

ATSS-DAS

MEMORANDUM FOR Commandant, United States Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas 79918-8002

SUBJECT: Access Agreement for release of Student writing assignment Ethics
Paper.

1. I, MSG DAVID ROLDAN, submitted a Bainbridge Ethics Paper to the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy archives regarding events and experiences that may be of historical significance to the United States Army and the Noncommissioned Officer Corps.

2. I understand the manuscript and attached documents will be accessioned into the historical holdings of the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy archives and will belong to the United States Government to be used in any manner deemed in the best interests of the United States Army as determined by the Chief of Military History or his representative. I also understand that I may retain a copy for my own use subject to classification restrictions.

3. I hereby expressly and voluntarily relinquish all rights and interest in the paper to the United States Army:

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Date: 2 June 2011

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Signature: 

Accepted on behalf of the United States Army by:

SGA Printed Name/Date: Danny Robinson / 2 Jun 11

Signature: 

Media and the Military

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Media and the Military

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to point out some of the ethical problems that exist between the media and the military. The main research question guiding this study will be does an ethical problem exist between the media and the military? The hypothesis for this study will therefore be that there is an ethical problem between the media and the military. The media in this study will be a dependent variable while the military remains the independent variable. The reason for doing so is that in our normal life scenarios the military may use force. Additionally, a media outlet does not decide on what it airs but will determine the content of what their clients provide. A study of this kind is aimed at shedding more light on the unethical handling of information between the military and the media. The public would therefore benefit from this study in the sense that they will be more vigilant and will scrutinize the information they receive as it relates to the military.

Introduction

Ethics is the act of doing things according to a certain level of accepted moral values of a particular society. An individual or a particular group will be ethical when he or she does what is right in the face of humanity. This however appears not to be the case with particular groups of the society like the military. Questions arise on how the release of information as it relates to operations. One is always kept wondering if the purpose of letting out the information is to gain popularity while in the real sense, lives are at risk. Ethical issues are also raised on the way the media release such information relating to military operation (Keeble, 2009). The sensitivity of such information keeps one wondering if they give out the information for the general knowledge of the public or to gain popularity.

It is important to note that, the 21st century is full of business completion and anything can be done so that profits are made. While doing this however, moral values are negated and thus raising questions on where and when the basics of humanity were lost. This study therefore seeks to validate the above testable hypothesis by providing the evidences where ethical issues between the media and the military have not been observed. People may consider such news and publications worth watching but most of them forget the moral values behind such news. There is a perception among the populace in the sense that, people tend to follow news proceedings and even purchase more magazines whenever they are related to the military operation (Cole, 2006). One of the perfect examples is the American military operation in Afghanistan in 2003. This operation received a lot of media coverage like no other and thus becomes morally questionable.

Objectives

Ethics in one the cherished values which humanity must bring forth at all times. This necessitates our reason for carrying out this study and it will only be meaningful upon identification of objectives for this study. The main purpose of this research is to identify the ethical problems that exist between the media and the military (Kieran, 1998). The research while being focused on this topic will seek to identify the reasons why the military release information regarding the activities they carry out. It will also seek to find the reason why the media is always interested in sharing information while they obviously know that the lives of people are at risk.

Literature review

The adequate performance of this research and evaluation of this subject will solely depend on the evidences from various articles relating to the same subject. Several authors have shared their arguments, contributed on different occasions, and given their verdict on this matter. One of the conclusions that they make is for the media and the military to have a rebirth of moral conscience and ethics within themselves as they consider sharing such information. Sweeney in his book “The military and the press: an uneasy truce”, gives an example of how the American war-time official have misused news to become a weapon of altering the opinion of the public and the morale of their troops (Sweeney, 2006). They do this he says, by controlling and influencing the press and planting them within the military units in Iraq.

He further provides a brief encounter of how the two parties have evolved in the 21st century and have become puppets of anti-ethicists. They do this in order to meet the demands of the politics and economy, politics, legal and other social forces. He goes on to question the liberty of the press and the magnitude of evasion of ethics where writings are made in the constitution, which are not later respected and rarely depend on public spirit and the government. He concludes by calling the patriotic press and radio to abstain voluntarily from giving detailed information especially about the movements of troops since this could harm their security (Sweeney, 2006).

Keeble, in his book “Ethics for Journalist” describes how journalists are always obsessed with the way they share issues in their day-to-day life. Such issues are not generally limited to military issues but also extend to sex, sleaze, and sensationalism. He observes that, most of them broadcast to gain popularity without taking into consideration the effect it has on the populace. By doing this the media becomes interested on issues that attract attention of the public and may

otherwise be unethical. The author goes ahead and provides other ethical dilemmas and features a number of interviews with renowned journalists like Philip Knightley (Keeble, 2009). He also provides relevant ethical issues to anyone working on the media industry and provides strategies that are helpful in improving the ethical standards of the media.

Cole on the other hand uses his book “Conflict, terrorism and the media in Asia” to describe how the media has been handling issues relating to terrorism in Asia. He adequately analyzes the role of media in these conflicts where it acts as an interlocutor while exercising its role of sharing information. The author concentrates on pointing out partialities that arise on media reporting various forms of political violence and conflict. The situation is even worse when he considers the media relation to government, military, and the insurgents, which he says has led to escalation of violence because the coverage is done in order to achieve particular political interest (Cole, 2006). The author gives an example of ethical conflict between the military and the media when he points out an incident where a television station was intimidated by the administration at Fox News and its coverage manipulated.

Research methods

Successful collection of data and final analysis of results is dependent on the research methods used. During this research, the primary method used to collect information was in the form of a well-structured questionnaire with easy-to-understand questions. The questionnaire was given to three categories of people identified by the research panel. These were the public, the media, and the military. On the public, the questionnaire sought the opinion of the public regarding the coverage of the media as it relates to the military. The media on their part were to give their source of strength when it comes to sharing of information relating to the military. This method was used because of its ease in administering. It is less tedious, and asks direct questions that are

easily understood by the respondent. Presence of the person administering the questionnaire is also advantageous because the respondent can be assisted whenever the questions may be confusing. This method is however time consuming.

Secondary methods of obtaining the information were also employed. In this research, further information was obtained from book in libraries and indexing. This method is advantageous because accurate data is obtained unlike the questionnaire, which may be biased. The method is however disadvantageous because the process of sifting information from the books is sometimes tedious and time consuming.

Results and findings

At end of the research, it was found out that an ethical problem exists relating to the media and military. It was clearly identified that the media had failed in the professional duty of sharing information equitably irrespective of the source. Failure to do so amounts to lack of professional ethics because they are selective in the sharing of information (Kieran, 1998). This is evidenced by the fact that, military operations are sensitive issues and are mostly followed by the public. It was realized that the media were cashing on this 'weakness' to make them popular without taking onto consideration it has on the public. This is clearly evidenced by the American operations on Afghanistan and Iraq where most media houses used to advance their revenues and popularity (Keeble, 2009).

Though it was found out that the military provide information for the benefit of public knowledge, very few of the do so with the aim of saving life. In fact, some military personnel confessed releasing the information to show their military prowess. This is a clear evidence of a society that is ethically rotten and destitute of human feelings. This is a clear prove that clearly shows existence of an ethical problem (Cole, 2006). As pointed out initially, an ethical problem

exists from the media perspective especially when they decide to promote their websites using information that is clearly against the basic moral values of the society.

The act of releasing information prior to military information is also an unprofessional way of sharing sensitive issues. This is because the lives of the military personnel are placed at a high risk especially if the military operation involves combating a terrorist group (Kieran, 1998).

Though the information may be good for the public, it would be unprofessional and unethical to expose critical information that may lead to lose of lives. Another ethical issue arose concerning journalism and ethics is when a photojournalist provides information about the activities of a terrorist group. Suppose he or she was the first one at the scene of a terrorist attack, one of the things that he will do is to gain the trust of the terrorists. An ethical question is if the journalists should report them to the authorities or go ahead with their duties of saving lives (Sweeney, 2006).

Conclusion

It is evident from the research that a problem exist relating to ethics of the military and the media. The media have apparently decided to cash on military activities and promote their websites and failing to share information with impartiality. It is however necessary for this so that ethics in the society is at the level of accepted standards, which can sustain the meaning of humanity and morality (Keeble, 2009).

References

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