



# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

## THESIS

**DOMESTIC EMBEDDED REPORTER PROGRAM:  
SAVING LIVES AND SECURING TACTICAL  
OPERATIONS**

by

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March 2017

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**DOMESTIC EMBEDDED REPORTER PROGRAM: SAVING LIVES AND  
SECURING TACTICAL OPERATIONS**

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**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES  
(HOMELAND SECURITY AND DEFENSE)**

from the

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## **ABSTRACT**

Advances in technology have provided journalists the tools to obtain and share real-time information during domestic-terrorist and mass-shooting incidents. This real-time information-sharing compromises the safety of first responders, victims, and reporters. Real-time sharing of tactical operations, including the positioning of law enforcement, firefighters, and their equipment, impacts the security and effectiveness of emergency responders in mitigating the public threat. The Department of Defense (DOD) fought a similar battle with members of the media more than a decade ago with the creation of its embedded reporter program. This thesis explores the following question: Can first response agencies and journalists in the United States adopt an embedded journalist program for domestic terrorist or mass-shooting events? The research reviewed the DOD's embedded reporter program and explored potential modifications for use within the United States. The thesis finds that although it is possible to create a collaborative embedded reporter program for use within the United States, it may be more feasible to adopt portions of the program such as placing an embargo on all tactical operations, creating a formal media training program, and implementing media credentials.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

|         |                                                                 |
|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| AAR     | after action review                                             |
| AOR     | area of responsibility                                          |
| APD     | Austin Police Department                                        |
| CEO     | chief executive officer                                         |
| CENTCOM | Central Command                                                 |
| CPR     | cardiopulmonary resuscitation                                   |
| DOD     | Department of Defense                                           |
| DOJ     | Department of Justice                                           |
| FEMA    | Federal Emergency Management Agency                             |
| MEF     | Marine Expeditionary Force                                      |
| NPR     | <i>National Public Radio</i>                                    |
| NYPD    | New York Police Department                                      |
| OASDPA  | Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs |
| PAG     | public affairs guidance                                         |
| PFD     | Phoenix Fire Department                                         |
| PIO     | public information officer                                      |
| SWAT    | special weapons and tactics                                     |

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With regard to publicity, the first essential in military operations is that no information of value shall be given to the enemy. The first essential in newspaper work and broadcasting is wide-open publicity. It is your job and mine to try to reconcile these sometimes diverse considerations.

—General Dwight D. Eisenhower

Advances in information-sharing technologies have allowed journalists to obtain and immediately share the position and tactics of first responders during domestic-terrorism and mass-shooting events.<sup>1</sup> This practice is called real-time reporting. The practice relies on social media platforms, live-streaming video, and access to radio scanners to share information. This thesis explores the adoption of a domestic embedded reporter program to coordinate the practice of real-time reporting while ensuring the public receives information and promoting transparency.

### A. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Reporters obtain radio traffic via live scanner feeds and radio scanners from public-safety agencies through web-based platforms or mobile applications. The scanner feeds are then shared by reporters on their social media platforms and live broadcasts. This type of information-sharing compromises the response and impacts the rescue of victims, the apprehension of suspects, and the mitigation of danger.

The use of Twitter by journalists to share tactical information obtained from radio scanners has been on the rise since the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing. Also increasing are pleas from public-safety agencies for reporters to stop sharing the locations of their

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigations, “Terrorism,” accessed October 15, 2016, <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/terrorism>. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defines a *mass murder* as, “...four or more [fatalities] occurring during the same incident, with no distinctive time period between the murders.”<sup>1</sup> A domestic terrorism event is defined by the FBI as “having these three characteristics: Involve acts dangerous to human life that violate federal or state law; Appear intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping; and occur primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the U.S.”

responders. The Boston Police Department Twitter account documented such a plea on April 19, 2013, at 6:52 a.m. when the public information officer posted alerts to the media to terminate the broadcasting of police positions.<sup>2</sup> This type of information sharing can compromise the tactical response of the incident and harm victims. Public-safety agencies are not the only groups to identify the threat of real-time reporting for first responders and victims. On November 27, 2015, a reporter from the *Colorado Springs Gazette* live-tweeted nearly every word of radio traffic heard on scanners as police responded to a mass-shooting at a Planned Parenthood facility. The mass-shooting left a police officer and two other people dead and nine people injured. This reporter shared all radio scanner traffic including the location of paramedics entering the building and their route to the safe rooms inside filled with victims.<sup>3</sup> These examples demonstrate the potential impact of real-time reporting of tactical information during emergency response efforts.

This thesis proposes developing an embedded journalist program coordinated by first-response agencies and in collaboration with journalists to protect the lives of emergency responders and victims during mass-shooting or domestic terrorism incidents. It breaks down the components of the DOD's program to determine whether a similar practice or procedure could function for journalists and public-safety agencies. The research question was as follows: How can first response agencies and journalists in the United States adopt an embedded journalist program for domestic terrorist or mass-shooting events?

This thesis reviewed the DOD's program and then explored modifications for its use in a domestic-based program. Chapter II explores the DOD's current policies and procedures and included information on how to translate this policy for domestic use. An important item under consideration in this chapter is journalist credentials within the United States for response to public-safety incidents. Chapter III centers on the ground

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<sup>2</sup> Boston Police Department, "Boston Police Department on Twitter," Twitter, April 19, 2013, <https://twitter.com/bostonpolice/status/325230546928160768>.

<sup>3</sup> Billie Anleau Stanton, "Billie Anleau Stanton," Twitter, <https://twitter.com/stantonanleu>, November 27, 2015.

rules established under the DOD's program and reviewed modifications for domestic implementation including the use of embargoes for reporting tactical operations by journalists and the creation of preapproved media messaging. These are key components of the program to ensure safety of first responders and victims. Chapter IV highlights the implementation of training programs for reporters covering domestic terrorism and mass shootings. The DOD provides a media boot camp in its program, and numerous public-safety agencies already offer training programs for external audiences. The chapter looks at the feasibility of expanding current programs to provide media with information on responding to mass-shooting incidents. Chapter V brings together both the positive impacts and challenges of adopting a Department of Defense—type program in the United States specific to the response of domestic-terrorism and mass-shooting incidents. Potential increases to both the safety of all stakeholders and greater access to information were noted as positive impacts of an embedded reporter program. Challenges noted in this chapter included financial impacts and possible diminished objectivity related to news coverage.

## **B. RECOMMENDATIONS**

In exploring the question of how first-response agencies and journalists in the United States can adopt an embedded journalist program for domestic-terrorist or mass-shooting events, this thesis produced the five recommendations based on the feasibility of adoption by both public safety and media agencies.

- Recommendation 1: Implement and adopt an embargo protocol.
- Recommendation 2: Create and provide a media training program.
- Recommendation 3: Implement journalist credentials.
- Recommendation 4: Encrypt all public safety radio traffic for tactical operations.
- Recommendation 5: Create a domestic embedded reporter program for domestic terrorism and mass-shooting incidents.

The considerations included the cost of the recommendation, the timeframe required to implement the change, and the likelihood of stakeholders implementing the recommendation.

## **C. CONCLUSION**

The creation of a domestic embedded reporter program provides benefits to reporters and first responders alike. The foremost benefits to public-safety stakeholders include operational security, increased safety for first responders and victims, protection of transparency, and stronger relationships with reporters. The reporters will also experience benefits in the areas of access to information, credibility, and reporter safety. Modifying the DOD's embedded reporter program provides a starting point for public-safety agencies in the United States to begin working with journalists on coverage of domestic terrorism at a time when incidents occur infrequently. The implementation of embargoes on tactical information-sharing during domestic-terrorist and mass-shooting events appears to be the most critical aspect of this proposal. An embargo protocol can be implemented with or without the fully embedded program and within a short timeframe. Although there is not enough research to support a fully embedded reporter program within the United States, aspects of the program can be implemented.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I could not have completed this thesis or the CHDS program without the support and understanding of my family. Thank you to my husband, Chris Trost, for rearranging his work schedule and supporting my hours of reading and writing. You are one of my inspirations for researching this thesis topic, and the more than 22 years you have dedicated to being a paramedic and firefighter. And to my kids (Cameron, Chaeli, Maddie, and Morgan), who let mom “study” with them at the kitchen table and who answered questions on how to format my research papers—you are the best. Lastly, thank you to my parents for raising me with the belief that I can do anything if I work hard and to my sisters for cheering me on.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

With regard to publicity, the first essential in military operations is that no information of value shall be given to the enemy. The first essential in newspaper work and broadcasting is wide-open publicity. It is your job and mine to try to reconcile these sometimes diverse considerations.

—General Dwight D. Eisenhower

Advances in information sharing technologies allow journalists to obtain and immediately share the position and tactics of first responders during domestic terrorism and mass-shooting events.<sup>1</sup> This practice is called real-time reporting. The practice relies on social media platforms, live streaming video, and access to radio scanners to share information. This thesis explores the adoption of a domestic embedded reporter program to coordinate the practice of real-time reporting while at the same time ensuring that the public receives information and that transparency is protected.

### A. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Public-safety radios share the tactical operations or location and strategies of first responders during domestic terrorism or mass-shooting events. Reporters obtain the radio traffic via live scanner feeds from public-safety agencies through web-based platforms or mobile applications. The scanner feeds are then shared by reporters onto their social media platforms and live broadcasts. The platforms typically used by journalists include Broadcastify, Twitter, and Facebook. Broadcastify is an example of an online scanner platform. The practice of sharing scanner traffic on Twitter is called “live-tweeting,” and can also include live video. Facebook also allows live posting and live-stream video. Sharing the position of first responders during law enforcement response puts both the

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigations, “Terrorism,” accessed October 15, 2016, <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/terrorism>. The Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) defines a *mass murder* as, “...four or more [fatalities] occurring during the same incident, with no distinctive time period between the murders.”<sup>1</sup> A domestic terrorism event is defined by the FBI as “having these three characteristics: Involve acts dangerous to human life that violate federal or state law; Appear intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping; and occur primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the U.S.”

victims and first responders in danger. It compromises the response and impacts the rescue of victims, the apprehension of suspects, and the mitigation of danger.

The use of Twitter by journalists to share tactical information obtained from radio scanners has been on the rise since the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing. Also increasing are pleas from public-safety agencies for reporters to stop sharing the locations of their responders. The Boston Police Department Twitter account documented such a plea on April 19, 2013, at 6:52 a.m. when the public information officer posted “#MediaAlert: WARNING: Do not compromise officer safety by broadcasting tactical positions of homes being searched.”<sup>2</sup> The tweet is seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Boston Police Department Tweet during Boston Bombing Suspect Search<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, similar statements are becoming the norm during domestic terrorist and mass-shooting events. A public tweet was issued during the mass shooting of Dallas police officers with the following post: “MEDIA: please stop all live feeds of DPD

<sup>2</sup> Boston Police Department, “Boston Police Department on Twitter,” Twitter, April 19, 2013, <https://twitter.com/bostonpolice/status/325230546928160768>.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Boston Police Department, “Boston Police Department on Twitter.”

headquarters and the parking garage right now for the safety of our officers.”<sup>4</sup> This tweet, seen in Figure 2, was posted as Dallas officers investigated a bomb threat following an evening that ended with the deaths of five police officers.



Figure 2. Dallas Police Department Tweet during 2016 Shooting of Officers<sup>5</sup>

This type of information sharing can compromise the tactical response of the incident and harm victims hiding in secure locations. Public-safety agencies are not the only groups to identify the threat of real-time reporting for first responders and victims. On November 27, 2015, a reporter from the *Colorado Springs Gazette* live-tweeted nearly every word of radio traffic heard on scanners as police responded to a mass-shooting at a Planned Parenthood facility. The mass-shooting left a police officer and two other people dead and nine people injured. This reporter shared all radio scanner traffic, including the location of paramedics entering the building and their route to the safe rooms inside hiding victims.<sup>6</sup> Figures 3 and 4 show two tweets from the reporter.

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<sup>4</sup> Boston Police Department, “Boston Police Department on Twitter.”

<sup>5</sup> Source: Boston Police Department, “Boston Police Department on Twitter.”

<sup>6</sup> Billie Anleau Stanton, “Billie Anleau Stanton,” Twitter, <https://twitter.com/stantonanleu>, November 27, 2015.

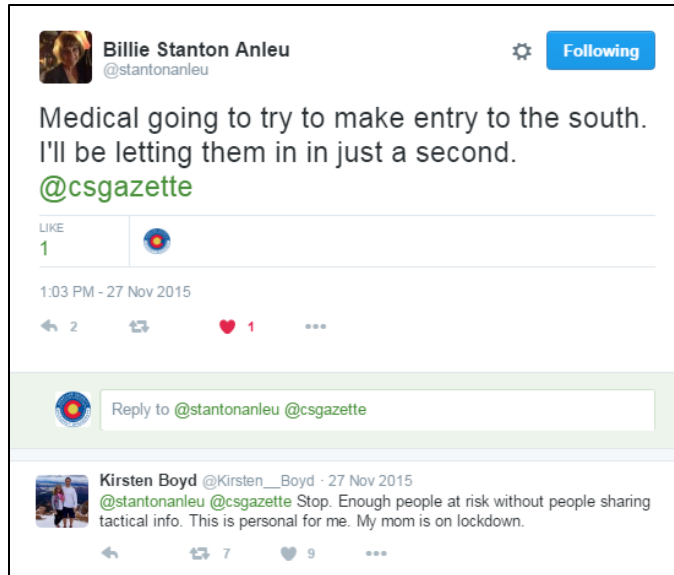


Figure 3. Example of Journalist Live-Tweeting Radio Scanner Tactical Operation Information<sup>7</sup>

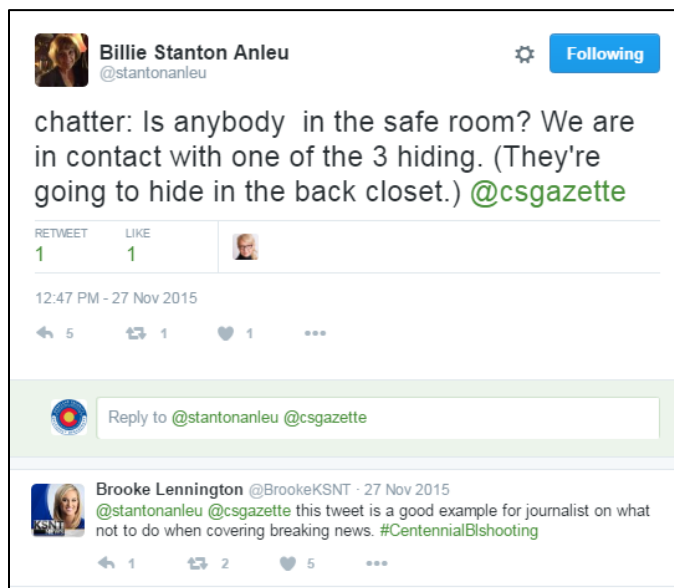


Figure 4. Example of Journalist Sharing Tactical Information from Radio Scanner on Her Twitter Account<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Source: Billie Anleau Stanton, "Billie Anleau Stanton."

<sup>8</sup> Source: Billie Anleau Stanton, "Billie Anleau Stanton."

This thesis proposes developing an embedded journalist program coordinated by first response agencies and in collaboration with journalists to protect the lives of emergency responders and victims during law enforcement mass-shooting or domestic terrorism incidents. This program would protect the reporting and sharing of information, but would establish safety procedures to delay the sharing of tactical operations until the release of the messages, images, or videos no longer impact the emergency response.

This research is significant due to the potential for shooters to use the real-time information, shared by journalists or broadcast over unsecured radio scanners, to complete their attacks. For example, the Orlando Pulse Club shooter searched his Facebook account for information on the shooting as he was in a standoff inside the building.<sup>9</sup> Information posted to social media platforms at the time shared the location of victims and first responders at the nightclub. This information can aid the shooter because he now knows where to find victims and how to prepare for police officers.

## **B. RESEARCH QUESTION**

The thesis breaks down the components of the Department of Defense (DOD) embedded reporter program and determines whether a similar practice or procedure can function for journalists and public-safety agencies within the United States. General Dwight D. Eisenhower's quote at the beginning of the chapter shares the spirit of this thesis by supporting the objectives of each stakeholder. The public-safety stakeholder wants to protect the lives of first responders and maintain the security of tactical operations. The media stakeholder wants to safeguard the right to share information. The research question is "Can first response agencies and journalists in the United States adopt an embedded journalist program for domestic terrorist or mass-shooting events?"

## **C. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This literature review explores three areas related to adopting an embedded journalist program within the United States. The first topic concentrates on documents and resources from journalists. This section explores the ethical guidance of reporting by

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<sup>9</sup> David Nicks, "Orlando Shooter Checked Facebook to Check If His Attack Went Viral," *Time*, June 16, 2016, <http://time.com/4371910/orlando-shooting-omar-mateen-facebook/>.

journalists. The second area examines resources from public-safety and first-response agencies. The literature related to public-safety reviews the impacts of real-time reporting during law enforcement incidents. The third area explores resources from the United States military, focusing on work with journalists during combat through a formal embedded journalist program. The embedded journalist program is established through military procedures known as the “Public Affairs Guidance on Embedding Media.” The literature review conclusion determines whether the adoption of formal guidelines is feasible within the United States.

### **1. Media Considerations**

The Society of Professional Journalists, with more than 7,500 members, has developed and adopted a code of ethics. The code of ethics includes four principles that the media considers the foundation of ethical journalism:

- seek truth and report it
- minimize harm
- act independently
- be accountable and transparent<sup>10</sup>

There are seven statements listed under the principle to minimize harm that speak directly to the impacts of real-time reporting of tactical operations. Journalists are directed to “balance the public’s need for information against potential harm or discomfort.”<sup>11</sup> Legal access does not support ethical reasoning to share all information that is obtained and reporters are directed to “recognize that legal access to information

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<sup>10</sup> Society of Professional Journalists, “Ethics Code,” accessed January 15, 2016, <http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

differs from an ethical justification to publish or broadcast.”<sup>12</sup> The information being shared on Twitter and Facebook puts first responders and victims in danger.<sup>13</sup>

Members of the media also question the ethics behind real-time reporting of tactical operations. During the Planned Parenthood shooting in Colorado Springs, Twitter was filled with discussions and pleas from the public and other journalists to stop the real-time reporting of scanner traffic revealing tactical operations.<sup>14</sup> The follow-up to that incident was several public reports from journalists and government officials on how to handle real-time reporting of scanner traffic. A group of journalists representing *USA Today*, *The Denver Post*, and Denver television network *KUSA* discussed the role and responsibilities of reporters during mass shootings.<sup>15</sup> During a 30-minute broadcast, the three organizations determined that the role of the reporter was to verify information and to share how they knew information; however, it was not to directly share the radio traffic. The journalists determined the word-for-word reporting caused more harm for the community. The group also introduced a resource for the public called the “Consumer’s Guide to Breaking News” to minimize the impact of real-time radio traffic and live-stream video reporting.<sup>16</sup> The guide was developed in September 2013 during the Washington, DC, Navy Yard shootings by *National Public Radio* (NPR) reporters Brooke Gladstone and Bob Garfield for a radio show called “On the Media.”<sup>17</sup> Gladstone and Garfield offer a nine-point guide to breaking news, beginning with the admission that

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Joe Nelson, “Assemblyman Hosts Hearing on Lessons Learned from Dec 2 San Bernardino Terror Attack,” *The Sun*, March 18, 2016, <http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20160318/assemblyman-hosts-hearing-on-lessons-learned-from-dec-2-san-bernardino-terror-attack>. San Bernardino Police Lieutenant (Lt.) Michael Madden stated that information shared on social media compromised his officers during an after action review with the county board members.

<sup>14</sup> Billie Anleau Stanton, “Billie Anleau Stanton.”

<sup>15</sup> Kyle Clark, “Balance of Power: Real-time Reporting During Mass Shootings,” 9 News, December 6, 2015, <http://www.9news.com/story/news/politics/balance-of-power/2015/12/06/bop-real-time-reporting-during-mass-shootings/76880868/>.

<sup>16</sup> Bob Garfield and Brooke Gladstone, “The Breaking News Consumer’s Guide,” NPR, September 20, 2013, [http://www.onthemedial.org/story/breaking-news-consumers-handbook-pdf/?utm\\_source=local&utm\\_medium=treatment&utm\\_campaign=daMost&utm\\_content=damostviewed](http://www.onthemedial.org/story/breaking-news-consumers-handbook-pdf/?utm_source=local&utm_medium=treatment&utm_campaign=daMost&utm_content=damostviewed).

<sup>17</sup> Bob Garfield and Brooke Gladstone, “Breaking News Consumer’s Guide: Active Shooter Edition,” *NPR*, November 20, 2015. <http://www.wnyc.org/series/breaking-news-consumers-handbook/1>.

“in the immediate aftermath, news outlets will get it wrong.”<sup>18</sup> In 2015, following the attacks in Paris, Gladstone and Garfield created a new guide to address the specific information-sharing needs related to terrorism events that are different from a mass-shooting. The terrorism guide focuses “on the language media uses.”<sup>19</sup> Figures 5 and 6 share both the original active shooter guide and the terrorism guide.



Figure 5. Breaking News Consumer's Handbook Original Active Shooter Guide<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Bob Garfield and Brooke Gladstone, "Breaking News Consumer's Handbook: Terrorism Edition," *NPR*, November 20, 2015, <http://www.wnyc.org/story/breaking-news-consumers-handbook-terrorism-edition/>.

<sup>20</sup> Source: Garfield and Gladstone, "Breaking News Consumer's Guide: Active Shooter."

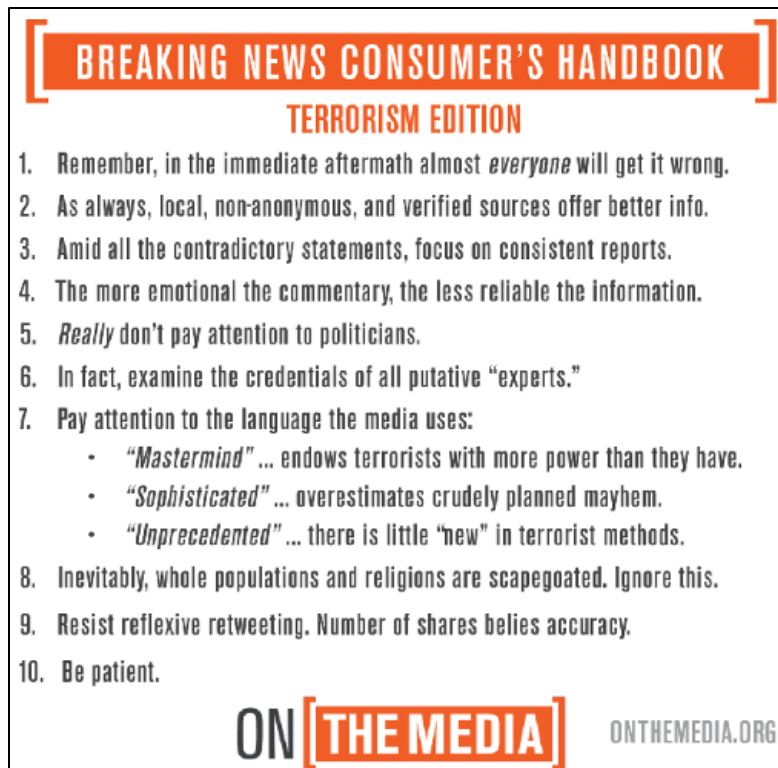


Figure 6. Breaking News Consumer's Handbook: Terrorism Edition<sup>21</sup>

When people within the profession recognize the potential harm caused not only to responders, but to those consuming their information it may be time to develop a policy for consideration. Constant changes in technology provide journalists with the tools to share emergency radio conversations through social media platforms, live streaming video mobile applications on their phones, or by staging helicopters over the incident to shoot the scene live. All of these actions by media expose the tactical actions of first responders.

## 2. Public-Safety Agencies

Public-safety agencies and first responders have a significant role in releasing information during domestic terrorism or mass-shooting events. There is minimal information on the direct impact of real-time reporting of tactical operations during emergency incidents. Social media is a primary source of information related to the

<sup>21</sup> Source: Garfield and Gladstone, "Breaking News Consumer's Handbook: Terrorism."

impact of real-time reporting and the statements made during recent law enforcement incidents, including the July 2016 shooting of numerous police officers in Dallas. The official Dallas Police Department Twitter account posted a statement directed at media to stop reporting for the “safety of our officers.”<sup>22</sup> A similar statement occurred during the Boston bombing response when a Boston Police tweet on April 19, 2013 stated, “#MediaAlert: WARNING: Do not compromise officer safety by broadcasting tactical positions of homes being searched.”<sup>23</sup> Examples of these messages were shared previously in Figures 1 and 2.

In December 2015, 14 people were killed during a domestic terrorist attack in San Bernardino, California involving two shooters. A public after action review (AAR) with the county board included the testimony of the first police officer to respond to the San Bernardino attack. San Bernardino police Lieutenant Michael Madden stated, “One of the most troubling things about that day was that police radio communications were broadcast live, in real time, nationwide—on YouTube and other network systems—for all to hear, including potential suspects.”<sup>24</sup> He stated that media access to radio scanner traffic puts first responders in “a precarious position,” and he encouraged his agency and the county to adopt the use of encrypted radio frequencies.<sup>25</sup> Encrypted frequencies would eliminate access to the radio traffic by journalists and platforms such as Broadcastify.<sup>26</sup>

Public-safety agencies use radios to communicate and share incident information and tactical operations. This radio traffic is shared on scanners if it is not encrypted. Encrypted radio channels are not used by all public-safety agencies because of the cost

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<sup>22</sup> Boston Police Department, “Boston Police Department on Twitter.”

<sup>23</sup> Taylor Miller Thomas, “Boston Police to Reporters: Don’t Quote Scanners,” April 19, 2013, accessed January 15, 2016, <http://www.poynter.org/2013/boston-police-to-reporters-dont-quote-scanners/210898/>.

<sup>24</sup> Nelson, “Assemblyman Hosts Hearing.”

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Mary Schley, “Encrypted Radios Herald New Era for Police, Sheriff: Most Emergency Calls Will Become Secret,” *The Carmel Pine Cone*, December 2–8 2016, 1; Kelly McEvers, “Police Radio Chatter is Open to All Ears. But Should It Be?,” *NPR*, March 28, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=472176266>.

and technical issues impacting interoperability with outside agencies. Broadcastify chief executive officer (CEO) Lindsay Blanton estimates that “10 to 15 percent of American police radios are encrypted;” however, in Europe most police scanners are restricted.<sup>27</sup> Additional research is needed on the impact of encrypted tactical channels for mass-shootings or domestic terrorist events. The research may explore the cost, technical issues related to interoperability between different agencies, and transparency issues involved in transitioning all public-safety agencies. If radio traffic is encrypted by all first responders, it may eliminate, or significantly reduce, the ability of journalists to obtain and report the information in real time. Journalists need an alternative method to obtain information if public-safety agencies use encrypted radio channels. The embedded reporter program would benefit media by providing access to information if encryption is adopted nationwide.

### **3. Military**

In May 1992, the DOD agreed on a set of nine principles of war reporting as part of the *Public Affairs Guidance on Embedding Media*.<sup>28</sup> The military not only allows, but strongly encourages embedding journalists with military units in an effort to share both the good and the bad of war activities. According to the DOD, the practice is an asset to military operations because “it tell(s) the factual story—good or bad—before others seed the media with disinformation and distortions, as they most certainly will continue to do.”<sup>29</sup> The importance of the DOD guidance is that it sets information sharing rules. Section four of the guidance details 19 items that can never be shared under the formal rules or that fall under embargo. The non-releasable information involves categories of information the military states “could jeopardize operations and endanger lives,” such as specific numbers of troops, aircraft, and information related to future operations.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> McEvers, “Police Radio Chatter is Open.”

<sup>28</sup> Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation, *Reporting the Next War*, 9.

<sup>29</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Public Affairs Guidance on Embedding Media* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2003), 1.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

The DOD guidance and expectations are clear and enforced only for security and safety reasons. This is the type of agreement that could be beneficial for domestic reporting of terrorist and mass-shooting events. The policy does not eliminate the ability for reporters to share information; however, it does set embargos for sharing information of facts in an effort to protect operational security. This means that information cannot be shared until the military commander approves its release. Embargoes maintain transparency by the delay, not the prohibition of information sharing. On the other hand, reporters may see the embargo as restrictive and as a negative impact on the reporter's ability to compete with other members of the media. Local emergency responders and journalists may need to determine the correct time frame for information sharing to preserve the safety and security of operations.

The DOD program includes safety and preparation training for the journalists as part of a media boot camp. Several books, written by both military troops and the journalists returning from war assignments, discuss the value of DOD's media boot camp. In an article for *Military Review*, U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel (Lt. Col.) Tammy Miracle states, "DOD news media boot camp helps embedded journalists develop a relationship with the military services and prepares them for the rigors of combat."<sup>31</sup> The media boot camp is not required for participation within the DOD embedded reporter program, however, Lt. Col. Miracle suggested a requirement should be made for journalists.<sup>32</sup> In his 2005 thesis, Raymundo Villarreal Jr. shares a different perspective on the training program stating, "another indirect means of implementing control of the media was an unofficial requirement ... to attend media boot camp."<sup>33</sup> Additional research is necessary to determine whether benefits are provided with a training program as part of an embedded reporter program. The training costs related to staff time, curriculum development, and program implementation will impact all participants.

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<sup>31</sup> Tammy L. Miracle, "The Army and Embedded Media," *Military Review* (September–October 2003): 45.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Raymundo Villarreal Jr., "The Role of the Department of Defense Embedded Reporter Program in Future Conflicts" (master's thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2005), 54.

Guidance from the military side is clear. The Department of Defense has built a program in collaboration with reporters that protects the safety and security of military personnel, operational tactics, and the reporters themselves. This has been done by establishing written expectations related to policies and procedures, ground rules, and training. These expectations are then signed and agreed upon by all parties working for the military and journalism fields.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The current sources of information specific to a public-safety managed embedded reporter program are limited. However, there are a significant number of military resources that can be explored for domestic implementation. This is an area that needs further research and consideration to determine the impact of real-time reporting of tactical information on response efforts. A resolution on the feasibility of adopting an embedded journalist program within the United States may be the first step. Additional information is required on the process used by the military to train and work with media related to real-time reporting of terrorist operations. The purpose of the thesis research is not to eliminate real-time reporting, but to ensure that no valuable information is provided to the domestic terrorist or mass-shooters through real-time reporting of tactical operations.

#### **D. RESEARCH DESIGN**

This thesis explores how an embedded journalist program can be adopted within the United States by first responders and reporters using the DOD's Public Affairs guidance policy as a model. The thesis breaks down the DOD guidance and determines which components are realistic for use on domestic terrorist incidents for implementation by journalists and public-safety agencies. The research method includes an all-inclusive review of the current practices used by both the DOD and journalists. The review determines whether a similar policy can be adapted to meet the objectives of the stakeholders from the media and public-safety organizations.

This thesis breaks down the current DOD public affairs guidance document into the following overarching themes:

1. Policy and procedures
2. Establishing ground rules
3. Safety and training<sup>34</sup>

The process explores the feasibility of a modified policy working within the United States.

This thesis specifically focuses on the real-time sharing of tactical operations during law enforcement incidents specific to domestic terrorism or mass-shootings. It looks at the responsibilities of journalists and public-safety agencies sharing the information. It does not study the direct impact of the real-time information sharing. The thesis does not include the real-time sharing of incident information outside of tactical operations such as the type of incident, the location of the incident, and what agencies are responding to mitigate the threat. The thesis does not include other types of emergency response incidents such as fires, medical assistance, motor vehicle accidents, or normal law enforcement incidents. For example, it does not cover general incident updates during a fire or law-enforcement responses typically shared by an agency's public information officer. Journalists are defined only as members of media agencies or those holding professional credentials. Journalists do not include citizen journalists, bloggers, or other unaffiliated individuals sharing information.

The research materials and data for this thesis come from military and government documents, after action reports, and public-safety agency statements following incidents. An example of a report is the official review shared during a commissioner's meeting following the San Bernardino shooting. Another source of information includes media reports and social media posts related to the topic of sharing real-time information. Social media posts include information shared in open-source platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. A third type of information includes policy information from agencies including the Society of Professional Journalists and the

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<sup>34</sup> U.S. Department of Defense. *Public Affairs Guidance on Embedding Media*, 1.

United States military. The final output for the thesis is a set of recommendations related to the creation of a domestic embedded journalist program. The recommendations are proposed for both the media and public-safety agencies. These recommendations may lead to an adopted response to real-time reporting of tactical operations that minimizes harm to others through an embedded journalist program. The final recommendations may lead to the adoption of current policies being implemented by other agencies to benefit domestic law-enforcement incidents.

## **E. CHAPTER OUTLINE**

Chapter II focuses on the DOD's current policies and procedures and includes information on how to translate this policy for domestic use. An important item for consideration in this chapter is the process of credentialing journalists. Chapter III centers on the ground rules established under the DOD program and suggests modifications for domestic use including the use of embargos on reporting tactical operations by journalists and the creation of preapproved media messaging. This is a key component of the policy to ensure safety of first responders and victims. Chapter IV explores the implementation of training programs for reporters covering domestic terrorism and mass-shootings. The DOD provides a media boot camp. The chapter also includes topics related to equipment and safe access for journalists. Chapter V brings together the positive impacts and challenges of adopting a DOD-type program in the United States specific to the response of domestic terrorism and mass-shooting incidents. The final chapter provides recommendations for both public-safety agencies and reporters on the feasibility of a domestically-based embedded journalist program within the United States as well as areas for future research.

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## **II. POLICY AND PROCEDURES OF AN EMBEDDED REPORTER PROGRAM**

One of the first steps to creating a successful program is establishing policies and procedures for all participants. This chapter focuses on the policies and procedures necessary for an embedded reporter program as outlined in the DOD's *Public Affairs Guidance for Embedded Reporters*, hereafter referred to as DOD guidance. All references to policies and procedures in this chapter come from the DOD guidance, which includes information addressing access, operational expectations, and program logistics. The policies creating the course of action for the military's embedded reporter program are found in Section Two of the DOD guidance. Twenty-three procedures outline the requirements to build the original military program in section three. The first half of this chapter reviews the military policies and procedures established in the 2003 DOD guidance. The second half considers which policies and procedures can be modified for civilian domestic use by public-safety agencies and reporters in the United States.

### **A. MILITARY OVERVIEW**

DOD policies 2.A through 2.B focus on media access to troops and information as part of the embedded reporter program. Policy 2.A sets the stage for a long-term “minimally restrictive” program involving all branches of the U.S. military, which includes “access to U.S. air, ground and naval forces through embedding.”<sup>35</sup> 2.A sets a program expectation of commanders and troops “to do it [embed with media] right from the start” because the information shared by media impacts the overall public opinion of the agency within the United States and around the world.<sup>36</sup> The same policy also directs troops to “organize for and facilitate access of national and internal media to ... forces, including those forces engaged in ground operations. ... To do this we [the military] will embed media with our units.”<sup>37</sup> The policies written in the DOD guidance make it clear

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

that all facets of the military are included within the program. The concept of balancing media access with operational security concerns is addressed in the Policy 2.B. Media is given open access to each aspect of the troop's missions including the troop's preparation and debriefing sessions.<sup>38</sup> This level of access, according to the policy, promotes the full understanding among the media of military operations. Policy 2.B directs troops to tell the military's story directly to the journalist, including both the good and bad, before other sources provide the information to the media.<sup>39</sup>

Operational expectations of media and troops appear in Policy 2.C of the DOD guidance. 2.C begins by defining an embedded reporter as "a media representative remaining with a unit on an extended basis."<sup>40</sup> Because media may remain embedded for weeks or months, commanders are required to "provide [them] billeting, rations and medical attention ... commensurate with that provided to members of the unit."<sup>41</sup> Military support to the reporters also includes transportation and assistance with communications necessary to share their reports with news agencies. 2.C.1 does restrict media from driving its own vehicles during its embed period with the military. 2.C.2 establishes priority seating and space for reporters and their equipment to support field coverage of troops in action. To protect operational security, 2.C.4 empowers the unit commander to impose delays on electronic transmissions and requires media to obtain approval with combat/hostile environment.<sup>42</sup> 2.C.4 also directs the reporter and military command to meet and discuss how communications equipment will be used upon the reporter's arrival. The DOD guidance was created through a collaboration between the military and media. The policies, including 2.C.4, support these collaborative efforts.

Procedures 3.A through 3.W of the DOD guidance focus on program logistics, including legal requirements. This section of the guidance provides 25 specific actions to create access to information for the media and transparency for the military. 3.Q seems to

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

sum up the DOD's philosophy for the embedded reporter program by pushing troops to focus on sharing information instead of holding it back from the media and the public by writing "The standard for release of information should be to ask 'why not release' vice 'why release.'" <sup>43</sup> Procedure 3.A appoints the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (OASDPA) as the agency responsible for "managing and vetting media embeds" as a component of the DOD guidance.<sup>44</sup> Procedures 3.A through 3.E establish the concept of media agencies, not individual reporters, becoming part of the program, either through their own request or as a recommendation from military units.

Scattered throughout the procedures are multiple references to accessing information. 3.H requires journalists not only to be physically capable of staying with military units, but also to carry their own equipment. Procedure 3.N outlines a process for resolving disputes between journalists and their assigned military commanders. 3.N dictates that resolutions "should be done as expeditiously as possible to preserve the news value of the situation" because a long process eliminates the importance of the story being told by the media.<sup>45</sup> The information covered during the embed process is time sensitive and a complicated approval or resolution process negatively impacts the information sharing capabilities of the media. The OASDPA is accountable for journalists. Accountability, as written in 3.U and 3.V, includes knowing each reporter's embedded status, injuries, deaths, and when reporters have been terminated or removed from their embed opportunity.<sup>46</sup>

The DOD guidance encompasses legal requirements for the embedded reporter program as well. Each journalist, as well as the news agency she represents, is required to sign a liability waiver and an agreement not to sue. These documents are kept on file with the military unit, according to procedure 3.E.1. An example of the waiver is found in Appendix B of this thesis. Procedure 3.M deals with the concept of ground rules created

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

between the media and the military. 3.M specifies media will “agree to abide by the ... ground rules ... in exchange for command/unit-provided support and access to service members, information and other previously stated privileges. Any violation of the ground rules could result in termination of that media’s embed opportunity.”<sup>47</sup> Chapter IV of this thesis discusses the DOD’s ground rules. In procedure 3.W.1, journalists are required to participate in a debriefing session in an effort to protect operational security of future operations related to information the media might have obtained during the embed opportunity.<sup>48</sup>

## **B. DOMESTIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

If public-safety agencies in the United States implement a domestic embedded reporter program, the agencies could use many aspects of the military-based policies and procedures as a starting point. Police Lt. Michael Madden stated that information shared on social media compromised his officers during the December 2, 2015 terrorist attack in San Bernardino because “police radio communications were broadcast live, in real time, nationwide—on YouTube and other network systems—for all to hear, including potential suspects.”<sup>49</sup> A domestic program provides the opportunity to create an information-sharing environment that keeps first responders, victims, and reporters safe while providing information to the public. First responders may adopt a goal for the domestic program that mirrors the military program, protecting transparency and providing the media access to information. In 2015, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) conducted an after action assessment of the response to the Ferguson, Missouri, demonstrations and cited the importance of creating and enforcing policies and procedures for public-safety agencies. In the DOJ report, lesson learned 26.1 directs law enforcement agencies to “work together in advance of the need for a coordinated response situation to review policies and to ensure any issues or substantial variations of interpretation are resolved. Maintaining policies and procedures that reflect widely accepted policing practices and

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Nelson, “Assemblyman Hosts Hearing.”

that meet national standards is a critical element of ensuring fairness and consistency of police operations.”<sup>50</sup> The DOJ report incorporates recommendations for policies and procedures throughout the document, showing the importance of including those concepts within a successful response. Policies and procedures could be similarly important to a proposed embedded reporter program.

The operational period, or timeframe, for a domestic program could be significantly different than experienced in the military program. The differences in operational periods may impact many possible modifications for a domestic program. A domestic policy may need to take into account the time of operational periods for response to a domestic terrorist or mass-shooting event. For the purposes of a domestic-based program, the timeframe for embedding a reporter could be several hours, several days, or several weeks. Examples of timeframes for U.S.-based domestic-terrorist or mass-shooting events are shown in Table 1. This information indicates that it may be unlikely that domestic embeds would extend beyond multiple hours or days. The DOD defines embedded media as “a media representative remaining with a unit on an extended basis.”<sup>51</sup> The domestic definition of embedded media could be modified to read that reporters remain and coordinate directly with the agency public information officer (PIO) at the established media staging site for incident command or the emergency operations center. A media-staging site allows for the PIO to meet media at a safe location near the incident and allows reporters to engage in additional in-depth reporting.

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<sup>50</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, *After Action Assessment of the Police Response to the August 2014 Demonstrations in Ferguson, Missouri* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. Published, 2015), 95.

<sup>51</sup> U.S. Department of Defense. *Public Affairs Guidance on Embedding Media*, 1.

Table 1. Timeframe of Mass-Shooting Incidents in United States<sup>52</sup>

| Incident                                          | Timeframe / Operational Period |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2013 Washington DC Navy Yard Shooting             | 1 hour                         |
| 2013 Boston Marathon Bombing                      | 4 days                         |
| 2015 Colorado Springs Planned Parenthood Shooting | 5.5 hours                      |
| 2015 San Bernardino Shooting                      | 4.5 hours                      |
| 2016 Dallas Police Officer Shooting               | 5 hours                        |
| 2016 Orlando Night Club Shooting                  | 3 hours                        |

The feasibility for a formal program is demonstrated in the 2015 experience piloted between the Baltimore Police Department and a *Baltimore Sun* reporter. In April 2015, *Baltimore Sun* reporter Justin George embedded with the Baltimore Police Department Task Force for nine days during the Freddie Gray riots.<sup>53</sup> During the time, Justin George was embedded with the Baltimore Police, he embargoed all information he gathered until an agreed upon time. The result was access to information and eventually a product that shared an in-depth review of the Freddie Gray investigation.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Adapted from: “What Happened inside Building 197?” *Washington Post*, September 20, 2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/local/navy-yard-shooting/scene-at-building-197/>; Ann O’Neill, “Tsarnaev Trail: Timeline of the Bombings, Manhunt and Aftermath,” *CNN*, May 15, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/03/04/us/tsarnaev-trial-timeline/>; Avi Selk, Hannah Wise, and Conor Shine, “Eight Hours of Terror,” *Dallas Morning News*, July 8, 2016, <http://interactives.dallasnews.com/2016/dallas-police-ambush-timeline/>; “Timeline of Events: Colorado Springs Planned Parenthood Shooting,” *The Gazette*, January 1, 2016, <http://gazette.com/video-timeline-of-events-colorado-springs-planned-parenthood-shooting/article/1564458>; Erik Ortiz, “San Bernardino Shooting: Timeline of How the Rampage Unfolded,” *NBC News*, December 3, 2015, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/san-bernardino-shooting/san-bernardino-shooting-timeline-how-rampage-unfolded-n473501>; Gal Tziperman Lotan et al., “Orlando Nightclub Shooting Timeline: Three Hours of Terror Unfold,” *Orlando Sentinel*, July 1, 2016, <http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/pulse-orlando-nightclub-shooting/os-orlando-pulse-nightclub-shooting-timeline-htmlstory.html>.

<sup>53</sup> “Inside the Freddie Gray Investigation,” *Boston Sun*, October 13, 2015, [http://live.baltimoresun.com/Event/Inside\\_the\\_Freddie\\_Gray\\_investigation](http://live.baltimoresun.com/Event/Inside_the_Freddie_Gray_investigation).

<sup>54</sup> “Inside the Freddie Gray Investigation,” *Boston Sun*. Reporter Justin George wrote a four-part series on his experience embedding with the Boston Police Department, including the embargo agreement.

If a domestic program is created, it could establish operational expectations. An example might be addressing expectations of the media at media-staging areas or emergency scenes. As with the military model, the media could carry their own equipment and transport themselves to the initial scene or media-staging location. This is already a common practice for media covering U.S. emergency incidents and would not be a new expectation. The embedding of reporters could be established in safe zones such as media staging near the incident command post or within emergency operations centers. Reporter safety could be a crucial issue to address within a domestic-based program because there are several documented cases of reporters narrowly avoiding injury. In 2015, David Danelski, a reporter with *The Press-Enterprise* newspaper, found himself in the middle of the San Bernardino shootout. He recounts, the experience in an interview stating “I heard a thundering sound. I didn’t recognize the sound as gunfire. Then I heard something strange, a whizzing sound go by my car.”<sup>55</sup> A second reporter’s account occurred during the 2016 coverage of the mass-shooting of Dallas Police officers. WFAA photojournalist Brandon Mowry shared how he “began to see and hear bullets hitting around him” as he covered the July 7, 2016, mass-shooting incident of Dallas Police officers.<sup>56</sup> Media staging areas are recommended by the DOJ in lesson learned 37.1 of the after action assessment of the police response to the Ferguson, Missouri demonstrations.<sup>57</sup> Establishing policies and procedures focused on creating a central location, or media staging area, could be valuable to stakeholders sharing information both among themselves and with the public.

If a domestic-based embedded journalist program is created, an agency could be established to manage the program, including delegation to a pre-existing government agency. The domestic program could be managed at the local, state, or federal level.

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<sup>55</sup> William Brangham, “Local Reporter Caught in Middle of San Bernardino Shootout,” PBS Newshour, December 2, 2015, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/local-reporter-caught-in-middle-of-san-bernardion-shootout/>; David Danelski, “How a Reporter Got Caught in Cross Fire of Gun Battle with San Bernardino Terrorists,” *The Press-Enterprise*, November 27, 2016, <http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20161127/how-a-reporter-got-caught-in-cross-fire-of-gun-battle-with-san-bernardino-terrorists>.

<sup>56</sup> Tom Burton, “Caught in the Middle of the Dallas Ambush,” National Press Photographers Association, July 11, 2016, <https://www.nppa.org/news/caught-middle-dallas-ambush>.

<sup>57</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, *After Action Assessment*, 95.

Typically, mass-shooting events require mutual aid from surrounding agencies with media representatives from across the region.<sup>58</sup> Selecting a state agency to manage a domestic embed program may be a benefit because it is connected to public-safety agencies across the state. Several possible organizations exist to act as coordination agencies at the state level, including public information officers from the department of public-safety or a state homeland security and emergency management agency. The DOJ report found a lack of a central managing agency led to “varying public information methods..., resulting in inconsistent communications and, in some cases, virtually no communications with the media.”<sup>59</sup> Establishing a managing agency may lead to an increase in consistent and accurate information sharing.

The managing agency could be tasked with establishing formal agreements and criteria for credentials and embedding opportunities. Domestic programs will likely require all reporters and their news agencies to sign a formal agreement using the military liability waiver forms as a template. This agreement would likely incorporate the ground rules established by the military embedded journalist program. The ground rules are discussed more thoroughly in Chapter IV. The next step could be creating a media credential program because many states and local jurisdictions do not currently require media credentials. This is documented in the findings within the DOJ report in lesson learned 37.2: “Law enforcement should establish a media credentialing process and a well-publicized staging area for frequent briefings during times of crisis.”<sup>60</sup> The media credentials may provide greater access for the media and assist first responders in immediate recognition of preapproved individuals needing information.

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<sup>58</sup> Metropolitan Police Department, *After Action Report Washington Navy Yard September 16, 2013* (Washington, DC: Metropolitan Police Department, 2014), [https://www.policefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Washington-Navy-Yard-After action-Report.pdf](https://www.policefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Washington-Navy-Yard-After-action-Report.pdf), 3; Massachusetts Emergency Management Project Team et al., *After Action Report for the Response to the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings* (Boston, MA: Massachusetts Emergency Management Project Team et al., 2014), <http://www.mass.gov/eopss/docs/mema/after-action-report-for-the-response-to-the-2013-boston-marathon-bombings.pdf>, 4; “Suspect Identified in Colorado Springs Planned Parenthood Shooting, 3 Killed, 9 Injured,” *The Gazette*, December 2, 2015, <http://gazette.com/suspect-identified-in-colorado-springs-planned-parenthood-shooting-3-killed-9-injured/article/1564419>.

<sup>59</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, *After Action Assessment*, 92.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

If a domestic embedded reporter program is created the program could echo procedures dealing with disputes between the media and first responders from the military model to meet time sensitivities and stakeholder objectives. The procedures may include consequences for violating agreements or ground rules. Adoption of a procedure to resolve disputes quickly could mirror the DOD guidance. The military approach encourages solutions at the lowest level and within the quickest timeframe. A possible domestic program procedure for disagreements could establish final decision making by the lead incident command organization with an appeal to the regional or state level if an agreement is not reached. The policy may address the consequences for releasing tactical information sharing in real-time. This program would likely encourage sharing of all information not categorized as tactical operations. An evaluation of the potential harm to first responders, victims, and operational security would likely be included in determining restrictions on information.

Establishing procedures with specific consequences for reporters who share tactical operations during embargo periods aligns with the DOD guidance. Possible consequences could be termination of credentials and loss of direct access to the public-safety agency. The consequence of terminating credentials and losing access could become more significant if additional public-safety agencies encrypt their radio traffic. A second procedure might address accountability issues related to embedding journalists including providing a public information officer at media staging for all domestic terrorism or mass-shooting incidents, providing safety guidance to reporters, and reporting any injuries or fatalities to reporters during the program to incident command officials. A final procedural consideration could require all stakeholders to follow the ground rules. The ground rules could provide specific information on how an embargo, or delay, of reporting tactical operation information could be implemented in order to minimize harm.

Public-safety and emergency response agencies often engage in debriefing or hot-wash activities following an incident. This means that all first responders engaged in the incident share their observations and experiences, whether positive or negative. The debriefing session could occur immediately or within a few days of the incident;

however, a *Firefighter Nation* article explains, “Due to the tactical details and high risk involved, it has become common practice for special operations, hazmat and technical rescue teams to conduct debriefings immediately after their incidents.”<sup>61</sup> The debrief activity could be as formal or as informal as standing in a circle and sharing a best practice, a lesson learned, or any other observation that the individual has related to the response. An example of a formal debriefing is the use of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Incident Command System (ICS) 204a form to record observations and lessons learned by the participant during the incident.<sup>62</sup> The military embedded reporter program includes a procedure requiring journalists to attend a debriefing with troops before leaving the assignment. Debriefings that include both first responders and media are rarely held in the United States. A procedure establishing a method to debrief embedded reporters during a domestic terrorist or mass-shooting incident may provide benefits and could be included within a domestic program.

### C. CONCLUSION

If public-safety agencies and media create an embedded reporter program within the United States, the DOD guidance could be modified or transferred for domestic use. A significant difference between the military program and a domestic-based program could be the operational period involved because the domestic program would likely have shorter periods of engagement. Another important difference is first responders in the United States have limited consequences to impose on media violating policies and procedures. Media within the United States currently have access to information without the need to embed as long as public-safety agencies continue to use unencrypted radio channels to communicate during emergency incidents. Each of the programs are based on supporting—or even increasing—transparency of an agency’s actions while maintaining the safety of troops and responders as well as the security of the tactical operations. Establishing formal policies and procedures creates the foundation necessary to build a

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<sup>61</sup> “How and Why to Conduct an Incident Debriefing,” *Firefighter Nation*, July 22, 2011, <http://www.firefighternation.com/articles/2011/07/how-why-to-conduct-an-incident-debriefing.html>.

<sup>62</sup> Federal Emergency Management Agency, “ICS Form 204A,” April 15, 1996, <http://www.sarci.org/srdi/members/ICS204A.doc>.

successful relationship. The next step in determining the feasibility of a domestic embedded journalist program is to consider the ground rules necessary for bringing the policy to fruition.

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### III. GROUND RULES

#### A. MILITARY GROUND RULES

Establishing the ground rules between the reporter and the military allows every individual engaged in the incident to have a clear understanding of the expectations related to information sharing. Information can be in the form of the written word, digital communications, photos, videos, or any platforms that allow journalists to convey a message to their audience. In a 2003 article for *Military Review*, U.S. Army Lt. Col. Tammy Miracle focuses on the impact of embedded media with the Army. She writes, “Embedded journalists have already noted that restrictions are sometimes placed on what they can report, but such limitations are liberal and based solely on operational security and force protection.”<sup>63</sup> If the ground rules are pre-established and agreed upon by both journalists and public-safety agencies, the result can be a safer response for both first responders and victims as well as continuously shared information. This chapter focuses on the ground rules established under the DOD’s program and suggests possible modifications for domestic use in the United States for first responders and journalists.

After a collaborative effort between the military and media, ground rules were established as a component of the DOD embedded journalist program. The full military guidance document is found in Appendix A. The ground rules focus on finding a balance between the access of information and safety issues related to both people and military operations. The ground rules are signed by both the reporter and military commander when the reporter arrives at the assigned camp. An important statement within the guidance document is “These ground rules recognize the right of the media to cover military operations and are in no way intended to prevent release of derogatory, embarrassing, negative or uncomplimentary information.”<sup>64</sup> The purpose of the ground rules and the embedded reporter program is not to eliminate transparency, but to provide it without compromising the safety and missions of the troops or the reporters. The

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<sup>63</sup> Miracle, “The Army and Embedded Media,” 42.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

document also includes the process for revising the rules as there may be changes necessary as time moves forward. Fifty rules are established within the ground rules section of the DOD guidance. The 50 ground rules cover five broad topics:

- interview rules
- general safety guidelines
- embargo rules and protocols
- information preapproved for release
- non-releasable/restricted information<sup>65</sup>

The ground rules provide guidance on the means by which journalists conduct interviews with service members. The rules read that all interviews will be on the record. Interviews must be “secure at the source” meaning “individuals meeting with journalists are responsible for ensuring that no classified or sensitive information is revealed.”<sup>66</sup> The ground rules allow for interviews with pilots and aircrew only after their mission has been completed and injured soldiers only with informed consent from both the soldier and the attending doctor. The DOD guidance includes how to coordinate approval processes when local ground rules are applied. Local ground rules may require reporters to include the date and location of the interview. A copy of local ground rules document can be found in Appendix B. The 2009 document *Regional Command East Media Ground Rules* is from Afghanistan and requires a reporter’s signature to acknowledge the rules. It is an actual contract of engagement between the regional command and each embedded reporter.<sup>67</sup> This demonstrates the formality of the agreement and expectations. The first item on the local grounds rules from Regional Command East is “Media on Bagram Air Field will not take photographs, video or conduct interviews unless escorted

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<sup>65</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Public Affairs Guidance on Embedding Media*, 1.

<sup>66</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Public Affairs* (Joint Publication 3-61) (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2016), C-2.

<sup>67</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Regional Command East Media Ground Rules* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2009).

by public affairs personnel.”<sup>68</sup> This local document provides specific direction for the reporter at Bagram Air Field that is different from other military camps.

The general safety of the troops and reporters is discussed in several of the rules within the military guidance. Rules restrict the use of both fire arms possession and the use of light sources for the reporters. At no point are the reporters allowed to carry personal firearms while embedded. For safety precautions, reporters cannot use flash cameras or visible light sources when working with troops at night. Light sources cause two safety concerns. The light may expose the location of soldiers to the enemy. If the light source hits soldiers’ eyes in the dark it can temporarily blind the soldiers leaving them unable to defend themselves. The on-scene commander can provide approval for the use of this equipment if requested in advance and he determines no compromise of safety.

The next topic addresses the practice of embargoes. An embargo is an agreement between a news source, in this case the military, and the reporter to delay publishing of information until a specified date or certain conditions have been met. The military guidance defines the process and timeline, “Embargoes will only be used for operational security and will be lifted as soon as the operational security issue has passed.”<sup>69</sup> Restricting transparency, or information sharing, is not the purpose of the embargo. The goal is to maintain safety and operational security by releasing the right information, at the right time, and under the direction of the ground rules. An embargo of information in this case includes restricting information on a specific military action until it has occurred. In 2003, Fox News reporter Geraldo Rivera was embedded with the Army’s 101st Airborne Division and was given information on future operational plans. Under the embargo rules he is required to hold that information until after the operations are complete and the troops have returned to a safe location. However, he is included in all incident command meetings and made aware of all planned activities so that he can report the information when it will do no harm to the troops.

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<sup>68</sup> Politico, “Regional Command East Media Ground Rules,” September 30, 2009, [http://www.politico.com/pdf/PPM143\\_091015\\_ground\\_rules.pdf](http://www.politico.com/pdf/PPM143_091015_ground_rules.pdf).

<sup>69</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Public Affairs Guidance on Embedding Media*, 5.

The next topic provides guidance on preapproved information sharing rules. This information is always appropriate to share by journalists while working with the military. Preapproved content allows the reporter to work without having to seek approval from the military authority. Preapproved content allows the reporter to continuously provide information to the public when other information may be under embargo. Figure 7 contains the 14 preapproved rules of information sources to be shared freely by the media. For the most part, the military guidance is for the removal of specific numbers in media coverage. The rules require reporters to use general terms or quantities when describing the support of military forces or locations.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approximate friendly force strength figures.</li> <li>• Approximate friendly force casualty figures by service.</li> <li>• Confirmed figures of enemy personnel detained or captured.</li> <li>• Size of friendly force participating in action can be disclosed using approximate terms.</li> <li>• Information and location of military targets and objectives previously under attack.</li> <li>• Generic description of origin of air operations, such as “land-based.”</li> <li>• Date, time or location of previous conventional military missions and actions, as well as mission results only if described in general terms.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Types of ordnance expended in general terms.</li> <li>• Number of Aerial combat or reconnaissance missions or sorties flown in Central Command’s area of operation.</li> <li>• Type of forces involved.</li> <li>• Allied participation by type of operation after approval from the allied unit commander.</li> <li>• Operation code names.</li> <li>• Names and hometowns of U.S. military units.</li> <li>• Service members’ names and home towns with the individual’s consent.</li> </ul> |
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Figure 7. Information Preapproved for Release<sup>70</sup>

The ground rules also establish information that is not releasable by the journalist because it will comprise the security of the operations and the safety of the troops. Figure 8 shares the 19 items that are not to be released. The 19 rules under this topic

<sup>70</sup> Adapted from: U.S. Department of Defense, *Public Affairs Guidance on Embedding Media*.

include restrictions on sharing specific numbers of troops, equipment or locations for the operations underway or future operations. Restrictions also apply to rules of engagement and intelligence collection activities. In order to maintain and protect the surprise of operations the ground rules include a provision to enhance information sharing restrictions during on-going military action.<sup>71</sup> This could mean that live broadcasts are restricted when operations are imminent. The military prohibits sharing information related to the failures or incompetence of the enemy including failures at deception, intelligence collection, or direct fire. Notifications to next of kin are required before any information can be released about missing aircraft, injured or killed members as a courtesy to the families.

The DOD's guidelines include the consequence of violating the ground rules during the embedding process as the "immediate termination ... and removal" of the reporter.<sup>72</sup> Although the termination of embedded reporters is rare, Fox News reporter Geraldo Rivera was removed from the combat zone in 2003 for violating the ground rules. Rivera was embedded with the Army's 101st Airborne Division when he conducted a live broadcast on Fox News. Ground rule 4.G.11, restricting live broadcasts from the airfield or ground, and rule 4.G.6, restricting information sharing of future operations, were both violated. Reporter David Carr writes in the *New York Times* that Geraldo Rivera compromised operational security by sharing the United States military location and plans in Iraq.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> David Carr, "A Nation at War: Coverage; Pentagon says Geraldo Rivera will be removed from Iraq," *New York Times*, April 1, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/04/01/us/a-nation-at-war-coverage-pentagon-says-geraldo-rivera-will-be-removed-from-iraq.html>.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific number of troops in units below Corps/Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) level.</li> <li>• Specific number of aircraft in units at or below the air expeditionary wing level.</li> <li>• Specific numbers regarding other equipment or critical supplies.</li> <li>• Specific numbers of ships in units below the carrier battle group level.</li> <li>• Names of military installations or specific geographic locations of military units in the Central Command area of responsibility, unless specifically released by the DOD or authorized by Central Command commander.</li> <li>• Information regarding future operations.</li> <li>• Information regarding force protection measures at military installations or encampments.</li> <li>• Photography showing level of security at military installations or encampments.</li> <li>• Rules of engagement.</li> <li>• Information on intelligence collection activities compromising tactics, techniques or procedures.</li> <li>• Extra precautions in reporting will be required at the commencement of hostilities to maximize operational surprise. Live broadcasts ... by embedded media are prohibited until the safe return of the initial strike package or until authorized by the unit commander.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During an operation, specific information on friendly force troop movements, tactical deployments, and dispositions that would jeopardize operational security or lives unless authorized by on-scene commander.</li> <li>• Information on special operations units, unique operations methodology or tactics.</li> <li>• Information on effectiveness of enemy electronic warfare.</li> <li>• Information identifying postponed or canceled operations.</li> <li>• Information on missing or downed aircraft or missing vessels while search and rescue and recovery operations are being planned or underway.</li> <li>• Information on effectiveness of enemy camouflage, cover, deception, targeting, direct and indirect fire, intelligence collection, or security measures.</li> <li>• No photography or other visual media showing an enemy prisoner of war or detainee's recognizable face, nametag or other identifying feature of item may be taken.</li> <li>• Still or video imagery of custody operations or interview with person under custody.</li> </ul> |
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Figure 8. Military Information Not Releasable<sup>74</sup>

## B. DOMESTIC GROUND RULES

The DOD's ground rules can translate into use within the United States for domestic use by our first responder agencies and journalists. Some of the rules will not apply; however, this section analyzes those rules that can be used to safeguard first

<sup>74</sup> Adapted from: U.S. Department of Defense, *Public Affairs Guidance on Embedding Media*, 5.

responders, the victims they seek to protect, and the reporter's assigned beat. Modifications will be necessary due to a difference in the operational period and environment experienced by first responders as compared to military operations.

The domestic guidelines might only be applicable during mass-shooting or domestic terrorist events. The first responder goal, or objective, for the ground rules could remain the same: safety and security. The rules may protect lives as well as the strategic operations necessary to neutralize the incident. There are four items from the DOD guidelines that translate well into guidance for a domestic embedded reporter program:

- interview rules
- safety guidelines
- embargo rules
- information not for release
- information preapproved for release

The inclusion of interview rules could strengthen the domestic guidelines or simply be a reminder. Reporters have established relationships for daily and crisis communication sharing with public information officers and first response agency representatives. The interview rules could direct reporters to work with the person identified as the lead PIO during a specific incident. Interview coordination with an agency PIO increases the accuracy of the reporting as well as access to information. A benefit for reporters in working with the PIO to complete interviews is securing the subject matter expert from the agency to answer the questions.

Safety guidelines could be retained and include information on light source restrictions within the immediate response area because it keeps first responders safe during response activities. This is because camera flashes or light sources can hit a first responder in the eyes and leave him temporarily blind. Another item for safety considerations could be reporters respecting crime scene boundaries established either by crime scene tape or the placement of emergency response vehicles. This is to keep reporters from being struck by bullets or interfering with the active response area, and to

eliminate any other distractions that might compromise safety. It also allows first responders to focus on the suspect, not on potential victims entering the area of concern or the hot-zone. The incident command or first responders could identify a safe location to establish a media staging area or a facility to provide frequent updates of information to reporters.

Establishing and honoring an embargo of information specific to tactical operations could be the biggest change for journalists within the United States. The embargo practice is not new and is used within the United States between reporters and information sources for announcing normal business decisions or non-crisis related matters. An embargo on tactical operations during a public-safety incident could require a high degree of coordination between the public information officer and the reporters, whether or not the reporters are at the incident. The procedures for announcing the embargo and ending the embargo may need to be developed by public information officers in coordination with journalists. The embargo announcement could be communicated face-to-face or posted digitally in order to reach a larger group of reporters. The digital notification could be as simple as a social media post announcing the embargo related to sharing tactical operations followed by an announcement lifting the embargo.

The embargoed information would be restricted to *tactical* operations. This means prohibiting information that describes or shows—through writing, pictures, video, or any other digital method—the location, position, activities, and number of emergency responders. This includes describing the tactics that are happening or are planned to eliminate threats to rescue efforts underway. A case in point is the Colorado Springs Planned Parenthood shooting in November 2015 during which a local reporter shared real-time information on her Twitter account. The radio traffic posted to Twitter transcribed the Colorado Springs Police Department’s tactical radio channel “We’re just going to have you ram the front of that bldg when we tell you to. OK? Ram the front?”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Billie Stanton Anleu, “Billie Stanton Anleu,” Twitter, November 27, 2015, <https://twitter.com/stantonanleu>.

See Figure 9 for the original post from Colorado Springs *Gazette* reporter Billie Stanton Anleu during the incident.



Figure 9. Tweet Sharing Tactical Operations of Colorado Springs Police.<sup>76</sup>

The reporter continued to share the tactical radio channel information on Twitter for more than an hour during the mass-shooting that left a police officer and two others dead and several people wounded. If an embargo had been enacted and honored, this type of reporting would be held until after the shooting stopped. The embargo could apply only to information specific to tactical operations. All other information related to the incident could be shared in real-time and would fall under the preapproved category. The embargoed information may be shared when deemed safe by the incident commander. The embargo does not stop information sharing; it simply delays sharing until the information will not compromise the safety of those involved.

In addition to establishing embargo rules, public-safety agencies could consider including preapproved information for release during incidents. Preapproved rules might allow reporters to provide on-going information to the community and meet reporting goals to keep the public informed. Generally, this information includes everything outside the scope of tactical operations. This could include the type of incident, the incident location, the number of responders and general numbers related to injuries and

<sup>76</sup> Source: Billie Stanton Anleu, "Billie Stanton Anleu."

fatalities. Preapproved messaging could also include the types of photos and video that will not compromise the safety of the people or operations for a mass-shooting or domestic terrorist incident. Figure 10 shares an example of preapproved information including text and photos.



Figure 10. Tweet Sharing Sample of Preapproved Information<sup>77</sup>

## C. CONCLUSION

This chapter covered the ground rules for embedded journalists. The chapter first reviewed 50 rules within the military guidance that were established in 2002 as part of a collaborative process between the military and media. Next, the chapter evaluated the

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<sup>77</sup> Source: Colorado Springs Fire Department, "Colorado Springs Fire Department on Twitter," Twitter, January 9, 2017, <https://twitter.com/CSFDPIO/status/818564284695322624>.

military ground rules and explored their feasibility for adoption within the United States. Modifications were identified for domestic use. The next step is to design and provide a training program that educates journalists on the current policies, procedures, and ground rules established for the protection of operational safety and security no matter what platform is used for dissemination by the reporter or the public-safety agency.

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## IV. TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR JOURNALISTS

The value of training programs is evident in that training is a component of the Department of Homeland Security's National Preparedness System. According to the FEMA website, "Training provides first responders, homeland security officials, emergency management officials, private and non-governmental partners, and other personnel with the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to perform key tasks required by specific capabilities."<sup>78</sup> Participation in a formal training program is a critical element of the *National Preparedness Guidelines* required under the 2003 *Homeland Security Presidential Directive-8* to prepare for response to all-hazards events including terrorism.<sup>79</sup> Likewise, a training program is a necessary component of an embedded reporter program to ensure understanding and compliance of the ground rules. The DOD provides training to the media through a boot camp for journalists who participate in its embedded reporter program. This chapter explores the feasibility of public-safety agencies delivering a formal training program to journalists and highlights current training programs provided by local law enforcement and fire departments across the United States to educate their communities on agency operations.

### A. MILITARY TRAINING PROGRAM

The DOD created a training program for its embedded reporter program in 2002. Participation in the training program, or media boot camp, is not required under the military program policies or procedures. U.S. Army Lt. Col. Tammy Miracle states the "DOD should require all journalists who want to be embedded with troops to attend the boot camp." due to the benefits received by journalists.<sup>80</sup> According to the DOD, more than 600 journalists completed the original week-long Embed Boot Camp in the first two

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<sup>78</sup> Federal Emergency Management Agency, "Training," October 17, 2016, <https://www.fema.gov/training>.

<sup>79</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *National Preparedness Guidelines* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2015), <https://www.dhs.gov/national-preparedness-guidelines>.

<sup>80</sup> Miracle, "The Army and Embedded Media," 45.

years.<sup>81</sup> Embed Boot Camp provides an overview of military operations, hostile environment training, and the opportunity, according to Miracle, to “experiment with improved communications gear and satellite uplinks.”<sup>82</sup> The boot camp includes more than 52 hours of classroom lecture and field exercises.<sup>83</sup> The Embed Boot Camp provides media an overview of military operations, covers proper equipment and physical fitness requirements, shares information on the locations and deployment areas, and allows reporters to use and see military staff and equipment in action through field exercises.

Several formal assessments and general media articles—from the Institute for Defense Analyses, *Military Review*, U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, as well as U.S. Army Command and General Staff College—have been written on the effectiveness of the DOD’s media boot camp. Each of these military-affiliated assessments involves interviews and research from sources both outside of the military as well as within the organization. These sources include members of the military who participated in the boot camp and others who participated in the embedded reporter program. Evaluations of the DOD’s media boot camps indicate a valuable experience resulting in positive experiences for both the reporters and military members. Brendan McLane conducted research for the Strategic Studies Institute and found that the media boot camp’s “extensive training and concomitant understanding the embeds received through the program, from boot camp to the day-to-day military routine, no doubt contributed to the quality of their [media] coverage.”<sup>84</sup> Domestic training programs may also result in positive outcomes among first responders and reporters.

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<sup>81</sup> Brendan R. McLane, “Reporting from the Sandstorm: An Appraisal of Embedding,” *Parameters* 34, no. 1 (2004): 77–88, <http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html&identifier=ADA486424>.

<sup>82</sup> Miracle, “The Army and Embedded Media,” 45.

<sup>83</sup> Richard Wright, *Assessment of DOD Embedded Media Program* (Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses, 2004), [https://www.ida.org/~media/Corporate/Files/Publications/IDA\\_Documents/JAWD/p-3931.pdf](https://www.ida.org/~media/Corporate/Files/Publications/IDA_Documents/JAWD/p-3931.pdf), V-39.

<sup>84</sup> McLane, “Reporting from the Sandstorm,” 82.

## **B. DOMESTIC TRAINING PROGRAM**

Public-safety agencies currently provide training boot camps or academies for citizens and local media.<sup>85</sup> These domestic training programs for citizens and reporters could be expanded or modified to include the following information specifically related to embedded reporters: embargo protocols, media credential information, and concerns over reporting radio scanner broadcasts for public-safety responders. In areas without a current program, modifying domestic law-enforcement or fire programs may be easier than employing the DOD program, but will require staffing and financial resources. In the end, exploring the value of a required formal training program for the media may benefit public-safety agencies.

A media training program provides public-safety agencies in the United States the opportunity to educate reporters about their organizations and decision-making processes. Completion of this program could result in more accurate coverage and better relationships with media organizations, similar to the results experienced following the DOD's media boot camps. The domestic-level media training programs may be conducted at the local or state level; however, creating a nationwide curriculum is a possible first step toward the program's foundation. One nationally accepted curriculum provides consistency. Currently, FEMA creates and delivers training course curricula to more than two million first responders and emergency management officials across the nation each year, demonstrating its ability to support both a nationwide media curriculum and training program that can be delivered by local agencies much like the incident command system courses.<sup>86</sup> The training program curriculum could provide an overview of how all public-safety agencies—fire, law enforcement, emergency medical services, and emergency management—support incidents involving domestic terrorists or mass-shooters. The DOD's training program was developed through the feedback and support

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<sup>85</sup> There are several examples of public-safety media boot camps available online, including that of the California Highway Patrol, available at <http://www.dailydemocrat.com/article/NI/20151009/NEWS/151009872> or the Los Angeles Police Department [http://www.lapdonline.org/home/news\\_view/58350](http://www.lapdonline.org/home/news_view/58350).

<sup>86</sup> Federal Emergency Management Agency, "Emergency Management Institute Mission," accessed February 27, 2017, <https://training.fema.gov/mission.aspx>.

of military and media members. The public-safety agencies may also consult a diverse group, comprising representatives from each public-safety sector and members of the media representing print, television, and radio, to create the curriculum.

## **1. Law Enforcement Training Programs**

Law enforcement agencies currently provide training academies across the United States. However, many of the academies are provided specifically to citizens in an effort to educate and work with only the people living within the borders of the agency's jurisdiction. A Google search of law enforcement-based citizen training academies produced 236,000 results, indicating how frequently law enforcement agencies offer training programs for external audiences.<sup>87</sup> The National Citizens Police Academy Association lists 28 citizen police academy associations in 17 states working to inform citizens.<sup>88</sup> The first citizen police academy in the United States was created in 1985 by the Orlando Florida Police Department.<sup>89</sup> Many of the law enforcement run academies coordinate a 14-week program. The New York Police Department (NYPD) offers two 14-week programs each year through the NYPD training bureau covering "the legal, social and procedural aspects of policing ... including firearms discipline and counterterrorism."<sup>90</sup> The NYPD program involves "lectures, electronic media, role-plays, simulations, and workshops are utilized to educate community members about police training and tactics, with the goal of having participants acquire a better understanding of the authority and limitations of the police."<sup>91</sup> A review of the Austin Police Department (APD)'s Citizen Police Academy also shows a 14-week program with a slogan

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<sup>87</sup> See [https://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=law+enforcement+citizens+academy&\\*&prod=US&prod=US](https://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=law+enforcement+citizens+academy&*&prod=US&prod=US) producing the search for citizen training academies on March 2, 2017.

<sup>88</sup> National Citizens Police Academy Association, "Resources," accessed March 2, 2017, <http://ncpaa.us/resources/resources>.

<sup>89</sup> National Citizens Police Academy Association, "About Us," accessed March 2, 2017, <http://ncpaa.us/about-us>.

<sup>90</sup> New York Police Department, "Training Bureau/Police Academy," accessed March 2, 2017, [http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/html/training\\_nypd/citizens\\_police\\_%20academy%20\\_.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/html/training_nypd/citizens_police_%20academy%20_.shtml).

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

“Understanding through Education.”<sup>92</sup> More than 2,300 citizens have completed the APD’s academy through 87 classes.<sup>93</sup> Of the 25 courses covered in the APD academy, the sessions covering special weapons and tactics (SWAT), bomb squads, and critical incidents are most beneficial for inclusion in possible embedded media training program.<sup>94</sup> Another example is the Citizen Police Academy managed by the Aurora Police Department in Colorado. The Aurora Police Department was the first agency responding to the mass-shooting at an Aurora movie theater on July 20, 2012, resulting in 12 fatalities. The Aurora Police Department instituted the academy in 1993 to educate citizens on strategic response and tactics, counterterrorism, and 16 additional topics through a 15-week evening program.<sup>95</sup> These courses can be adapted to establish a media training program that educates reporters on the response of police officers during domestic-terrorist or mass-shooting incidents.

## **2. Fire Department Training Programs**

Fire departments also provide training academies across the United States. Research provided only one fire department currently providing a formal training program for media; however, many fire departments are conducting citizen fire academies. Since 1996, the Phoenix Fire Department has provided a one-day Certified Fire Journalist Media Academy involving both classroom and hands-on exercises.<sup>96</sup> The academy currently consists of 10 sessions for journalists focused on fire ground operations, fire behavior, fire investigations, search and rescue, hazardous materials, homeland defense, special operations, emergency medical services, dispatch and deployment, and community involvement.<sup>97</sup> Journalists who complete the Phoenix Fire

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<sup>92</sup> Austin Police Department, “Citizen Police Academy,” accessed March 2, 2017, <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/citizen-police-academy>.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Aurora Police Department, “Citizen Police Academy,” accessed February 10, 2017, [https://www.auroragov.org/residents/public\\_safety/police/citizen\\_\\_\\_teen\\_police\\_academies/citizen\\_police\\_academy/](https://www.auroragov.org/residents/public_safety/police/citizen___teen_police_academies/citizen_police_academy/).

<sup>96</sup> Phoenix Fire Department, “Certified Fire Journalist Fire Academy,” accessed February 10, 2017, <https://www.phoenix.gov/fire/directory/publicaffairs/firejournalist>.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

Department media training are rewarded with access inside the fire lines and closer access to both fire and medical incidents.<sup>98</sup> A domestic embedded reporter program may need these types of rewards to entice reporters to participate in the program. The training academies not only educate journalists about public-safety agencies the programs also create relationships between first responders and the media. Another example of a fire department training program is the Citizens' Fire Academy coordinated by Boulder Fire Department in Colorado. The Boulder Fire Department provides a seven-week program for people living and working within the fire district's boundaries in order to strengthen community relations.<sup>99</sup> The fire department program provides participants the opportunity to complete hands-on learning while donning firefighter bunker gear to extinguish a live fire or search through a smoke-filled room to find hidden victims.<sup>100</sup> The Boulder Fire Department citizen program provides exposure to emergency medical services with hands-on cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training and classroom presentations conducted by firefighter paramedics.

### **3. Public-Safety Media Training Academy**

The research for this thesis identifies areas not included in current law enforcement and fire department media and citizen training programs that could supplement curriculum to meet the needs of an embedded reporter program and educate all stakeholders on the impact of information sharing during an incident. The key areas missing from the current training programs provided by public-safety agencies are embargo protocols; media credential procedures, and radio scanner-sharing impacts. Current academy curriculum provides the opportunity to present the ground rules with an objective to understand and accept the ground rules. With the addition of these procedures into a current media academy curriculum, the ground rules of a new embedded reporter program could be presented and understood. The Phoenix Fire Department (PFD) incentivizes reporters attending media training with increased access

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Boulder Fire Department, "Citizens' Fire Academy," accessed February 10, 2017, <https://bouldercolorado.gov/fire-rescue/citizens-fire-academy>.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

to emergency scenes. A benefit similar to the PFD incentive could be included for all reporters completing a formal training program.

Explaining the embargo process and its application to tactical operations, as defined by the DOD's program, may form a portion of the curriculum for embedded reporters. The embargo process will be a new concept for emergency incident information-sharing; therefore, adequate time may be necessary within a training program to understand the embargo concept and exercise the practice with hands-on learning drills. The embargo session could be a priority as its use is a key component of a program that protects the release of tactical operations until information-sharing can do no harm to first responders and victims. It may be useful to include information on messages that are preapproved for sharing during a mass-shooting and do not require reviews by incident commanders or public information officers. This is recommended because the embargo does not stop all information sharing; the embargo applies only to tactical operations. Public-safety personnel could participate in the media academies to learn about the media needs during an incident. The media academy could include time for reporters to share their perspectives and to answer questions for first responders on how reporters operate during domestic terrorist or mass-shooting events.

A session addressing credentials could also be part of an embedded reporter training program. The Department of Justice (DOJ) identified the lack of credentials as a lesson learned in the Ferguson Police response because reporters could not be identified, and the DOJ recommended the creation of a credential program and process.<sup>101</sup> The issuance and use of media credentials may be new to portions of the nation for first responders and media. The training could explain the credential application process, the use of credentials to gain access, and the consequences of misusing credentials. Overall, the media boot camps provide field exercises that show and explain how the credentials will be incorporated into the media staging area, incident command post, and emergency operations center.

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<sup>101</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, *After Action Assessment*, 117.

The DOJ's after action assessment found that negative relationships between public-safety officials and journalists created barriers to effective communication.<sup>102</sup> A training program could address this problem and create relationships that lead to more effective communication. Through a media training academy that incorporates hands-on exercises with law-enforcement officers and firefighters, an opportunity emerges to strengthen relationships. For the examples of citizen academies in this chapter, each program listed improving relationships as a goal. As stated in the Aurora Police Department's program description, "It is our hope that the graduates will become *partners* with us."<sup>103</sup> Similarly, the Phoenix Fire Department admits, "The *friendships* made during these three days of training have transcended the bounds of normal working relationships."<sup>104</sup> A benefit of a training program for embedded reporters includes building rapport and creating trusting relationships between reporters and first responders.

### C. CONCLUSION

Formal training is necessary within a domestic embedded reporter program. The Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Emergency Management Agency have shown the importance of training in the National Preparedness System supporting the *National Preparedness Goal*. Current citizen academy participants are given the opportunity to explore the logistics and procedures that could easily translate to the proposed embedded reporter program. Formal academies may provide all stakeholders time to exercise the required practices of responding to a domestic terrorist incident and following guidance. Depending on how the curriculum and conditions are developed, training could result in more accurate reporting, increased knowledge of public-safety operations and decision making, as well as provide greater access during the incident upon completion of the academy. After training, operational security may strengthen if the ground rules are enforced and observed. Chapter V examines the negative and

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 88.

<sup>103</sup> Aurora Police Department, "Citizen Police Academy."

<sup>104</sup> Phoenix Fire Department, "Certified Fire Journalist Fire Academy."

positive impacts of a domestic embedded reporter program on journalists and first responders.

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## **V. IMPACTS OF ADOPTING THE MILITARY MODEL FOR DOMESTIC USE**

A study published in the *International Journal of Information Management* explores the use of social media during emergencies. The study's authors, Tomer Simon, Avishey Goldbert, and Bruria Adini, conclude, "During emergency events, individuals are exposed to large quantities of information without being aware of their validity or risk of misinformation."<sup>105</sup> The impact of misinformation extends beyond the individual at home to the victims of crime, first responders, and members of the media. Previous chapters analyzed the DOD's embedded reporter program to determine whether the military's guidance can be modified for a program in the United States. This chapter reviews the impacts of a similar policy on public-safety agencies and journalists for domestic terrorism and mass-shooting incidents.

### **A. POSITIVE IMPACTS**

The motivation in proposing a domestic embedded reporter program is increasing the safety of all people involved in the emergency response and preserving the security of tactical operations used to mitigate threats. Multiple examples of real-time reporting on social media demonstrate how the reporting of tactical operations is putting first responders and victims at risk during domestic terrorism and mass-shooting incidents. Messages posted by journalists to public Twitter accounts highlight safety issues. Figures 11 and 12 show the compromised safety of victims and first responders through the media reports on social media. Figure 11 is a message posted on Twitter by the Fox 5 DC media account sharing the specific location of a gunshot victim during the 2013 Washington, DC Navy Yard Shooting.<sup>106</sup> The figure also includes two responses from members of the community asking I DC to stop sharing the location because it is jeopardizing the victim. Figure 12 is also from Fox 5 DC's Twitter account and this tweet

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<sup>105</sup> Tomer Simon, Avishey Goldbert, and Bruria Adini, "Socializing in Emergencies—A Review of the Use of Social Media in Emergency Situations," *International Journal of Information Management* 35, no. (2015): 609–619, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2015.07.001>.

<sup>106</sup> Twitter, "Fox 5 DC," accessed January 15, 2017, <https://twitter.com/fox5dc/status/379595316200108032>.

also compromises the safety of an individual because it quotes radio scanner traffic sharing the location of an injured police officer.<sup>107</sup>



Figure 11. Tweet from Fox 5 DC<sup>108</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Source: Twitter, "Fox 5 DC."

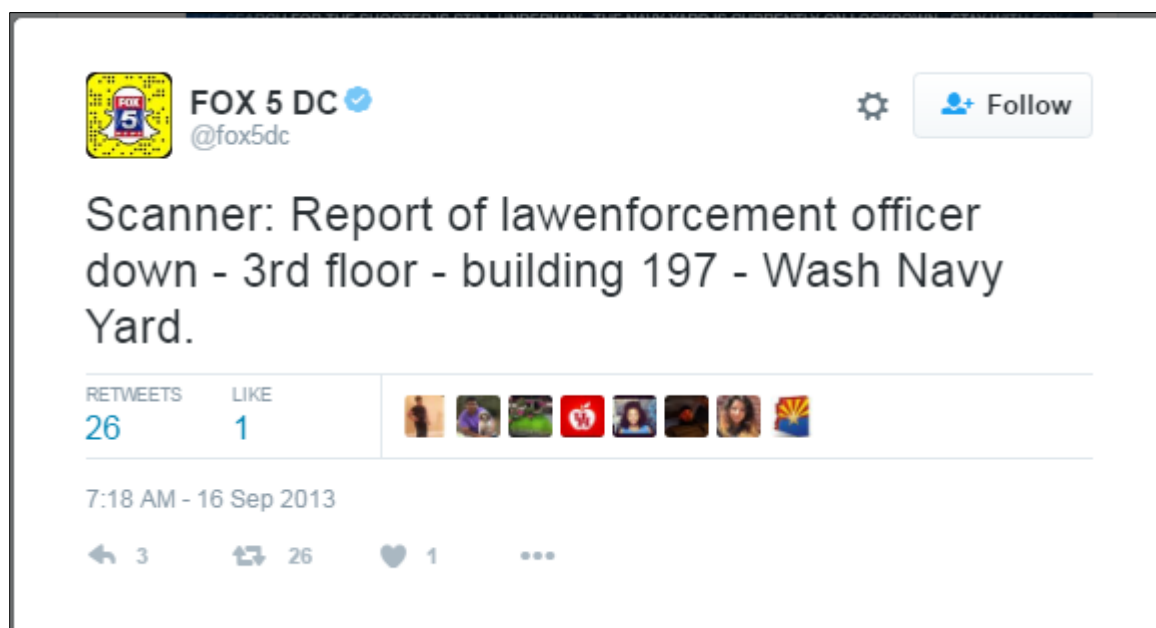


Figure 12. Tweet from Fox 5 DC<sup>109</sup>

The Boston Police Department and Dallas Police Department pleaded with the media on Twitter to discontinue sharing information that put first responders at risk. Figure 13 is a message posted by the Boston Police Department on Twitter warning media that real-time reporting is impacting the safety of law enforcement officers as they search for the Boston Marathon bomber.<sup>110</sup> Figure 14 is a message from the Dallas Police Department posted to Twitter during the July 2016 mass-shooting of police officers. This tweet directs media to stop sharing live feeds of the police department's office and garage area due to security concerns for the law enforcement personnel.<sup>111</sup> The information was obtained from scanners broadcasting public-safety radio channels and on-scene media coverage. A domestic embedded reporter program could curtail the practice of quoting first responder radio communications and reduce this risk faced by law enforcement and fire fighters as they work to save others.

<sup>109</sup> Source: Twitter, "Fox 5 DC."

<sup>110</sup> Twitter, "Society of Professional Journalists," accessed January 15, 2017, [https://twitter.com/spj\\_tweets/status/325232238767792128](https://twitter.com/spj_tweets/status/325232238767792128).

<sup>111</sup> Dallas Police Department, "MEDIA: Please Stop."

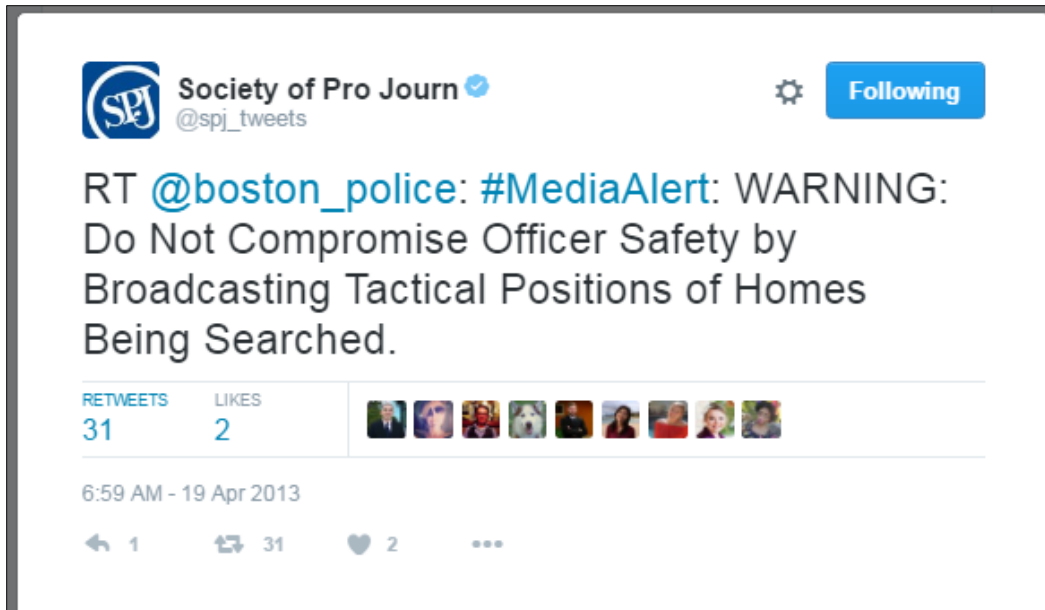


Figure 13. Twitter Message Showing a Retweet of a Boston Police Message<sup>112</sup>



Figure 14. Dallas Police Tweet<sup>113</sup>

An embedded reporter program potentially provides reporters greater access to information and increases the safety of reporters covering mass-shooting or domestic

<sup>112</sup> Source: Twitter, "Society of Professional Journalists."

<sup>113</sup> Source: Dallas Police Department, "Dallas Police Department on Twitter."

terrorism incidents. Implementing embargoes on tactical operation information-sharing may result in the following benefits: increased safety, security of tactical operations, and increased accuracy of reporting and information sharing. Embargoing tactical operations would eliminate the practice of the media quoting scanner traffic. The elimination of quoting radio scanners potentially protects first responders and the victims they seek to assist. Embargoes should also apply to sharing livestream videos showing the tactical positions of emergency personnel and equipment.

Embargoes will help limit the amount of misinformation shared during emergency incidents. Scanner traffic is not vetted and contains numerous examples of misinformation. If transcripts from scanner traffic are shared over and over on Twitter, or other social media accounts, inaccurate information can rapidly spread. The practice of quoting scanner traffic has become so prevalent that two *National Public Radio* (NPR) journalists created the “Breaking News Consumer Handbook” to educate the public about the information-sharing process during mass-shootings.<sup>114</sup> The first warning in the handbook reads, “In the immediate aftermath, news outlets will get it wrong.”<sup>115</sup> This is important because reporters are acknowledging the misinformation and through the breaking news handbook are attempting to educate news consumers on the validity of the first reports. This breaking news guide has been widely shared by members of the media and public information officers during terrorist attacks, active shooter incidents, and breaking news events. After the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks, NPR’s “On the Media” created a terrorist news version of the handbook and the first statement is to “remember, in the immediate aftermath [of a terrorist attack] almost *everyone* will get it wrong.”<sup>116</sup> The difference in this warning, compared to the original “Breaking News Consumer Handbook,” is the expansion from media getting it wrong to everyone posting information to social media accounts getting information wrong. The first tip on the “Breaking News Consumer’s Handbook: Terrorism Edition” list is “Terrorist attacks are designed to sow mayhem and confusion. Even using best practices, news outlets,

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<sup>114</sup> Garfield and Gladstone, “Breaking News Consumer’s Handbook: Active Shooter.”

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Garfield and Gladstone, “Breaking News Consumer’s Handbook: Terrorism.”

witnesses, and governments need time to get the facts straight.”<sup>117</sup> An example of this within the United States occurred on February 21, 2017 as the Houston Police responded to reports of an active shooter at the Ben Taub Hospital. The initial report occurred at 1:13 p.m. on the Houston Police Department Twitter account stating, “We are responding to reports of shots fired at Ben Taub Hospital; SWAT and PIO enroute #hounews” and this resulted in numerous social media messages over the next three hours.<sup>118</sup> The incident ended at 3:45 p.m. when the Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo announced, “there was no evidence at this time of an active shooting incident ... and the hospital would resume normal operations.”<sup>119</sup> Embargoes create time to vet information because all information is released in coordination with the incident commander’s approval.

Embargoing information allows reporters to provide more accurate information as the race to share scanner traffic ends. Sonja Gruber explores news embargoes in her 2014 Reuters Institute fellowship paper entitled “News Embargoes—Under Threat, but Not Extinct.” Gruber’s research affirms that the original goal of the embargo is accuracy. She states, “In theory, both sides benefit from an embargo: The ever-pressurized journalists get time to prepare their stories, and sources can ensure that the media is well-informed and thus less likely to report inaccurately.”<sup>120</sup> The use of an embargo is also a benefit to reporters in securing and publishing exclusive coverage of a story. The benefit of an embargo to *Baltimore Sun* reporter Justin George was increased information sharing with the Baltimore Police during the Freddie Gray riots. He embedded for nine days with the police department after agreeing not to report or share any information obtained during the investigation.<sup>121</sup> The embargo restriction was lifted by the Baltimore Police Department after the attorney general announced her decision to charge the police

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Houston Police Department, “Houston Police Department on Twitter,” Twitter, February 21, 2017, <https://twitter.com/houstonpolice/status/834133872795320321>.

<sup>119</sup> Bryan Kirk, “Houston’s Ben Taub Hospital Shooting: Police Chief Says No Evidence of Active Shooting,” *Houston Patch*, February 21, 2017, <http://patch.com/texas/houston/hospital-locked-down-amid-reports-shooting>.

<sup>120</sup> Sonja Gruber, *News Embargoes—Under Threat but Not Extinct*, Reuters Institute, 2014, <http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/publication/news-embargoes-under-threat-not-extinct>, 2.

<sup>121</sup> “Inside the Freddie Gray Investigation,” *Boston Sun*.

officers.<sup>122</sup> George gathered information by attending staff meetings, riding out with investigators, and accessing all activities related to the initial investigation. The result for George was a four-part series in the *Baltimore Sun* and a fellowship at Marquette University.

The implementation of an embedded reporter program should improve reporter accuracy during domestic-terrorist and mass-shooting incidents in the United States. A media training program should be required as part of an embedded reporter program. A formal training program allows public-safety agencies to educate media representatives on public-safety tactics and equipment. The training program also offers an opportunity to exercise information sharing related to a domestic-terrorist incident. The training program promotes an environment to build relationships and develop information practices that can be used during mass-shooting events. First responders also become educated on reporter needs and practices during a training program.

The DOD program included a media boot camp to prepare journalists for the embed opportunity. In the United States, public-safety agencies also provide boot camps for the media and members of the community. The Phoenix Fire Department created the Certified Fire Journalist Media Academy in 1996 to provide an in-depth learning opportunity for the media.<sup>123</sup> The Phoenix Fire Department media academy includes ten sessions focused on educating reporters on how firefighters respond to emergency incidents:

- fire ground operations
- fire behavior
- fire investigations
- search and rescue
- hazardous materials
- homeland defense
- special operations

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Phoenix Fire Department, "Certified Fire Journalists Media Academy."

- emergency medical services
- dispatch and deployment
- community involvement<sup>124</sup>

Police departments provide citizens police academies that could be modified as media boot camps. The Denver Police Department Citizen's Academy is "designed to give an insight into how/what/why the Department operations."<sup>125</sup> The Thornton Police Department Citizen's Academy is open to citizens and community leaders willing to commit to a 14-week program that educates participants on the operational procedures of the police department.<sup>126</sup> Each of these programs educates the participants about on the operations and tactics used by the public-safety agencies and could be modified to create a media academy.

An embedded reporter program supports transparency because information continues to be shared with the public; however, information is delayed if it contains tactical operations. All other information is shared in real time. Former Pentagon spokesperson Victoria Clarke explains how the DOD embedded reporter program has supported transparency: "Transparency works. The good news gets out. The bad news gets dealt with quickly."<sup>127</sup> The focus can now be on actionable information for the impacted community. First responders can complete their assigned tasks without worrying that suspects will follow their moves on social media. In 2016, Orlando nightclub shooter Omar Mateen searched social media platforms during the attack for "Pulse Orlando" and "shooting," according to a report by the *New York Daily Times*.<sup>128</sup> This shows that real-time information sharing of fire and police positioning and tactics is

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Denver Police Department, "Denver Police Citizen's Academy," accessed February 10, 2017, [www.denvergov.org/citizensacademy.org](http://www.denvergov.org/citizensacademy.org)

<sup>126</sup> "City of Thornton Police Academy," City of Thornton, accessed February 10, 2017, [www.cityofthornton.net/pd-ca-app](http://www.cityofthornton.net/pd-ca-app).

<sup>127</sup> Laura Miller, "Pentagon Ponders Embedded Reporter Policy," *PR Watch*, June 17, 2003, <http://www.prwatch.org/spin/2003/06/2006/pentagon-ponders-embedded-reporter-policy>.

<sup>128</sup> Stephen Rex Brown, "Omar Mateen Searched 'Pulse Orlando' on Facebook During Shooting," *New York Daily Times*, June 16, 2016, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/omar-mateen-searched-pulse-orlando-facebook-shooting-article-1.2676114>.

accessible by the shooter as the first responders work to rescue victims. The focus of information during the initial response could be the evacuation area, direct community impacts, support services for victims, or whatever lock-down or lock-out actions should be taken by the public.

## **B. PROGRAM CHALLENGES**

Challenges to a domestic embedded reporter program impact both first responders and journalists. The financial impact of implementing a new program may create obstacles for public-safety agencies and the media. Another hurdle is the perception that the media is influenced by public-safety agencies. This perception is created as reporters work closely with first responders and begin to relate more closely with them resulting in what is referred to as the soda straw effect. Finally, access to information may be reduced, or completely eliminated, for journalists who do not participate in the embedded reporter program.

There will be new costs associated with a domestic embedded reporter program, and these costs will need to be absorbed into current public-safety and media budgets. The program will require public-safety agencies to pay staff to develop the policy, develop a training program, and manage the program after it is in place. Increases to public-safety payroll in the form of overtime and additional staffing may be necessary to allow public-information officers to manage media during the incident. Another cost involves the purchase of materials to issue credentials and software to maintain a credential program for embedded reporters. Credentials will need to be purchased in states that do not currently provide a program for the media. There will also be costs incurred by members of the media. Reporters will need to attend the training program, spend time applying for credentials, and complete program requirements. Depending on how a final program policy is written, reporters may need to purchase safety equipment to cover mass-shooting incidents. Journalists will likely need to provide materials and staff time to share their knowledge with public-safety agency members during the training courses. The total cost will need to be evaluated to determine whether the value of a new program offsets these hard costs.

A potential negative impact of the program is whether stronger relationships between public-safety officials and the media will result in loss of objectivity for all stakeholders. A challenge for media is the perception of the “soda straw” effect, the loss of objectivity created because the reporter relates too closely with the public-safety agency during the embed process. The DOD raised the concern of a soda straw effect in research conducted by Christopher Paul and James Kim for RAND, as the researchers observed reporters narrowing their focus during the embed period resulting in “the opposite of ‘the big picture.’”<sup>129</sup> The concern for loss-of-objectivity is nothing new to the embedded reporter concept. Reporters rely on their professional standards and their code of ethics as they provide information on domestic-terrorist incidents and work in concert with public-safety representatives. First responders may also lose objectivity as journalists become trusted partners. First responders may overshare information that is protected, or classified for security reasons, as they work closely with reporters in the embedded program. This might compromise future homeland security operations or future litigation.

Reporters who choose not to engage in the embedded reporter program may feel they are penalized. Reduced access to information and people involved in the emergency response might occur if reporters do not embed. However, reporters may find benefits outside of a formal embedding program. A switch to encrypted radio channels will change the importance of the embedded reporter program because journalists would lose access to information the media now obtains through scanners. Currently, encrypted radio channels are not an issue within the United States because most public-safety agencies use publicly accessible radio channels. Broadcastify CEO Lindsay Blanton estimates “10 to 15 percent of American police radios are encrypted;” however, in Europe most police scanners are restricted.<sup>130</sup> Access to information could change if radio practices are modified to use fully encrypted platforms. A move to encrypted radio channels might increase the benefits for an embedded reporter program if the tactical information is restricted. The relationships between first responders and media will change if radio

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<sup>129</sup> Christopher Paul and James J. Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2004), 111.

<sup>130</sup> McEvers, “Police Radio Chatter.”

channel encryption increases in the future because the media will become more dependent on public-safety agencies and their public information officers.

### **C. CONCLUSION**

A domestic-based embedded reporter program involving journalists and first responders has both challenges and benefits. An embedded reporter program will likely increase the access of information for media as reporters work more closely with public information officers at the incident. Transparency could increase as the media is provided information directly from public-safety agencies and journalists witness the decision-making process in person, instead of over a radio scanner. The safety of media, victims, and first responders could be affected, first, with the development of a formal program and agreement, second, by participation in training programs, and lastly by creating of policies to establish safe media staging areas. The feasibility of an embedded reporter program and additional research is explored in Chapter VI in the form of formal recommendations and areas suggested for future research.

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## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Advances in technology provide journalists with the tools to obtain and share real-time information during domestic terrorist and mass-shooting incidents. This real-time information sharing compromises the safety of first responders, victims, and reporters. Real-time sharing of tactical operations, including the positioning of law enforcement, firefighters, and their equipment, impacts the security and effectiveness of emergency responders in mitigating the public threat. The DOD fought a similar battle with members of the media more than a decade ago with the creation of its embedded reporter program and the *Public Affairs Guidance on Embedding Media*. The research question was as follows: Can first response agencies and journalists in the United States adopt an embedded journalist program for domestic terrorist or mass-shooting events?

Chapter II focused on the policies and procedures necessary for an embedded reporter program as outlined in the DOD guidance. One of the first steps to creating a successful program is establishing policies and procedures for all participants. This chapter analyzed the policies and procedures written in the DOD's guidance, including information that addressed three areas: access, operational expectations, and program logistics. Twenty-three procedures outline the requirements to build the original military program. References to policies and procedures within this thesis came from the DOD's guidance. The first half of this chapter reviewed the military's policies and procedures established in the 2003. The second half contemplated which policies and procedures could be modified for domestic use by public safety agencies and reporters in the United States.

Chapter III looked at the ground rules for an embedded reporter program and explored possible modifications for consideration in a domestic embedded reporter program. Establishing the ground rules between reporters and the military allows every individual engaged in the incident to have a clear understanding of the expectations related to information sharing. Information can take the form of the written word, digital communications, photos, videos, or any platforms that allow journalists to convey a message to their audience. In a 2003 article for *Military Review*, U.S. Army Lt. Col.

Tammy Miracle focuses on the impact of embedded media with the Army. She writes, “Embedded journalists have already noted that restrictions are sometimes placed on what they can report, but such limitations are liberal and based solely on operational security and force protection.”<sup>131</sup> If the ground rules are pre-established and agreed upon by both journalists and public-safety agencies, the result can be a safer response for first responders and victims as well as continuously shared information.

Chapter IV reviewed the concept of training programs for journalists. The value of training programs is evident in that training is a component of the Department of Homeland Security’s National Preparedness System. According to the FEMA’s website, “Training provides first responders, homeland security officials, emergency management officials, private and non-governmental partners, and other personnel with the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to perform key tasks required by specific capabilities.”<sup>132</sup> Participation in a formal training program is a critical element of the *National Preparedness Guidelines* required under the 2003 *Homeland Security Presidential Directive-8* to prepare for response to all-hazards events including terrorism.<sup>133</sup> Likewise, a training program is a necessary component of an embedded reporter program to ensure understanding and compliance of the ground rules. The DOD provides training to the media through a boot camp for journalists who participate in its embedded reporter program. This chapter explored the feasibility of public-safety agencies delivering a formal training program to journalists and highlighted current training programs provided by local law enforcement and fire departments across the United States in order to educate their communities on agency operations.

Chapter V examined both the positive impacts and challenges of a domestic-based embedded reporter program. A study published in the *International Journal of Information Management* explores the use of social media during emergencies. The study’s authors, Tomer Simon, Avishey Goldbert, and Bruria Adini, conclude, “During emergency events, individuals are exposed to large quantities of information without

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<sup>131</sup> Miracle, “The Army and Embedded Media.”

<sup>132</sup> Federal Emergency Management Agency, “Training.”

<sup>133</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *National Preparedness Guidelines*.

being aware of their validity or risk of misinformation.”<sup>134</sup> The impact of misinformation extends beyond the individual at home to victims of crime, first responders, and members of the media. Chapter V reviewed the impacts of a similar policy on public-safety agencies and journalists for domestic terrorism and mass-shooting incidents in relation to safety, accessibility, costs, and logistics.

The answer to the thesis question—Can first response agencies and journalists in the United States adopt an embedded journalist program for domestic terrorist or mass-shooting event?—is that a domestic program is feasible. However, creating a domestic-based program between first responders and the media should be done through a collaborative effort, and the full-fledged program may take several years to implement. Nonetheless, components of the embedded reporter program can be implemented in a few months or within the next year. The adoption of an embargo protocol could occur almost immediately by members of the media. Another item with a short implementation period would be the modification of current media training programs to offer components of an embedded reporter program such as embargoes, credentials, and tactical information-sharing impacts. The adoption of a nationwide media credentialing program may take several months to a year. Therefore, the recommendations below focus on practices that may be more feasible and realistic.

## **A. RECOMMENDATIONS**

In exploring the question of whether first-response agencies and journalists in the United States can adopt an embedded journalist program for domestic terrorist or mass-shooting events, this thesis produced the following five recommendations. The recommendations are organized according to the feasibility of adoption by both public safety and media agencies within the United States. The considerations included the cost of the recommendation, the timeframe required to implement the change, and the likelihood of stakeholders implementing the recommendation.

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<sup>134</sup> Simon, Goldbert, and Adini, “Socializing in Emergencies.”

(1) Recommendation 1: Implement and Adopt an Embargo Protocol

An embargo for tactical operations is the most critical component of increasing operational security and safeguarding emergency responders as they work to mitigate threats caused by domestic terrorist and mass-shooting incidents. The embargo can occur regardless of inclusion within a broader embed program. Currently, journalists and media networks embargo the results of election and normal business announcements. Justin George, *Baltimore Sun* reporter, demonstrated the successful use of embargoing public safety-related information during the Freddie Gray riots.<sup>135</sup> It is time to adopt an embargo policy that has the potential to save lives.

(2) Recommendation 2: Create and Provide a Media Training Program

A formal training program should be implemented with or without the adoption of a formal domestic embedded reporter program and delivered to both journalists and first responders. Completion of training should be a requirement for reporters participating in the program. The training program curriculum should provide informational sessions on the policies, procedures, and ground rules implemented during a domestic terrorism incident. It should also include full-scale exercises or hands-on opportunities between first responders and media to practice a response to a mass-shooting using the new program guidelines.

Currently, there are numerous examples of public-safety agencies proving the efficacy of citizen and media training academies to educate communities. The Phoenix Fire Department provides the Certified Fire Journalist Media Academy, and numerous police departments offer citizen boot camps for the purpose of educating participants on the operations and decision making of public-safety agencies.<sup>136</sup> The existing training programs require modifications to include sessions on embargoes, media credentials, and ground rules. The result of the media attending a training program would be enhanced and more accurate coverage by journalists and increased safety for all stakeholders.

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<sup>135</sup> “Inside the Freddie Gray Investigation,” *Boston Sun*.

<sup>136</sup> Phoenix Fire Department, “Certified Fire Journalists Media Academy;” Denver Police Department, “Denver Police Citizen’s Academy;” City of Thornton, “City of Thornton Police Academy.”

(3) Recommendation 3: Implement Journalist Credentials

Public safety agencies should provide credentials for reporters. A system will need to be developed to determine whether a national or local-level credential is preferred. A credential system can benefit both the reporters and first responders by providing reliable identification of professional journalists. The U.S. Department of Justice recommended establishing a media credentialing process in its *After Action Assessment of the Police Response to the 2014 Demonstrations in Ferguson, Missouri*.<sup>137</sup> The media credential could be awarded after completion of the public-safety agency's media boot-camp or revoked if information-sharing violates ground rules.

(4) Recommendation 4: Encrypt All Public Safety Radio Traffic for Tactical Operations

Public safety agencies should encrypt all radios for tactical operations. Broadcastify CEO Lindsay Blanton estimates, "10 to 15 percent of American police radios are encrypted;" however, in Europe, *most* police scanners are restricted.<sup>138</sup> Access to this information permits the practice of real-time sharing of tactical information by reporters on social-media channels and in news reports. If public-safety agencies encrypt their radio traffic, the need for an embedded reporter program increases because real-time access to information is not available from scanners. This recommendation requires additional research to determine the costs and logistics involved in transitioning. However, it is included as a recommendation because the switch to encrypted radios may provide the greatest improvement in safety for first responders and increased security of operations.

(5) Recommendation 5: Create a Domestic Embedded Reporter Program for Domestic Terrorism and Mass-Shooting Incidents

A domestic-based embedded reporter program coordinated between first responders and journalists is possible within the United States and should be implemented. The program should include written policies and procedures, detailed

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<sup>137</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, *After Action Assessment*, 95.

<sup>138</sup> McEvers, "Police Radio Chatter."

ground rules, credentials, and a formal training program for both reporters and first responders. Each chapter of this thesis proposed possible modifications that can be made for a domestic program. The best practice would be to develop either a statewide or national-level system. This would allow for the greatest consistency across the nation. According to the Department of Justice, inconsistent media practices led to confusion as a result of poor or no communication with media during the Ferguson riots.<sup>139</sup> A nationwide or statewide program would support uniformity and eliminate confusion during emergency incidents.

## **B. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This thesis suggests several areas for future research to benefit the goal of increased operational security and safe response for law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency medical service personnel. These suggestions fall into two general areas of future research. The first area involves information-sharing practices conducted by the media. The second area involves how public safety agencies impact information sharing during emergency response.

### **(1) Media Information Sharing Responsibilities**

Research should be initiated to determine additional information-sharing responsibilities for the media. Research is needed to determine the feasibility of the media establishing a self-imposed restriction on sharing information during tactical operations of first responders. During and after the 2015 mass shooting at a Colorado Springs Planned Parenthood facility, reporters argued that real-time reporting of tactical operations violated their professional code of ethics. Several blogs, magazine stories, and even a newscast in Denver, Colorado, focused on the responsibilities of reporters to do no harm through reporting.<sup>140</sup> Media in Denver and in Oregon currently operate under informal programs to restrict information and live video-sharing during active-shooter

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<sup>139</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, *After Action Assessment*, 92.

<sup>140</sup> Clark, "Balance of Power."

situations.<sup>141</sup> These agreements should be explored to determine whether a nationwide agreement can be adopted by the media for domestic terrorism and mass-shooting incidents.

A second method currently used by media is a process called a lock-up room. Research should be done to determine whether this is an alternative to embedding journalists. The lock-up room can be a physical location provided to reporters or can be conducted through a virtual process. Since the 1980s, reporters have participated in lock-up rooms and agreed to embargo information from the U.S. Department of Labor and New York Stock Exchange.<sup>142</sup> The reporters are given access to information and agree to embargo it until a specific date and time. The reporters participating in the lock-up room receive secure financial market information several hours in advance, and during that time, they have no access to communication lines and must use government-approved computers to write their stories. This process was created to protect the financial markets and eliminate any negative impacts created from releasing information early.

The final recommendation related to the media involves citizen journalists. Additional information is necessary to determine whether an embedded reporter program should be expanded to include citizen journalists. Additionally, research should be conducted on the feasibility of citizen journalists honoring embargoes on tactical operations. Research is necessary on the impact of citizen journalists and those sharing information across social media platforms outside the professional journalist network.

## (2) Public Safety Information Sharing Responsibilities

Research is recommended on the impact of transitioning all first responders to encrypted radio channels when sharing tactical operations. Several factors should be considered in this research such as the logistics involved in encrypting all radio traffic and the impacts on maintaining interoperable communications with all agencies supporting an incident. Another factor is the cost of transitioning to encrypted channels.

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<sup>141</sup> Alicia Shepard, "Safety First," *American Journalism Review* 22, no. 1 (2000): 22, <http://ajrarchive.org/Article.asp?id=518>.

<sup>142</sup> Gruber, "News Embargoes," 29.

The impact on transparency should also be considered. Because there are no current metrics on the impact of a domestic-based embedded journalist program additional research is required. Additionally, a decision will need to be reached on what information should be included in the metrics. This research is necessary to determine the impacts of embedding journalists during domestic terrorist or mass-shooting events.

### **C. THESIS CONCLUSION**

The creation of a domestic embedded reporter program provides benefits to reporters and first responders alike. The foremost benefits to public-safety stakeholders include operational security, increased safety for first responders and victims, protection of transparency, and stronger relationships with reporters. The reporters will also experience benefits in the areas of access to information, credibility, and reporter safety. Modifying the DOD's current embedded reporter program provides a starting point for public safety agencies within the United States to begin working with journalists on coverage of domestic terrorism at a time when incidents occur infrequently. It is time to begin planning. The implementation of embargoes on tactical information-sharing during domestic terrorist and mass-shooting events appears to be the most critical aspect of this proposal. An embargo can be implemented with or without the fully embedded program. There is not enough research to support a fully embedded reporter program within the United States. However, a program is needed as the real-time reporting of tactical operations is already showing signs of negative impacts. Military journalist Edward Offley writes, "Experienced military reporters know that there are facts that can kill," and a domestic embedded journalist program aims to create a safer information-sharing environment for both first responders and the media.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Ed Offley, *Pen and Sword: A Journalists Guide to Covering the Military* (Oak Park, IL: Marion Street Press, 2001), 258.

## APPENDIX A. DOD PUBLIC AFFAIRS EMBEDDED JOURNALIST GUIDANCE

This document has been reformatted from the all caps to upper and lower case from the original *DOD Public Affairs Embedded Journalist Guidance*.<sup>144</sup>

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101900Z FEB 03 FM  
UNCLAS

Subject: Public Affairs Guidance (PAG) on embedding media during possible future operations/deployments in the U.S. central commands (CENTCOM) area of responsibility (AOR).

References: Ref. A. SecDef MSG, DTG 172200z Jan 03

Subj: Public Affairs Guidance (PAG) for movement of forces into the CENTCOM AOR for possible future operations.

1. Purpose. This message provides guidance, policies and procedures on embedding news media during possible future operations/deployments in the CENTCOM AOR. It can be adapted for use in other unified command AORs as necessary.

### 2. POLICY.

2.a. The Department of Defense (DOD) policy on media coverage of future military operations is that media will have long-term, minimally restrictive access to U.S. air, ground and naval forces through embedding. Media coverage of any future operation will, to a large extent, shape public perception of the national security environment now and in the years ahead. This holds true for the U.S. public; the public in allied countries whose opinion can affect the durability of our coalition; and publics in countries where we conduct operations, whose perceptions of us can affect the cost and duration of our involvement. Our ultimate strategic success in bringing peace and security to this region will come in our long-term commitment to supporting our democratic ideals. We need to tell the factual story—good or bad before others seed the media with disinformation and distortions, as they most certainly will continue to do. Our people in the field need to tell our story only commanders can ensure the media get to the story alongside the troops. We must organize for and facilitate access of national and international media to our forces, including those forces engaged in ground operations, with the goal of doing so

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<sup>144</sup> Department of Defense, *DOD Public Affairs Embedded Journalist Guidance* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2003).

right from the start. To accomplish this, we will embed media with our units. These embedded media will live, work and travel as part of the units with which they are embedded to facilitate maximum, in-depth coverage of U.S. forces in combat and related operations. Commanders and public affairs officers must work together to balance the need for media access with the need for operational security.

2.b. Media will be embedded with unit personnel at air and ground forces bases and afloat to ensure a full understanding of all operations. Media will be given access to operational combat missions, including mission preparation and debriefing, whenever possible.

2.c. A media embed is defined as a media representative remaining with a unit on an extended basis perhaps a period of weeks or even months. Commanders will provide billeting, rations and medical attention, if needed, to the embedded media commensurate with that provided to members of the unit, as well as access to military transportation and assistance with communications filing/transmitting media products, if required.

2.c.1. Embedded media are not authorized use of their own vehicles while traveling in an embedded status.

2.c.2. To the extent possible, space on military transportation will be made available for media equipment necessary to cover a particular operation. The media is responsible for loading and carrying their own equipment at all times. Use of priority inter-theater airlift for embedded media to cover stories, as well as to file stories, is highly encouraged. Seats aboard vehicles, aircraft and naval ships will be made available to allow maximum coverage of U.S. troops in the field.

2.c.3. Units should plan lift and logistical support to assist in moving media products to and from the battlefield so as to tell our story in a timely manner. In the event of commercial communications difficulties, media are authorized to file stories via expeditious military signal/communications capabilities.

2.c.4. No communications equipment for use by media in the conduct of their duties will be specifically prohibited. However, unit commanders may impose temporary restrictions on electronic transmissions for operational security reasons. Media will seek approval to use electronic devices in a combat/hostile environment, unless otherwise directed by the unit commander or his/her designated representative. The use of communications equipment will be discussed in full when the media arrive at their assigned unit.

### 3. PROCEDURES.

3.a. The office of the assistant secretary of defense for public affairs (OASD) (PA) is the central agency for managing and vetting media embeds to include allocating embed slots to media organizations. Embed authority may be delegated to subordinate elements after the commencement of hostilities and at the discretion of OASD (PA). Embed

opportunities will be assigned to media organizations, not to individual reporters. The decision as to which media representative will fill assigned embed slots will be made by the designated POC for each news organization.

3.a.1. Law Ref. A, commanders of units in receipt of a deployment order may embed regional/local media during preparations for deployment, deployment and arrival in theater upon receipt of theater clearance from CENTCOM and approval of the component command. Commanders will inform these media, prior to the deploying embed, that OASD (PA) is the approval authority for all combat embeds and that their particular embed may end after the unit's arrival in theater. The media organization may apply to OASD (PA) for continued embedding, but there is no guarantee and the media organization will have to make arrangements for and pay for the journalists' return trip.

3.b. Without making commitments to media organizations, deploying units will identify local media for potential embeds and nominate them through PA channels to OASD (PA) (POC: [DELETED]) Information required to be forwarded includes media organization, type of media and contact information including bureau chief/managing editor/news director's name; office, home and cell phone numbers; pager numbers and email addresses. Submissions for embeds with specific units should include an unit's recommendation as to whether the request should be honored.

3.c. Unit commanders should also express, through their chain of command and PA channels to OASD (PA), their desire and capability to support additional media embeds beyond those assigned.

3.d. Freelance media will be authorized to embed if they are selected by a news organization as their embed representative.

3.e. Units will be authorized direct coordination with media after assignment and approval by OASD (PA).

3.e.1. Units are responsible for ensuring that all embedded media and their news organizations have signed the "release, indemnification, and hold harmless agreement and agreement not to sue." Units must maintain a copy of this agreement for all media embedded with their unit.

3.f. Embedded media operate as part of their assigned unit. An escort may be assigned at the discretion of the unit commander. The absence of a PA escort is not a reason to preclude media access to operations.

3.g. Commanders will ensure the media are provided with every opportunity to observe actual combat operations. The personal safety of correspondents is not a reason to exclude them from combat areas.

3.h. If, in the opinion of the unit commander, a media representative is unable to withstand the rigorous conditions required to operate with the forward deployed forces, the commander or his/her representative may limit the representatives participation with operational forces to ensure unit safety and inform OASD (PA) through PA channels as soon as possible. Gender will not be an excluding factor under any circumstance.

3.i. If for any reason a media representative cannot participate in an operation, they will be transported to the next higher headquarters for the duration of the operation.

3.j. Commanders will obtain theater clearance from CENTCOM/PA for media embarking on military conveyance for purposes of embedding.

3.k. Units hosting embedded media will issue invitational travel orders, and nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) gear. See para. 5. For details on which items are issued and which items the media are responsible to provide for themselves.

3.l. Media are responsible for obtaining their own passports and visas.

3.m. Media will agree to abide by the CENTCOM/OASD (PA) ground rules stated in para. 4 of this message in exchange for command/unit-provided support and access to service members, information and other previously-stated privileges. Any violation of the ground rules could result in termination of that media's embed opportunity.

3.n. Disputes/difficulties. Issues, questions, difficulties or disputes associated with ground rules or other aspects of embedding media that cannot be resolved at the unit level, or through the chain of command, will be forwarded through PA channels for resolution. Commanders who wish to terminate an embed for cause must notify CENTCOM/PA prior to termination. If a dispute cannot be resolved at a lower level, OASD (PA) will be the final resolution authority. In all cases, this should be done as expeditiously as possible to preserve the news value of the situation.

3.o. Media will pay their own billeting expenses if billeted in a commercial facility.

3.p. Media will deploy with the necessary equipment to collect and transmit their stories.

3.q. The standard for release of information should be to ask "why not release" vice "why release." decisions should be made ASAP, preferably in minutes, not hours.

3.r. There is no general review process for media products. See para 6.a. For further detail concerning security at the source.

3.s. Media will only be granted access to detainees or EPWS within the provisions of the Geneva Conventions of 1949. See para. 4.g.17. For the ground rule.

3.t. Having embedded media does not preclude contact with other media. Embedded media, as a result of time invested with the unit and ground rules agreement, may have a different level of access.

3.u. CENTCOM/PA will account for embedded media during the time the media is embedded in theater. CENTCOM/PA will report changes in embed status to OASD (PA) as they occur.

3.v. If a media representative is killed or injured in the course of military operations, the unit will immediately notify OASD (PA), through PA channels. OASD (PA) will contact the respective media organization(s), which will make next of kin notification in accordance with the individual's wishes.

3.w. Media may terminate their embed opportunity at any time. Unit commanders will provide, as the tactical situation permits and based on the availability of transportation, movement back to the nearest location with commercial transportation.

3.w.1. Departing media will be debriefed on operational security considerations as applicable to ongoing and future operations which they may now have information concerning.

#### 4. GROUND RULES.

For the safety and security of U.S. forces and embedded media, media will adhere to established ground rules. Ground rules will be agreed to in advance and signed by media prior to embedding. Violation of the ground rules may result in the immediate termination of the embed and removal from the AOR. These ground rules recognize the right of the media to cover military operations and are in no way intended to prevent release of derogatory, embarrassing, negative or uncomplimentary information. Any modification to the standard ground rules will be forwarded through the PA channels to CENTCOM/PA for approval. Standard ground rules are:

4.a. All interviews with service members will be on the record. Security at the source is the policy. Interviews with pilots and aircrew members are authorized upon completion of missions; however, release of information must conform to these media ground rules.

4.b. Print or broadcast stories will be datelined according to local ground rules. Local ground rules will be coordinated through command channels with CENTCOM.

4.c. Media embedded with U.S. forces are not permitted to carry personal firearms.

4.d. Light discipline restrictions will be followed. Visible light sources, including flash or television lights, flash cameras will not be used when operating with forces at night unless specifically approved in advance by the on-scene commander.

4.e. Embargoes may be imposed to protect operational security. Embargoes will only be used for operational security and will be lifted as soon as the operational security issue has passed.

4.f. The following categories of information are releasable.

4.f.1. Approximate friendly force strength figures.

4.f.2. Approximate friendly casualty figures by service. Embedded media may, within OPSEC limits, confirm unit casualties they have witnessed.

4.f.3. Confirmed figures of enemy personnel detained or captured.

4.f.4. Size of friendly force participating in an action or operation can be disclosed using approximate terms. Specific force or unit identification may be released when it no longer warrants security protection.

4.f.5. Information and location of military targets and objectives previously under attack.

4.f.6. Generic description of origin of air operations, such as “land-based.”

4.f.7. Date, time or location of previous conventional military missions and actions, as well as mission results are releasable only if described in general terms.

4.f.8. Types of ordnance expended in general terms.

4.f.9. Number of aerial combat or reconnaissance missions or sorties flown in CENTCOM’s area of operation.

4.f.10. Type of forces involved (e.g., Air Defense, Infantry, Armor, Marines).

4.f.11. Allied participation by type of operation (ships, aircraft, ground units, etc.) After approval of the allied unit commander.

4.f.12. Operation code names.

4.f.13. Names and hometowns of U.S. military units.

4.f.14. Service members’ names and home towns with the individuals’ consent.

4.g. The following categories of information are not releasable since their publication or broadcast could jeopardize operations and endanger lives.

4.g.1. Specific number of troops in units below Corps/MEF level.

4.g.2. Specific number of aircraft in units at or below the air Expeditionary Wing level.

4.g.3. Specific numbers regarding other equipment or critical supplies (e.g., artillery, tanks, landing craft, radars, trucks, water).

4.g.4. Specific numbers of ships in units below the carrier battle group level.

4.g.5. Names of military installations or specific geographic locations of military units in the CENTCOM area of responsibility, unless specifically released by the department of defense or authorized by the CENTCOM commander. News and imagery products that identify or include identifiable features of these locations are not authorized for release.

4.g.6. Information regarding future operations.

4.g.7. Information regarding force protection measures at military installations or encampments (except those which are visible or readily apparent).

4.g.8. Photography showing level of security at military installations or encampments.

4.g.9. Rules of engagement.

4.g.10. Information on intelligence collection activities compromising tactics, techniques or procedures.

4.g.11. Extra precautions in reporting will be required at the commencement of hostilities to maximize operational surprise. Live broadcasts from airfields, on the ground or afloat, by embedded media are prohibited until the safe return of the initial strike package or until authorized by the unit commander.

4.g.12. During an operation, specific information on friendly force troop movements, tactical deployments, and dispositions that would jeopardize operational security or lives. Information on on-going engagements will not be released unless authorized for release by on-scene commander.

4.g.13. Information on special operations units, unique operations methodology or tactics, for example, air operations, angles of attack, and speeds; naval tactical or evasive maneuvers, etc. General terms such as “low” or “fast” may be used.

4.g.14. Information on effectiveness of enemy electronic warfare.

4.g.15. Information identifying postponed or canceled operations.

4.g.16. Information on missing or downed aircraft or missing vessels while search and rescue and recovery operations are being planned or underway.

4.g.17. Information on effectiveness of enemy camouflage, cover, deception, targeting, direct and indirect fire, intelligence collection, or security measures.

4.g.18. No photographs or other visual media showing an enemy prisoner of war or detainee's recognizable face, nametag or other identifying feature or item may be taken.

4.g.19. Still or video imagery of custody operations or interviews with persons under custody.

4.h. The following procedures and policies apply to coverage of wounded, injured, and ill personnel:

4.h.1. Media representatives will be reminded of the sensitivity of using names of individual casualties or photographs they may have taken which clearly identify casualties until after notification of the NOK and release by OASD (PA).

4.h.2. Battlefield casualties may be covered by embedded media as long as the service member's identity is protected from disclosure for 72 hours or upon verification of NOK notification, whichever is first.

4.h.3. Media visits to medical facilities will be in accordance with applicable regulations, standard operating procedures, operations orders and instructions by attending physicians. If approved, service or medical facility personnel must escort media at all times.

4.h.4. Patient welfare, patient privacy, and next of kin/family considerations are the governing concerns about news media coverage of wounded, injured, and ill personnel in medical treatment facilities or other casualty collection and treatment locations.

4.h.5. Media visits are authorized to medical care facilities, but must be approved by the medical facility commander and attending physician and must not interfere with medical treatment. Requests to visit medical care facilities outside the continental United States will be coordinated by the unified command PA.

4.h.6. Reporters may visit those areas designated by the facility commander, but will not be allowed in operating rooms during operating procedures.

4.h.7. Permission to interview or photograph a patient will be granted only with the consent of the attending physician or facility commander and with the patient's Informed Consent, witnessed by the escort.

4.h.8. "Informed consent" means the patient understands his or her picture and comments are being collected for news media purposes and they may appear nationwide in news media reports.

4.h.9. The attending physician or escort should advise the service member if NOK have been notified.

## 5. IMMUNIZATIONS AND PERSONAL PROTECTIVE GEAR.

5.a. Media organizations should ensure that media are properly immunized before embedding with units. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC)-recommended immunizations for deployment to the Middle East include hepatitis A; hepatitis B; rabies; tetanus-diphtheria; and typhoid. The CDC recommends Meningococcal immunizations for visitors to Mecca. If traveling to certain areas in the CENTCOM AOR, the CDC recommends taking prescription Anti-Malarial drugs. Anthrax and Smallpox vaccines will be provided to the media at no expense to the government (the media outlet will bear the expense). For more health information for travelers to the Middle East, go to the CDC web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/mideast.htm>.

5.b. Because the use of personal protective gear, such as helmets or flak vests, is both a personal and professional choice, media will be responsible for procuring/using such equipment. Personal protective gear, as well as clothing, will be subdued in color and appearance.

5.c. Embedded media are authorized and required to be provided with, on a temporary loan basis, nuclear, biological, chemical (NBC) protective equipment by the unit with which they are embedded. Unit personnel will provide basic instruction in the proper wear, use, and maintenance of the equipment. Upon termination of the embed, initiated by either party, the NBC equipment shall be returned to the embedding unit. If sufficient NBC protective equipment is not available for embedded media, commanders may purchase additional equipment, with funds normally available for that purpose, and loan it to embedded media in accordance with this paragraph.

## 6. SECURITY

6.a. Media products will not be subject to security review or censorship except as indicated in para.

6.a.1. Security at the source will be the rule. U.S. military personnel shall protect classified information from unauthorized or inadvertent disclosure. Media provided access to sensitive information, information which is not classified but which may be of operational value to an adversary or when combined with other unclassified information may reveal classified information, will be informed in advance by the unit commander or his/her designated representative of the restrictions on the use or disclosure of such information. When in doubt, media will consult with the unit commander or his/her designated representative.

6.a.1. The nature of the embedding process may involve observation of sensitive information, including troop movements, battle preparations, materiel capabilities and vulnerabilities and other information as listed in para. 4.g. When a commander or his/her designated representative has reason to believe that a media member will have access to

this type of sensitive information, prior to allowing such access, he/she will take prudent precautions to ensure the security of that information. The primary safeguard will be to brief media in advance about what information is sensitive and what the parameters are for covering this type of information. If media are inadvertently exposed to sensitive information they should be briefed after exposure on what information they should avoid covering. In instances where a unit commander or the designated representative determines that coverage of a story will involve exposure to sensitive information beyond the scope of what may be protected by prebriefing or debriefing, but coverage of which is in the best interests of the DOD, the commander may offer access if the reporter agrees to a security review of their coverage. Agreement to security review in exchange for this type of access must be strictly voluntary and if the reporter does not agree, then access may not be granted. If a security review is agreed to, it will not involve any editorial changes; it will be conducted solely to ensure that no sensitive or classified information is included in the product. If such information is found, the media will be asked to remove that information from the product and/or embargo the product until such information is no longer classified or sensitive. Reviews are to be done as soon as practical so as not to interrupt combat operations nor delay reporting. If there are disputes resulting from the security review process they may be appealed through the chain of command, or through PA channels to OASD/PA. This paragraph does not authorize commanders to allow media access to classified information.

6.a.2. Media products will not be confiscated or otherwise impounded. If it is believed that classified information has been compromised and the media representative refuses to remove that information notify the CPIC and/or OASD/PA as soon as possible so the issue may be addressed with the media organization's management.

## 7. MISCELLANEOUS/COORDINATING INSTRUCTIONS:

7.a. OASD (PA) is the initial embed authority. Embedding procedures and assignment authority may be transferred to CENTCOM PA at a later date. This authority may be further delegated at CENTCOM's discretion.

7.b. This guidance authorizes blanket approval for non-local and local media travel aboard DoD airlift for all embedded media on a no-cost, space available basis. No additional costs shall be incurred by the government to provide assistance IAW DODI 5410.15, para 3.4.

7.c. Use of lipstick and helmet-mounted cameras on combat sorties is approved and encouraged to the greatest extent possible.

8. OASD (PA) POC for embedding media is Maj Tim Blair [Contact information deleted].

## **APPENDIX B. REGIONAL COMMAND EAST MEDIA GROUND RULES**

This document is a sample of a contract implemented between media and military at the beginning of the embed process. The first section typically includes a copy for both the media representative and the regional command representative. This appendix provides a copy of just the regional command copy of the *Regional Command East Media Ground Rules*.<sup>145</sup>

Regional Command—East  
30 September 2009  
Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan

### **Regional Command East Media Ground Rules**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ understand that I am bound to the (print first, middle initial, last name) (media organization/affiliation)

following RC-East Media Ground Rules. Any violation of these rules will result in the immediate termination of coverage/access to RC-East units/installations and confiscation of my RC-East Media Badge.  
(Please initial)\_\_\_\_\_.

RC-East Media Ground Rules:

- 1. Media on Bagram Air Field will not take photographs, video or conduct interviews unless escorted by Public Affairs personnel.**
2. All interviews will be on the record.
3. During interviews, no questions will be asked about the politics of the military. (e.g., Iraq war, equipment, readiness, funding)
4. When embedded with a unit, media must remain with that unit at all times.
5. The media is responsible for loading and carrying its own equipment at all times.
6. Media will not carry or possess personal weapons, knives, firearms, pornography or alcohol.

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<sup>145</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Regional Command East Media Ground Rules*.

7. Visible light sources and infra-red devices, including flash or television lights, will not be used when operating with troops at night unless specifically approved in advance by the on-scene commander. Likewise, media will follow tactical movement and noise discipline while covering operations.
8. If, in the opinion of the unit commander, a media representative is unable to withstand the conditions required to operate with the forward deployed forces, the commander or his/her representative may limit the representative's participation to ensure both the reporter's and the unit's safety. Disputes should be raised through PAO channels. The PAO community will work as the honest broker but the ultimate decision to accommodate media is held by the commander.
9. Embargoes may be imposed to protect operational security. Embargoes will be lifted as soon as the operational security issue has passed.
10. Under no circumstances will media take photographs or video of detainees or persons in custody, detainee or custody facilities; or detainee operations in Afghanistan. No interviews with detainees or persons in custody will be granted.
11. Information and images of special operations units, U.S. or coalition will not be released unless otherwise directed by the RC-East public affairs or granted prior approval by Combined Joint Special Operation Task Force (CJSOTF).
12. The following categories of information are not releasable since their publication or broadcast jeopardize operations and endanger lives:
  - a. Specific numerical information on troop strength, equipment or critical supplies (e.g., artillery, tanks, landing craft, radars, trucks, water) for U.S. or coalition units.
  - b. Information regarding future operations, current operations or strikes including postponed or cancelled operations.
  - c. Information regarding security precautions or force protection measures at military installations or encampments, to include video or still footage. RC-East PAO may allow photography/video on a case-by-case basis if footage is reviewed prior to release.
  - d. Photography that shows level of security at military installations or encampments, especially aerial and satellite photography which reveals the name or specific location of military units or installations.
  - e. Information on intelligence collection activities/operations compromising tactics, techniques and procedures to include targets, methods, analyses and/or results.
  - f. Rules of engagement details.

- g. During an operation, specific information on friendly forces, troop movements, tactical deployments, and dispositions that would jeopardize operational security or lives. Information on ongoing engagements will not be released unless authorized for release by the on-scene commander.
  - h. Information on missing personnel or sensitive equipment or downed aircraft while search and rescue and recovery operations are being planned and executed unless expressly authorized by PA staff.
  - i. Information on friendly forces electronic warfare equipment or procedures or friendly forces counter-IED activities which would result in a tactical advantage to the enemy.
  - j. Information on effectiveness of enemy electronic warfare.
  - k. Photographs or video of damaged MRAPs and armored support vehicles to include their components.
  - l. Any additional guidelines the RC-East PAO or Task Force PAO's determines necessary to protect tactical security.
13. Photos of local nationals employed by the coalition may not be published without written consent of the individual photographed or the Commander of the unit the individual is supporting.
14. Media will not be allowed to photograph or record video of U.S. personnel killed in action.
15. Media visits to medical facilities are authorized and will be conducted in accordance with standard operating procedures, operations orders and instructions by attending physicians. If approved, service or medical facility personnel must escort media at all times.
16. Patient welfare, privacy, and next of kin/family considerations are the governing concerns about news media coverage of wounded, injured, and ill personnel in medical treatment facilities or other casualty collection and treatment locations.
- a. Permission to interview or photograph a patient will be granted only with the consent of the attending physician or facility commander and with the patient's expressed, informed consent, witnessed by the escort.
  - b. "Informed consent" means the patient understands his or her picture and comments are being collected for news media purposes and they may appear in news media reports.
17. Written coverage of all killed and wounded is also prohibited unless the following conditions are adhered to:

- a. Names or identifiable written/oral descriptions of wounded service members will not be released without the service member's prior written consent. If the service member later becomes a KIA, next of kin reporting rules apply.
  - b. DOD will release names of KIAs. In respect for family members, names or identifying oral/written reporting of individuals "killed in action" will not be released prior to notification of next of kin and in accordance with current legislation. Names of KIAs may be released after the DOD announcement has been made – journalists may check the DefenseLink.mil Web site for those announcements.
18. If media decides to terminate coverage and/or embed opportunity before planned, they must coordinate with appropriate authority (unit commander, unit public affairs representative, PAO...) to properly end embed experience and make arrangements to exit the area of operation.
19. Embedded journalist are required to maintain a copy of these ground rules on their person at all times during the embed.
20. As embedded media you will be treated with respect and dignity while with Coalition Forces, the same is expected in return. Failure to do so may result in an immediate termination of your embed. If you feel the same courtesies are not being offered to you, it is imperative that the problem or issue is raised through that unit's Chain-of-Command. If an honest attempt to resolve the problem has failed, please inform the Media Support Center NCOIC or the Media Support Center Director of all facts surrounding the issue.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Witness initials** \_\_\_\_\_

**RC-EAST MEDIA OPERATIONS CENTER COPY**

## REGISTRATION

I (name) am a/an \_\_\_\_\_ (job title) with (organization) , and have read the Media Ground Rules and agree, with my signature, to abide by them. I also understand that violation of these ground rules is cause for the revocation of my media accreditation with RC-East and loss of all media privileges in CENTCOM area of responsibility. I am not aware of any existing physical or health conditions, which would adversely affect my covering strenuous combat activities. \_\_\_\_\_ (initial)

### **Hold Harmless/Release from Liability Statement**

- a. I recognize that covering combat and other military operations carries with it certain inherent risks to life, limb and equipment.
- b. I recognize that U.S. military, in pursuing the successful accomplishment of its mission, cannot guarantee my personal safety or the safety of my equipment.
- c. I hereby release the U.S. government and the U.S. military of any liability and hold them harmless for any injuries I may suffer or any equipment that may be damaged as a result of my covering combat or any other military operations.
- d. I understand that my agreement to this statement is a condition of being credentialed to cover U.S. military operations and receiving assistance for that coverage.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number (Cell & Local)

\_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Organization

\_\_\_\_\_  
Specialty: Radio/Video/Print (Circle One)

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Employer's Name/Contact Information

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Blood Type

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Date of Birth (month/day/yr)

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Passport Number/Social Security Number/ID Number

### **TRANSPORTATION HOLD HARMLESS AGREEMENT**

In consideration of receiving free transportation from the United States Military by land, air or other means that may be reasonably required to cover military operations in Afghanistan, I hereby release the United States Government, including its subdivisions, officers, military personnel, employees, and agents from all liability for any injuries or death that may result to me from this transportation, whether caused by negligence or otherwise.

I understand that in transporting me, the United States Government is not acting as a common carrier for hire and does not bear the liabilities attaching to that status.

I acknowledge that I voluntarily accept such transportation, I incur no obligation toward the United States Government except as imposed by this release.

I agree that this release not only binds me, but also my family, heirs, assigns, administrators, and executors.

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*Signature*

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*Date*

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*Witness (MOC Personnel)*

## **RELEASE, INDEMNIFICATION, AND HOLD HARMLESS AGREEMENT AND AGREEMENT NOT TO SUE FOR “EMBEDDING” JOURNALISTS**

1. The United States of America (the “Government”), acting by and through the Department of Defense, believes it to be mutually beneficial to both the Government and news media organizations (“media organizations”) to place selected news media organization employees (“media employees”) with selected military units (“military units”) for the purpose of providing news media coverage before, during, and after military operations. The placement of media employees with military units is referred to in this Agreement as “embedding” or the “embedding process” and will require media employees to live, travel, eat, sleep, and conduct all professional and personal activities with the military unit to which the media employees are “embedded.”

### **2. Definitions.**

a. The term “Government” means the United States Government, including its departments, subdivisions, agencies, instrumentalities, officers, employees (including military and civilian personnel), servants, contractors, volunteers, and agents.

b. The term “media organization” means the “media employee’s” employer, a registered U.S. or foreign profit or not-for-profit organization, its successors, and assigns.

c. The term “media employee” means an employee or agent of a “media organization,” his or her guardians, executors, administrators, heirs, and assigns.

3. Media organizations and media employees understand and agree that the embedding process will expose media employees to the same risks and hazards as those to which the military members of military units are exposed, including the extreme and unpredictable risks of war, combat operations, and combat support operations, as well as common and uncommon hazards of military living. Media organizations and media employees fully understand and appreciate the following:

a. The embedding process will expose media employees to all hazards of a military environment, including but not limited to the extreme and unpredictable hazards of war, combat operations, and combat support operations. The military environment is inherently dangerous and may result in death or personal injury of media employees or damage to personal property.

b. The embedding process may include strenuous and inherently dangerous activities, including transportation in, and close proximity to, military tactical vehicles, aircraft, watercraft, and other Government (and Government contracted) vehicles and may involve substantial risk of serious injury or death as the result of the media employee’s own actions or inaction, the actions or inactions of others including agents, contractors, officers, service members, and employees of the

Government, the conditions of the Government facility and the natural environment, the known or unknown condition of any government-furnished equipment, and the inherent dangers of war, combat operations, and combat support operations.

- c. The embedding process requires media employees to be in overall good physical health and condition. Persons who are not in overall good physical health and condition should not participate in the embedding process. Media employees should consult their physicians prior to embedding to be certain they are qualified to do so. Persons with a history of heart or lung disease or conditions, or coronary disease, or other chronic or pervasive diseases or conditions may not participate. Likewise, those women currently pregnant may not participate. Anyone suffering from any injuries, conditions, ailments or pre-existing conditions that could be affected by the embedding process may not participate.
- d. As part of the embedding process, the Government will make available anthrax and smallpox vaccinations to media employees, provided it is done at no cost to the Government (full reimbursement of all Government costs) and provided that the media employees sign an additional agreement regarding the risks involved. These vaccinations are voluntary and are not a prerequisite for participating in the embedding process. Media organizations and media employees agree, for those media employees choosing to receive the anthrax and smallpox vaccinations, that the Release, Indemnification, and Hold Harmless Agreement and Agreement Not to Sue specifically includes all risks and hazards associated with the smallpox and anthrax vaccinations, including any negative reactions, adverse effects, including the media employee's illness, infirmity, or death.

4. The media employee agrees to:

- a. Participate in the embedding process and to follow the direction and orders of the Government related to such participation. The media employee further agrees to follow Government regulations. The media employee acknowledges that failure to follow any direction, order, regulation, or ground rule may result in the termination of the media employee's participation in the embedding process.
- b. Voluntarily, willingly, and knowingly ASSUME ANY AND ALL RISKS, known and unknown, in any way associated with the embedding process, war, combat operations, and combat support operations.
- c. RELEASE, INDEMNIFY, AND HOLD HARMLESS the Government from and against any claims, demands, actions, liens, rights, subrogated or contribution interests, debts, liabilities, judgements, costs, and attorney's fees, arising out of, claimed on account of, or in any manner predicted upon the media employee's participation in the embedding process, including any loss or damage to property or the personal injury or death of any person which may occur as a result of the media

employee's participation in the embedding process, even where that loss, damage, personal injury, or death is caused or contributed to, in any manner, by the Government.

5. The media organization agrees to permit its media employees to participate in the embedding process. As a condition of being permitted to participate in the embedding process, the media organization agrees to RELEASE, INDEMNIFY, AND HOLD HARMLESS the Government from and against any claims, demands, actions, liens, rights, subrogated or contribution interests, debts, liabilities, judgements, costs, and attorney's fees arising out of, claimed on account of, or in any manner predicated upon the media employee's participation in the embedding process, including any loss or damage to property or the personal injury or death of any person, even where that loss, damage, personal injury, or death is caused or contributed to, in any manner, by the Government.
6. The media organization and media employee hereby covenant and agree they will never institute, prosecute or in any way aid in the institution or prosecution of any demand, claim or suit against the Government for any destruction, loss, or damage to the media organization's property or the media employee's property, or the personal injury or death of media employees which may occur as a result of the media employee's participation in the embedding process.
7. The media organization and media employee grant express, voluntary, and knowing consent to the rendering of all emergency medical or dental treatment that may, in the professional judgement of a Government medical or dental officer, become necessary while participating in the embedding process. Transportation to a definitive Government or commercial care facility may be required as an adjunct to authorized emergency medical or dental care. Persons receiving Government medical or dental care who are not otherwise eligible to receive such care shall be obligated to reimburse the Government.
8. The media organization and the media employee understand and agree that the Government may terminate the embedding process at *any time for any reason*, as the Government determines appropriate in its sole discretion.
9. The Release, Indemnification, Hold Harmless Agreement and Agreement Not to Sue shall be interpreted according to federal law. It is to be construed as broadly and inclusively as is permitted by relevant federal law. If any portion of this document is held invalid, the balance shall continue in full force and effect.

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Media Employee's Signature

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Date

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Media Organization

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Witnessed By (MOC Personnel)

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