



United States European Command Public Affairs Directorate

**ECPA Monthly Newsletter
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Turning Knowledge Gained into a Productive Reality

I'm sure everyone in attendance at the first EUCOM Public Affairs Conference gained an abundance of knowledge on the interoperability of public diplomacy and public affairs. Additional areas of discussion touched on asymmetrical approaches to media and publics that promote rapid information flow, understanding and support, as well as adaptation of technology to increase coordination of information flow and consensus building.

Ensuring the knowledge

gained at the conference is turned into a productive reality is a job for all in our field. We have to focus our efforts on uniting the media and public affairs representatives. Working together to keep the public informed is a definitive step in the right direction.

In this issue you will find the Coalition Communication Principles: The 10 Commitments. I encourage you to consider those commitments as we diligently work towards our goal of timely and clear communications.



Colonel Ben K. Weiner, U.S. Army

The Media as Translators: Roundtable Discussion

Several interesting key points were brought up during the media roundtable discussion pertinent to the cohesiveness between the media and the Public Affairs Officers/Public Information Officers.

The main focus seemed to be access. Being able to get the media where they want to be, when they want to be there seems to be an impossible mission. Here are a few excerpts from the discussion:

Mr. Steve Komarow:

...because attempts, as I'm sure you've all heard about, by journalists like myself in the field to cover those operations, are almost repelled violently. At Tora Bora, reporters who saw Special Operations folks operating in the

hills found that the Special Ops guys sicced local Afghans on them to chase them away. There is the famous story of course, about the reporter who was kept away at gunpoint by a US soldier. We've had some other dangerous incidences like that and just in day-to-day work, if I'm in Kabul or just on the road and I see a military unit the soldiers are under the belief that they are not allowed to talk to me.

General Drew Davis:

Let me leap in here. That's absolutely false!

Mr. Komarow:

It's not at all false.

General Davis:

First of all, Steve (Admiral) Pietropaoli and I have worked very hard, early on to come up with procedures and ground rules for first getting journalists aboard ship in the North Arabian Sea and then getting them forward. Last week the Task Force 58 Commander, Brigadier General Jim Mattis, who lead the longest amphibious assault in

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General Davis and Steve Komarow debate the level of access given to journalists by the military. (Photo by SSG Gary Kieffer)

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the history of warfare, 400 miles from his North Regency into forward operating base Rhino; he spoke last week at the Marine Ground Warriors Dinner and we had a table of journalists that we invited, and he and the Commandant spent about an hour with them. So access is part of our culture. Anyway, on the eve of the longest amphibious assault in the history of warfare, included with the commanders who were going to be executing that amphibious assault, were six journalists hearing a Top Secret briefing

on that operation. When those six journalists went in on that 400-mile assault into the most remote landscape on the face of this planet, combat operations began within 24 hours and the journalists were with them and they were augmented with another 15 journalists within days. Those journalists had complete access to the combatants on the ground whether they were gentlemen or like one who was getting in trouble for making an off hand comment, not in trouble with the press or the Marine Corps actually, but with diplomatic side of

things when he said, "We now own a piece of Afghanistan." But three days later he was speaking again to the press.

While there were several moments during the discussion when tensions seemed to run high, in the end both sides, the media and the Public Affairs Officers were able to clearly see the constraints by which each group is bound.

A full text version of the roundtable discussion can be found on the Conference Website under the heading Transcripts.

Requests for video tapes of the roundtable discussion should be sent to Maj. Morgan at morganmf@eucom.mil.



General Davis clearly states his position on journalistic access. (Photo by SSG Gary Kieffer)

The Role of the Media in International Conflict

*by Christopher Young,
Conflict Research Consortium*

Security

There is an ongoing tension between journalists' desires to report on conflicts and military actions, and military concerns about security. Generally journalists accept the need for some secrecy regarding military maneuvers. However many journalists have observed that "secrecy and controls on reporters are often imposed for reasons of political convenience, for example to avoid blame for military or political errors that deserve exposure."

In order to maintain military security and prevent a massive influx of reporters into the war zone, reporters were confined to pools during the Gulf War. Representative journalists were included in the press pool, and their reports were made available to the rest of the media. Many journalists were dissatisfied with this system, since it greatly restricted most report-

ers' access to events, and since the military limited what even the pool reporters could cover. Retired General Sidle, who continues to work as a consultant to the Defense Department, argues that in dealing with the press, security and troop safety must be the military's first concern. Rather than pools, Sidle favors field press censorship, which he argues provides the maximum freedom for the press, while still maintaining troop safety. Sidle cautions however that if the media won't limit the number of reporters it send into a battle zone, the military will have to intervene and impose limits.

Escalation

The media can contribute to conflict escalation, either directly or indirectly. Experienced war reporters observe that sometimes the very presence of cameras will prompt the sides to start shooting. Terrorists often rely on the media. Terrorist attacks may be calculated to draw media attention, and so draw atten-

tion to their cause. In the absence of media coverage, many types of terrorism would be useless.

Video media in particular tend to focus on dramatic and violent events. It was observed that "more than ever in terms of news, war is better than peace, violence is better than non-violence." This tendency to focus on violence and conflict, and to further sensationalize violent events can distort the public's perceptions of the situation.

Many seminar participants felt that the American press, in particular, failed to adequately investigate the Gulf War, or to report on the causes of the war. Instead the media "became the mouthpiece for the government, it gave up its privilege of free criticism, reinforced the us-versus-them syndrome." Many participants expressed grave concern that the public seemed quite willing to accept such a "tame" press. Milton Viorst of the New Yorker

argued that, as a result of this "Congress didn't obtain, and the American people didn't obtain the information needed to challenge the president on the subject of a war which I believe could have been avoided."

De-escalation

The media can also contribute to conflict de-escalation. Many people believe that the media coverage of the conflict played a key role in turning U.S. public opinion against the war in Vietnam. Lack of popular support eventually forced the U.S. to withdraw from that conflict. One seminar participant suggested that the constant live coverage in the early stages of the Yugoslavian conflict helped to contain that conflict by allowing the parties to publicly vent their emotions and positions. Another participant observes that the Gulf War "is the first war in the history of humanity where a representative of the other belligerent appeared almost nightly in the homes of

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The Role of the Media in International Conflict

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the world. Can you imagine interviews with Ho Chi Min in American living- rooms at the height of the Vietnam war?" The media can offer better communication with and better information regarding the adversary. By allowing each side to see the other relatively directly, by bringing the opponent into our liv-

ing-rooms, the media can help to prevent the demonization of the other side.

Hostages

Former hostage and journalist Roger Auque argued that the media should cover hostage-takings. The safety of the hostages depends in part on their being remembered by their own governments and by the

broader community. Auque also observed that "Americans have a kind of naive belief in not negotiating with terrorists, but they benefit as much as anyone else." The media often serves as a needed channel of communication between the terrorists and the target government. However, another journalist observed that media sensationalism can escalate a

hostage situation. When a U.S. television station described the Iranian hostage situation as "America held hostage," their exaggeration simply puffed up the already inflated self-image of the hostage-takers.

For the full article please visit <http://www.e11th-hour.org/media/>.

Coalition Communication Principles: The 10 Commitments

As U.S. diplomatic and military public affairs and information officers we agree to make a commitment to the following principles of communication as we seek to meet the challenges in communicating the security interests of the United States and coalition members in the global struggle against terror:

1. The many voices of the coalition taken together provide crucial depth and diversity to successfully communicate our shared security priorities and goals.
2. Serving overseas we recognize our obligation to help shape the substance and character of our national security message drawn from our regional experience and perspective. We live within the coalition.

3. Each nation may identify its security concerns in different ways and we can learn from our host nations in how to meet and communicate these challenges.

4. The security challenges facing our nation, friends and allies are often too complex to responsibly reduce to simple messages. The challenge for us is in communicating that complexity while maintaining focus and resolve.

5. The public has a right to know about the unclassified activities of DoD and State Departments worldwide. It is our obligation to provide that information professionally, fully, and in good spirit.

6. We have a responsibility to demonstrate our appreciation for the cooperation we receive from other nations and for the

valuable contributions coalition forces bring to these combined efforts - whether in peacetime by way of strengthening the deterrent, or in wartime by securing victory.

7. We will seek to do nothing that could raise questions about the credibility of U.S. diplomatic and military initiatives in support of U.S. Security interests. We are bound to tell the truth, we will not use censorship or propaganda, and we must be believed to be telling the truth or our important work is undermined.

8. Coordination and detailed public affairs planning among State, DoD, and coalition member public information specialists is crucial to communicating our shared security goals successfully. We have significant improve-

ments to make in this regard and we should cautiously seek-out fresh metrics in communicating to a world that perhaps misperceives who we are and what we intend.

9. We carry an obligation to reach out to international audiences to educate and inform and mitigate the perception that the war on terror equates to a struggle of ideologies, cultures or religions, when it is in fact a fight to combat international terrorist networks when and where they exist.

10. We have a shared responsibility to promote new mechanisms of trust and security cooperation throughout this Area of Responsibility in order to build stronger coalition ties.



Major Melinda Morgan (Chief, Internal Operations ECPA) gives administrative notes to conference attendees.

(Photo by SSG Gary Kieffer)



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Public Affairs Notes

- We invite you to participate in ECPA's monthly Embassy PAO teleconference. The teleconferences are held on the first Friday of each month. We welcome your input for agenda ideas as well as your knowledge in the field of public information. The POC is CPT Linnie Cain; e-mail him at cainl@eucom.mil and let him know you'd like to be included.
- EUCOM 50th Anniversary celebration will be held on 1 August 2002. For more information contact Maj. Mindy Morgan via e-mail at morganmf@eucom.mil.

Quote of the Month

These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman.

--Thomas Paine (1737-1809) American political theorist, writer

Scenes from the First Annual ECPA Theater Public Affairs Conference



Allies in Communications and Information Management

(Photos by SSG Gary Kieffer)