mission. The *Ottawa Sun* commissioned a firm to conduct a polling study, published 8 August, 2011, which found that by mission's end only 30% of the public felt the mission had been "worth" the Canadian effort.[63]

The Canadian military had set out to manage the media and engineer strong public support for the mission in Kandahar. The CAF had made great strides in recognizing the importance of the media in doctrine via the JIMP model and had incorporated lessons learned from the U.S. experiences in Iraq, utilizing a robust media embedding program to establish control over the media in Kandahar. However, the CAF did not foresee the unintended effect of creating a media focus on Canadian casualties. This unintended consequence although not catastrophic, certainly limited public support. The outcome saw a nation that felt that the results of the mission may not have been

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[61]   Sean Maloney, "Was it Worth it? Canadian Intervention in Afghanistan and Perceptions of Success and Failure, *Canadian Military Journal,* 14, no.1, 3. http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vol14/no1/page19-eng.asp

[62]   John Kirton, "Two Solitudes, One War: Public Opinion, National Unity and Canada's War in Afghanistan"(Paper prepared for a conference on "Quebec and War," Université de Québec à Montréal, 8 Oct 2007), 17. http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/scholar/kirton2007/kirton-afghanistan-071008.pdf

[63]   Maloney, *Was it Worth it…* 3.

worth the sacrifice. Despite well-intentioned efforts in controlling the media's access to information at the tactical level, the unforeseen strategic effects in Canada negatively impacted the conduct of the mission in Kandahar.

Conclusion

This paper utilized four examples spanning 50 years to demonstrate the importance of the media in military operations. The military-media relationship is more important today in the successful conduct of military operations than it ever has been. Yet this paper has also revealed that the challenge of managing the media is nothing new. The United States military clearly mismanaged the media message in the Vietnam War, destroying the trust of the media, creating an adversary that became openly critical of the war effort in Vietnam. With insufficient controls in place to address reporting coming out of Vietnam, there was no way for the U.S. military to stop the decline in media support for the war. Lack of media support for the war, in turn, eroded public support and ultimately political will to carry on the war.

The importance of management of the media was further reinforced through examining the successful management of the media by the U.S. military in Iraq in 1991 and 2003. Implementing lessons learned from Vietnam, the military established the "12 rules" during Gulf War I and the embedded journalism program of 2003. These policies gave control over the media to the military without the appearance of oppressive

censorship. Successful control of the media directly contributed to strong public support for the conflicts and soothed decades-old discord in the military-media relationship.

The complexity of managing the media was revealed in examining the Canadian military's management of the media in Afghanistan. The Canadian Armed Forces employed similar tactics to the "12 rules" of Gulf War I and the U.S. embed program of 2003 in managing the media in Kandahar. The CAF developed and implemented its own media embedding program. This focused the Canadian media on the soldier's story and gave increased control of the content of reports to the military. Unfortunately, this policy had unintended second order effects. The resulting media obsession with casualties limited public and political support to the mission. Unable to re-orient the media towards reconstruction and other subjects, the media message never altered from its casualty based course, resulting in a nation that maintained tepid support for the conflict and in the end, felt a sense of doubt over the cost the conflict in Kandahar exacted on Canada.

Clearly, this paper has demonstrated that the failure of the U.S. military to manage the media message to the American public was the dominant factor in the U.S. defeat in Vietnam. Similarly, the Canadian military's inability to manage the media message in Kandahar had a significant negative impact on recent Canadian operations in Afghanistan. This paper has also clearly determined that in today's fourth generation warfare, the media remains the decisive factor in garnering and maintaining public support and thus, political will for military operations. Commanders in the future will ignore the media at their peril when planning the conduct of any military operation.

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