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LIGHTS! CAMERA! ACTION!
THE OPERATIONAL COMMANDER AND THE MEDIA

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A Monograph

by

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Armor



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The solution to the apparent conflict of interests between the operational commander and the war correspondent is not censorship. The historical evidence suggests that greater openness and candid revelations about the conduct of operations have been most successful in fostering the goals of each institutional actor. The commander wants to achieve his strategic goal and the correspondent wants the information that determines that goal to be as accurate as possible. Each actor needs to operate with a clear understanding of the other.

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and the Media

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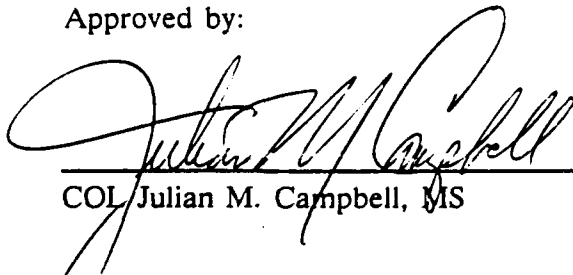
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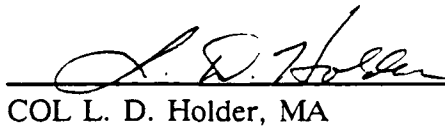
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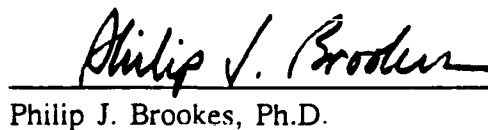
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ABSTRACT

LIGHTS! CAMERA! ACTION! THE OPERATIONAL COMMANDER AND THE MEDIA
by MAJ James G. Diehl, USA, 47 pages.

The purpose of this monograph is to examine the relationship of the operational commander with the media in the context of theater operations.

The importance of maintaining the passion of a nation-state to conduct military operations to attain political goals is clearly defined by Carl von Clausewitz. As such, the modern era of mass communications and the influence exercised by the media over the information broadcast to a population can become a prime target of manipulation in modern warfare.

Throughout the history of American participation in war, armies have travelled to the battlefield accompanied by press representatives, war correspondents, and, most recently, television reporters and cameramen. What has been the effect on operations conducted by American military commanders in the presence of these institutional representatives of the free press? Have they betrayed operational security? Were they willing agents of deception? How was their access to the battlefield controlled? Could they soberly analyze the conduct of the campaign? Did they contribute to the support of military adventures by building or upholding morale on the home front? An examination of the conduct of the free press in American military operations from the Civil War to the present is the vehicle used to evaluate the performance of the war correspondent in a theater of war. By examining the historical performance, lessons are drawn which relate to the distinctive relationship that must be developed between the American operational commander and the free press.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the early part of the Nineteenth Century, Carl von Clausewitz identified as the aim of war "to overcome the enemy and disarm him."(1) In order to accomplish this straightforward task, a nation pursued three broad objectives: "the armed forces, the country, and the enemy's will."(2)

Since early times, combat and warmaking have concentrated on the destruction of the enemy's army and the occupation of his territory, two of the three Clausewitzian objectives. As man's technological capabilities have increased and his capacity for destruction grown, the collateral consequences of destroying an enemy's armed forces and the risk incurred by attempting to occupy his country have made Clausewitz's third objective grow in importance. In recent American history, the will of a people to wage a war of long duration and significant sacrifice has been seen to be the key ingredient in determining the victor.

The national will of a state is heavily dependent on the information it has available. Therefore, it is vulnerable to a manipulative campaign either externally generated by an enemy or one which has internal origins. Information in a free society such as the United States influences decisions made by every institution. The organizations which control the information broadcast to a nation likewise influence the national will of the people. Newspapers, magazines, wire news services, radio broadcast correspondents, and television news programs comprise the information service in the United States which will be grouped

together under the title of the media. The ability to manipulate the media has become a powerful weapon in current and future wars.

Mr. William S. Lind includes this manipulation as part of what he calls fourth generation warfare, "Adversaries will be adept at manipulating the media to alter domestic and world opinion...Television news may become a more powerful operational weapon than armored divisions."(3) Terrorists have learned the impact of media manipulation and, in the future, we can expect an increasing threat.

In Clausewitz's theory of war the state pursues its war aims through a trilogy of actors; the government, the army, and the people. The government determines the national goals and policies; the army is an instrument to pursue the objectives set by the government; and the people provide the passion or national will which fuels the entire process.(4) Technological advances have had a significant impact on the instruments of war wielded by the nation-state, however, in the field of communications, technology has opened up an entirely new dimension. The speed in which information is communicated, the transmission of news, the reporting of significant events, the analysis of those events by broadcasters have added a new leg to Clausewitz's trilogy.

In the American context, is it an additional leg or is it merely a new environment? In modern times, information gathering for all three members of the original trilogy is accomplished through this multi-faceted communications medium. The people do not go directly to Washington and hear policies and decisions

directly from the government nor do they find out about the conduct of military operations directly from the military commander. They learn of it through television news reports or read about it in a newspaper or magazine. Likewise, the government gauges the people's response or passion through opinion surveys, news conferences, and the front pages of the daily newspapers. The military operating in a far-off place must communicate its own story to the people and the government by feeding information to war correspondents and minicam television reporters. The correspondents, the television cameramen, the anchormen--these people form the environment through which everyone's information flows.

The media's grip on our information is not solely restricted to the internal transfer of news between the Clausewitzian legs of the trilogy. The media has made the world a "stage" for information flow between nation-states. Public relations personnel attempt to portray a certain image of a particular nation-state to another nation-state. Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet president, has used the media to do more good for the Soviets' international image than the Soviet military has accomplished in forty-five years. As a result, rather than making the nation-state trilogy a four-legged stool, advances in communication for the media have served to place it in the dominant role of dictating the information environment in which the American nation-state operates.

The First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States guarantees the right of free speech and a free press to the people

of the United States. As a result, through two hundred years of American history the media has served American society as a watchdog on the excesses of government. At times the views of the media and the government have coincided on a particular issue, nevertheless, free and open debate of governmental policies has insured that, by and large, the government must enact policies which serve the interests of the American people. This is not to say that the media guarantees that the government will always do what is right, only that it makes it difficult for the government to pursue a policy which most of the people do not condone.

The same can be said of the media's relationship with the military. The scrutiny of newsmen over the years while not insuring that the Army will always do what is right, nevertheless, makes it difficult to pursue tactics and techniques which the American people will not condone. In other words, the media in American history has guaranteed the ascendancy of the national will or passions of the American people in the formation of national policy by serving as an independent source of information and news on the conduct of the government and the military.(5)

The purpose of this study is to determine what impact the media can have on the conduct of military operations and what considerations the operational commander should address in dealing with the media in a theater of war.

The study is focused on certain aspects of the media's impact. Has it been necessary to censor correspondents in order to protect the lives of American servicemen or to avoid tipping the enemy on proposed and future operations? What has been the media's role in

deceiving our enemy or feeding him erroneous information? Who gets to accompany soldiers into the battle area, what are their credentials, and what kind of support should they have? Finally, the study will look at the media's role in objectively analyzing military operations and its role in maintaining the morale and "passion" of the people.

The study takes an historical approach by examining first the introduction of battlefield correspondents in the nineteenth century and studying their development through the World Wars of this century and concluding with the modern conflicts characterized as being short of war. Following the Grenada incursion, the Sidle Commission made several recommendations pertaining to military-media relations which will be examined. The study will conclude by recommending certain considerations that a commander must make in dealing with the media in an age of advanced communications.

II. The Crimean War and the Civil War

Up until the time of fairly rapid communications brought about by the use of the telegraph, there was no censorship to speak of in the early wars of the nineteenth century. However, in 1854 the London Times dispatched William H. Russell to cover the British military excursion into the Crimea. This reporter was destined to become the first of the particular breed referred to as war correspondents.

Russell's assessments of the military operations being

conducted in the Crimea were transmitted by telegraph to his British readers. His evaluations were not very complimentary of the manner in which the British expeditionary forces were being handled. As a result, he began to sow the seeds of the dispute between the media and military commanders which would come to fruition more than one hundred years later.

Military reactions to the correspondents could be very strong. "I would delight to see these paltry knaves (war correspondents) exposed to the showers of shot and shell which never even raise the colour in our gallant commander's face. I would like to see the scurvy paltrons trying to hide their shivering frames."--Colonel Maxwell, 88th Foot.(6)

Exactly what did Russell and his peers do that would bring about such an assessment from a professional military officer? Russell sent back several dispatches from the Crimea which were extremely critical of the living conditions of the soldiers of the British Expeditionary Force. The wounded soldier's lot was abominable and many wounded died from the atrocious conditions. Disease and military inefficiency were rampant in the camps and Russell reported it to his editors. His reports raised a great hue and cry in the military and political circles of London. They shocked the nation and the people demanded action from the government. As a result, the government was replaced in office and a number of reforms were initiated which improved the lot of the ordinary soldier in the British Army.(7)

Military and political leaders who felt the heat of Russell's investigation accused him of serving the enemy's purposes and

revealing important facts to the Russians on the front pages of the London Times. Russell, on the other hand, claimed, "Although it was dangerous to communicate facts likely to be of service to the Russians, it was certainly hazardous to conceal the truth from the English people."(8)

The American Civil War accomplished little in improving understanding between the media and the military. The same sort of animosity that Colonel Maxwell displayed toward those of Mr. Russell's ilk was matched by a number of prominent American military leaders. General Benjamin Butler, a Northern general, felt that, "The government would not accomplish much until it hanged half a dozen spies and, at least, one reporter."(9) General Henry W. Halleck, the Northern General-in-Chief, wanted nothing to do with the correspondents and attempted to have them expelled from his theater.(10)

It is possible that the behavior of certain correspondents caused this hostile attitude. At the First Battle of Manassas, a Washington newspaper had already published the details of Union General McDowell's battle plans.(11) A Confederate commerce raider commander, Captain William Semmes, claimed to have learned his intelligence on Union naval dispositions from the newspapers.(12) Robert E. Lee learned by reading Northern newspapers that General George B. McClellan has grossly overestimated his strength in defense of Richmond. He, therefore, felt safe in reinforcing Jackson with a division in June 1862 during the famous Valley Campaign .(13) As a result of these publishing indiscretions, a form of censorship was instituted

which enabled the military authorities to control the means of transmission, the telegraph. In addition, if military authorities found, after an operation, that a story endangered operations, embarrassed some Union general, or criticized the conduct of the war, the newspaper could be prosecuted or closed. Nearly twenty newspapers were closed by the Union Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, as a result of their failure to follow the foggy guidelines.(14)

In addition to Halleck's attempts to rid his theater of correspondents, General William T. Sherman had little use for the idea of their accompanying him in his march to the sea through Georgia. "They are a set of dirty newspaper scribblers who are a pest and shall not approach me," were his comments in 1864.(15) The newspapers begged to differ. The New York Times felt that, "More harm would be done to the Union by expulsion of correspondents than these correspondents now do by occasional exposure to military blunders, imbecilities, peccadilloes, corruption, drunkenness, and knavery or by their occasional failures to puff every functionary as much as he thinks he deserves."(16) Nevertheless, only eight correspondents accompanied Sherman on his March to the Sea.(17)

ANALYSIS: The mid-nineteenth century saw the beginnings of the development of the war correspondent. Did they have a significant impact on the acquisition of intelligence by the enemy and should they have been controlled due to a concern for operational security? The occasional revelations which would have any operational significance appear to be more than outweighed by

the valid criticisms which were levelled at the conduct of military operations by men such as William Russell. Nevertheless, censorship became an accepted means of muzzling the press in its attempts at operational speculation or embarrassing revelations.

For deception purposes, the newspapers of the day did not serve much purpose. The correspondents did not appear to intentionally mislead their purported enemies on the course of operations. Their greatest challenge was in getting the facts correct. Generally, the battle accounts in their dispatches were exaggerated and wholly inaccurate. The first accounts of the First Battle of Manassas indicated a great Union victory rather than a rout and near disaster for the Army of the Potomac. Casualties were grossly underestimated or overestimated depending on which side was making the estimate. The enemy forces were vile and contemptuous creatures; the friendly forces were stouthearted lads. As a result, the overwhelming majority of accounts were deceptive, but unintentionally so and with little or no operational effect.

The primary means of control over the media that the military utilized was through the access to the telegraph lines. Accreditation of the correspondents was not particularly well controlled by the newspapers or the higher command echelons of the Army. Theater commanders would have arrested any members of the media of whom they disapproved. General George Meade had a reporter of the Philadelphia Inquirer placed backwards on a horse and ridden out of his theater because he objected to the manner in which he had been treated in the reporter's dispatch.(18)

Generals Sherman and Halleck attempted to place every block possible between themselves and the correspondents. Grant, on the other hand, received correspondents such as Sylvanus Cadwallader of the Chicago Times and Charles A. Dana of the New York Tribune and allowed them to accompany him on campaigns. At Vicksburg he earned their trust and respect by his cooperation and openness and they continued to accompany him through the end of the war.(19)

Newspapers played a key role in maintaining the morale of the participants. The Vicksburg Daily Citizen and Daily Whig contributed immeasurably to the maintenance of morale among citizens through significant hardship of the campaign and particularly through the siege of Vicksburg.(20) The Northern newspapers tended to overlook a good deal of the dissension in the North which the war generated. While they could not overlook the draft riots conducted in New York, they ignored real frictions between Union troops from the eastern states and western states, racism in the Union Army, brutal disciplinary treatment, and the inhuman conditions in hospitals and prisoner of war camps.(21)

While critical analysis of campaigns was certainly prevalent in the major northern newspapers, it did not appear to influence the operational decisions of the better commanders. The Vicksburg campaign once again offers an example. General Sherman's costly and unsuccessful assault on Chickasaw Bayou December 29, 1862 was reported in the New York Times three weeks later. The editors blamed the delay on the government's attempt to conceal the facts and characterized the failed attack as "one of the greatest and most disgraceful defeats of the war."(22) Later in the month of

January, Sherman and Grant were subjected to scathing criticism in the northern press for their attempt at outflanking Vicksburg by the construction of a canal, "the Big Ditch." Criticism did not set well with either Sherman or Grant and they attempted to impose a type of censorship which was singularly unsuccessful. In retaliation the newspapers became more vitriolic in their condemnations and began calling for their removal from command. The Cincinnati Gazette observed, "There never was a more thoroughly disgusted, disobedient, demoralized army than this one, and all because it is under such men as Grant and Sherman."(23)

The battle lines were drawn in the nineteenth century for the media-military conflict. Genuine concern for operational security which could affect battles and soldier's lives overlapped with the desire to cover up fiascoes and disasters. Censorship, access to communications apparatus, and accreditation became the manner in which military commanders would insulate themselves from the media. Finally, the military commanders and the media recognized that the media played a significant role in drumming up the war spirit and maintaining morale.

III. THE WORLD WARS AND KOREA

It is unlikely that the United States will ever again participate in military operations which will so closely resemble the Crusades as our participation in World Wars I and II. The mobilization of national power directed against Evil Incarnate, the Kaiser and Adolf Hitler, is difficult to envision in the future. Therefore, it is not surprising that the American media

were harnessed to the war effort along with the population, industry, government, and the armed forces.

Declarations of war in each case enabled the government to put into effect extensive controls over the operations of the national media. In World War I, President Woodrow Wilson formed the Committee on Public Information in order to manage censorship and public relations on the war. He chose George Creel, a former editor of the Rocky Mountain News and prominent journalist, to chair the committee. Creel's appointment gave credibility to the committee among the ranks of the journalists and preserved the generally good relations the government, the military, and the media enjoyed throughout the war. The government through the Committee on Public Information established extensive accreditation processes for journalists covering the war zone. Censorship was enforced by the military in the zone in accordance with guidelines issued by the Committee and the journalists obeyed these guidelines since they felt they had representation on the Committee in the form of Mr. Creel and persons like him. As a result only five journalists lost their credentials during the war through failure to follow the established guidelines.(24)

The second crusade of the century, World War II, learned its lessons from the first one. The Office of Censorship established a Code of Wartime Practices early in the war and journalists, public affairs officers, and commanders enjoyed generally good relations throughout the war.(25) Some incidents are worth noting, however, such as General MacArthur's tendency to magnify his own image in his campaigns and the Navy's attitude on press

relations characterized by the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral King's comment in 1942, "Don't tell them anything. When it's over, tell them who won."(26)

War correspondents operating in combat zones had good access to operations and were frequently briefed by the highest commanders. General Eisenhower brought them in and conducted extensive personal briefings including the most sensitive information as well as providing them with access to his principal subordinates, Bradley, Patton, Simpson, and others. In Europe, the Joint Press Censorship Group maintained the security of press dispatches and insured the speed of delivery to news organizations. In addition, they insured that correspondents received assistance from military support organizations regarding food, equipment, transportation, and access to communications equipment.(27) Of course, there were incidents, however, disclosures were generally inadvertent and, once again, resulted in very few journalists having their credentials withdrawn. As in the First World War, the Second was a national crusade and everyone was a participant.

From the invasion by the North Koreans to the commitment of American forces and the reaction of the United Nations, the Korean Conflict sprang up as a series of surprises to everyone involved. As a result, the media reacted to Korea initially as another crusade. Censorship was not instituted by the Truman Administration nor was a declaration of war sought. What censorship there was was strictly voluntary on the part of the correspondents themselves and, as most of these were veterans of

World War II, they were generally knowledgeable of appropriate restrictions. Korea was also a country without a mature communications infrastructure so that the few open lines were regulated by the military.(28)

As the Korean War ground on through the late summer of 1950, MacArthur began to initiate his plan for the Inchon landing. Operation "Chromite" as it was referred to by the military or Operation "Common Knowledge" as it was referred to by the Tokyo Press Club was not a very well kept secret.(29) The New York Times offered some conjecture on 14 September, the day prior to the landing, that, "An amphibious landing on the Korean coast well behind the enemy's front lines is an obvious and possible strategy."(30) However, this was too little, too late, and too obvious to be of any use to the North Koreans.

War correspondents accompanied the invasion fleet for Chromite and were briefed by Generals Almond and MacArthur aboard the USS Mount McKinley two days prior to the scheduled landing.(31) In fact, a large number of correspondents were put ashore in the early stages of the invasion. Marguerite Higgins of the New York Herald-Tribune landed on Red Beach with the 5th Marine Regiment's fifth wave.(32) This lack of restraint on the press and its generally good performance in self police established some initial trust between the military and the media. In late September, MacArthur expressed satisfaction with the performance of the press in theater, "Correspondents assigned to war reporting are essentially responsible individuals as are their editors and publishers, and their ability to assume the

responsibility of self-censorship has been amply and conclusively demonstrated."(33) The good relations would not last long.

The Chinese intervention into the conflict in late November and the humiliating defeats that were inflicted on American and United Nations forces changed the complexion of media coverage. As the Eighth Army fled to and through the 38th Parallel on the west side of the Korean peninsula and X Corps conducted the extraordinary evacuation of Hungnam, a good deal of acrimonious debate over responsibility was conducted in the media. Why were American troops surprised and overrun again in less than five months? Why had MacArthur predicted that the troops would be home by Christmas when China was infiltrating nearly 300,000 soldiers into northern Korea? Why had the United Nations crossed the 38th Parallel in the first place?

As the media coverage of the war began to change in tone to one of questioning the purpose of the troop commitment and speculation on its usefulness, General MacArthur imposed full censorship on 21 December 1950. The military began a campaign of intimidation toward the correspondents which included challenges to them to "get on the team and stop helping the Reds!"(34) This tack was generally unsuccessful with the correspondents in the war zone, but it was very successful with editors in the United States. Correspondents in the theater noticed the confusion, lack of purpose, and, in some cases, incompetence among certain United Nations troops and attempted to report these weaknesses by circumventing the clamp the censors had on communications in Korea. Japan and Australia had no such restriction and reports

could be filed from these locations. Nevertheless, these reports did not find their way into publication since the home editors were under severe political pressure to support the war effort. Accounts of South Korean brutality toward political prisoners, low morale and lack of purpose among American troops, bitter feelings between Allied troops and American troops over the competence and bravery of American soldiers--none of these reports were published by editors.(35)

The heavy clamp of the censor's hand to protect political information rather than operational intelligence left a bad taste in the mouth of Korean War correspondents. They had proven their trustworthiness in the early stages of the war through the Chinese intervention. The reports filed which were quashed by their editors in order to prove that they were "on the team" did not appear to them to be in line with their responsibilities to provide the entire story of the war to the American people. Our participation in the Korean War had little similarity to the World War crusades and discussion of the new role was a valid function of the media.

The military (and MacArthur, in particular) felt that the Korean War was another crusade and the media should get on board just as they had done in the World Wars. Criticism of their conduct and performance appearing in dispatches was treasonous, disloyal, harmful, and, most importantly, embarrassing.

ANALYSIS: The media established a good reputation of operational security in all three wars discussed. Accreditation of journalists was a recognized method of controlling the conduct

of war correspondents and very few ever had their credentials withdrawn. Most violations were inadvertent or, in a number of cases, passed the military censors. After the Battle of Midway in World War II, the New York Times carried the names of the Japanese ships that had been sunk, revealing that the Navy was monitoring the Japanese coded transmissions. However, the dispatch had cleared a Navy censor.(36)

Deception and efforts to mislead the enemy through the media were not widely employed in any of these wars. Regardless of the fact that worldwide communications were improving, newspapers would not have been a particularly good source for operational intelligence. Journalists depended on accuracy to gain credibility in the eyes of their editors and readers and they did not appreciate being utilized as tools of the military. As a result, they were not inclined to knowingly dispatch erroneous information. They preferred to demur from participating in Allied deception efforts.

Accreditation became a useful tool in controlling access of war correspondents into operational areas. In the First World War a correspondent had to provide an autobiographical sketch to the Secretary of War, swear to report the truth and not to reveal information to the enemy, as well as pay a significant amount to the Army for his personal support.(37) Although the requirements eased in World War II and Korea, it was an acceptable way to control access. The requirements were agreed to by the media representatives and the military and demonstrated their mutual acceptance of such restrictions.

Obviously, maintenance of morale of soldiers on the war front and civilians on the home front was a critical function of the media in the World Wars. Korea cast a shadow of doubt across that axiom. By the end of the Korean War, the war correspondents did not perceive themselves as cheerleaders for the tremendous efforts being expended in Korea. Although some of their editors assumed that role, the correspondents continued to file reports on a variety of subjects ranging from the use of napalm to widespread collaboration among American POWs held by the Red Chinese. The political atmosphere initially did not permit these reports from getting into print in America, however, they eventually worked their way into American newspapers and magazines.(38) Their effect on morale is mixed. Korea was not the crusade that the World Wars had been, but the limited goals expressed by the Truman Administration were responsible, not the newspapers. The drift and lack of purpose in Korea relegated the entire war to the inner pages of the newspapers. General Ridgway wanted his soldiers to receive the credit he had come to expect from his experience in World War II for the sacrifices they were making on the Korean peninsula. He insisted that someone needed to "tell their story."(39) Unfortunately, the story that was told was not what he wanted to hear.

In the World Wars the use of censorship enabled the correspondents to participate much more generously in the planning phases of various operations. As a result, their analysis of these operations carried a certain amount of authority. Eisenhower, Patton, Montgomery, even MacArthur developed close

relationships with respected journalists and, in some cases, confided sensitive operational plans with them. The Korean War, with no initial censorship, was self-regulated until the disastrous retreat from the Yalu. MacArthur confided the Chromite operation to trusted news service chiefs and trusted them to keep it in confidence. The Inchon landing was a stroke of brilliance and it was covered as such. As the coverage turned more adversarial in early 1951, the trust and confidence between the commanders and the journalists deteriorated and cooperation was not so forthcoming. As a result, the coverage was significantly altered in tone and content. If the military would not tell them what was going on, then the journalists would find out without any military assistance. And without any military expertise, as it turned out.

IV. VIETNAM

The American intervention in Vietnam in no way resembled the crusades on which we had embarked in 1918 and 1941. There was no surprise attack on defenseless civilians such as the Lusitania. There was no secret assault on the fleet moored at Pearl Harbor nor was there an evil man with the profile of Adolf Hitler. Even Korea had an overt conventional invasion of the South by the In Min Gun in late June 1950.

The American government and military slowly became embroiled in the Vietnam war by replacing the French after their bitter defeat in 1954 until the commitment of American combat forces in

1964 after the Gulf of Tonkin incident through to the subsequent withdrawal of American forces in 1973. Along this tortuous road the media and the military battled to present the "true" picture of the situation in Vietnam to the American people. It was unique in a number of ways, but two major differences stand out in its conduct. Television and a lack of censorship made the Vietnam war an entirely new experience for the military, the government, the people, and the media.

In 1962, an Associated Press reporter, Malcolm Browne, submitted a story to his editors complaining that the American government was attempting to conceal the full extent of its participation in the war in Vietnam. The story appeared in the New York Times and raised quite a furor. There was a good deal of pressure put on the newspapers to suppress the stories and to "get on the team" as they had done in the World Wars. As in Korea, the correspondents attempted to get their impressions of the situation in print and political pressure was put on their editors to support the government's program. At this stage of the conflict, the pressure worked and the editors, for the most part, "got on the team."(40)

The Battle of Ap Bac in 1963 in which a South Vietnamese division was defeated by a smaller Viet Cong force received a significant amount of press coverage. LTC John Vann, the American advisor, had accused the South Vietnamese forces of cowardice and lack of aggressiveness. These printed accounts were called irresponsible and sensationalized by American officials and, once again, the editors were pressured to "get on the team."(41)

The military and government by this time realized that appeals to patriotism and teamwork were not going to be sufficient to enlist the support of the media in presenting the official version of American participation in the Vietnam war. When General William C. Westmoreland assumed command of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) in 1964 and the build-up of American combat forces began, censorship was eliminated from consideration as a tool. Instead it was felt that an extensive public relations campaign could be conducted to invite correspondents to tour Vietnam and get the "true" official version of what was occurring.(42)

Due to a number of factors, the campaign worked for the most part. The correspondents were to a large degree completely dependent on official sources for their information on the war. It was extremely difficult for them to travel on their own in the country and they were dependent on the military for transportation support and current updates on the situation. The daily briefings conducted at the Joint United States Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) in Saigon provided reams of statistics and charts which purportedly traced the progress of the war. Nevertheless, some journalists attempted to acquire a lower level view. Their travels to obscure base camps, fire bases, guard posts, and patrol bases revealed a vicious war against what Bernard Kalb referred to as "the most faceless foe in our history."(43)

By late 1967, however, we were winning the war. In November of that year, the President, the Vice-President, and General Westmoreland were unanimously trumpeting that the war was being

won. Westmoreland claimed, "We have reached an important point when the end begins to come into view."(44) Although popular support for the war was beginning to wane due to the increase in casualties suffered by American troops as a result of the build-up, the media covered the official version of anticipated victory with bated breath. The entire country was glad to know that we were winning and the casualties would soon be coming to an end.

In much the same way that MacArthur's promises in October 1950 were dashed to pieces by the Chinese offensive, the Tet Offensive in January 1968 dashed the official promises of November 1967. To a people who had been told that the enemy was near defeat and that the end was in sight, the severity and strength of the Tet Offensive was quite a shock. Fighting erupted simultaneously all over South Vietnam and one commando attack carried into the American Embassy compound in Saigon. Its proximity to the the press bureaus (less than $\frac{1}{2}$ mile) made the correspondents inflate the story "beyond its military significance."(45) Although the commandos had been eliminated before daylight on the night of the attack, it was shocking to everyone that an enemy on its last legs could mount such a daring assault and plunge South Vietnam into a series of tactical crises. Suddenly, it did not appear to the correspondents, the American people, and probably a large number of American soldiers that the official version of the progress of the Vietnam war was anywhere near accurate.

The fallout over the Tet Offensive was the final death knell over the institutional trust between the media and the military.

The media perceived that it had been lied to by military officials who had attempted to portray the war as a victory of American arms and American strategy. That carefully nurtured illusion had been shattered by the Tet Offensive and by later revelations of atrocities committed by American troops at My Lai. The "truth" of the war had been masked by statistics, official sleight of hand, a public relations campaign, and a lack of candor with the media and, in the long run, the American people.(46) The military, on the other hand, felt that their significant efforts and sacrifices in an unappreciated war were being undermined by a media which was searching for a sensational story and had appointed itself as a disinterested third observer to an essentially distasteful contest in the backwaters of Southeast Asia. Media visits to Hanoi and the uncontested embrace of the enemy's versions of operations were deeply resented as were the unflattering portrayals of American soldiers as drug addicts and murderers.(47) The Tet Offensive had been a costly defeat for the Viet Cong, however, the credibility of each side had already been lost by the time that could be determined. Walter Cronkite had already aired a special on CBS 27 February 1968 which concluded that "Tet added up to a defeat for the allies."(48) Frank McGee on ABC followed that analysis on 10 March with the observation that "The war, as the Administration has defined it, is being lost."(49)

The Tet Offensive achieved a number of strategic goals for the North Vietnamese whether that was intended or not. The Democratic administration was removed from office in the 1968 elections and Nixon came to power with the commitment to reduce American

involvement in the war. Interest in the war declined as combat units withdrew and casualties eased. By 1973 Americans were out of Vietnam and two years later the North Vietnamese invaded and captured Saigon. Almost twenty years after the French had been defeated, the Americans had lost, too.

ANALYSIS: In Vietnam, despite the animosity that was generated between the military and the media, breaches of operational security were rare. Barry Zorthian, the chief American spokesman at the JUSPAO, insisted that of the nearly 2000 journalists eventually accredited in Vietnam, there were no more than four or five cases of classified information being leaked for publication.(50) Once again American correspondents understood the need for discretion when disclosures would endanger the lives of American soldiers or risk the compromise of ongoing or planned operations. There is no evidence of attempts by journalists to circumvent safeguards which would harm or endanger tactical operations.

Correspondents, editors, and publishers were loathe to knowingly participate in disinformation or deception campaigns. Credibility with their readers or audiences was highly sought and complicity with official deception attempts would ruin such credibility. This is not to say that the facts of their accounts were scrupulously scrubbed to verify their accuracy. On the contrary, competition between the news sources had served to hinder attempts to wait until the facts were in before filing a news story. During Tet, sensationalized accounts of the Saigon Embassy attack dominated the headlines and evening news reports

long before the relative weakness of the particular foray (only nineteen commandos, all killed within 12 hours) was known in relation to the sizeable attacks going on elsewhere in country.(51) Although not a designed disinformation campaign, it served the purposes of the North Vietnamese well.

In order for a correspondent to become accredited in Vietnam, he had to arrive with two items in his possession. An entry visa into the country from the South Vietnamese government and a letter from the editor or publisher requesting accreditation (two letters if the correspondent was freelance) were required. With that in hand, a visit to the JUSPAO in Saigon would get the correspondent a letter promising full cooperation and assistance to include rations, quarters, and transportation. In addition, he would receive a list of rules he was expected to adhere to and a pass to the briefing held at JUSPAO on a daily basis and referred to as "the Five O'Clock Follies."(52) The liberal accreditation policy insured that Vietnam at any one time had nearly 500 accredited correspondents in the theater. Such a plethora of writers and television newsmen precipitated an atmosphere of competition which, surprisingly, resulted in incomplete coverage of news events. Fast-breaking action had to be synthesized, encapsulated, edited, and transmitted to editors rapidly to "beat" the competition. The larger picture, background information, and sober assessments suffered. The overwhelming coverage of the war instead of resulting in more complete coverage and in-depth analysis resulted in a shallower coverage with little or no background.

The inability of the news media to present a sober analysis of the American involvement can also be traced to the relative lack of experience of the correspondents. The freewheeling accreditation policy allowed "war correspondents" into theater who did not know the first thing about military operations, Vietnam, or Southeast Asia. The lack of perspective on military affairs left the correspondents at a significant disadvantage. They were completely dependent on official sources of news, but they did not have the expertise to challenge these sources or travel into the countryside to meet soldiers and get the truth. Their lack of perspective on Vietnamese history did not permit them to reflect on American policy initiatives and compare them historically with other initiatives. As a result of their inexperience, correspondents generally failed to analyze in detail American military, political, and social policies in South Vietnam.

In addition, the failure of America's political and military leaders to express a coherent strategic and operational justification of goals in the Vietnam theater left these inexperienced journalists on their own in providing information to the American people. By claiming that the "end is in sight" and failing to adequately describe that "end," the government set itself up for the crushing disappointment of Tet. The American people had come to believe from the correspondents that the "end" was a significant reduction in American casualties and the withdrawal of American units. Tet demonstrated that there was a great deal of sacrifice yet to come.

The influence of the media on morale and national will in the

Vietnam War was significant. The mounting casualties of the Vietnam War and its growing "cost" as opposed to its questionable "value" eroded the national will to prosecute this war in an obscure and distant land. It was not the media, in and of itself, which caused this loss of purpose. The media published the official dispatches issued by the military and political leadership in the description of the national purpose in Vietnam. Discrepancies in the official versions caused distrust and correspondents sought the truth. Although their inexperience hindered them, they eventually revealed that we were making sacrifices out of all proportion to the worth of the prize. This realization took root in 1967-68 and the Tet Offensive shook our national resolve to continue the sacrifices. Support for the war crumbled and by 1973 we were out. The media did not accomplish this as much as the administration failed to adequately articulate our goals.

Television's impact was primarily in the ability to portray real-time events to viewers. Its effects were pervasive throughout the media industry. Newspapers and magazines had no hope of competing with television in being the first with the news, so they became relegated to covering events in greater depth. Cameramen travelled to the front lines and tried to get the feel of combat to their viewers (56 journalists KIA/MIA in Vietnam).(53) Contrary to popular opinion, a Newsweek survey in 1967 indicated that television footage of combat made viewers more supportive of the American position in Vietnam.(54) The portrayal of combat on television screens was shocking, but then William

Russell's dispatches from the Crimea were shocking for their day. Television coverage became the "truth" to viewers because they could see it and hear it. It was, however, by necessity, shallow. Reams of footage had to be edited into 20 or 30 second spots and editors had a penchant for dramatic combat footage. Americans at their television screens got a somewhat jaded view of the Vietnam war while they were having their dinner. Nevertheless, it was the responsibility of the political leadership and military leadership to respond; they did not.

V. SIDLE COMMISSION

In the years following the end of America's involvement in Vietnam, bitter debate sought a scapegoat for the humiliating loss. Military leaders have indicated that the media shares a certain blame for the loss due to their slanted view of the war that was projected to the American people. In an article in Military Review, one officer claimed, "It is easy to see that the unlimited and often biased reporting of the Vietnam War severely limited the military's prosecution of it by undermining public support for the cause."⁽⁵⁵⁾ The former Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger, asserted that military officers, in particular, harbored a distrust for the media due to unfair treatment in Vietnam.⁽⁵⁶⁾

As a result of this distrust for the media as an institution, the first two days of the Grenada operation in 1983 were conducted without any media representation on the island. From our study of

previous media participation in military operations, this was a serious departure from accepted practices. Apparently, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Vessey, did not want reporters to be present in the initial stages of the operation and the Secretary of Defense, Mr. Weinberger, concurred. The result was that a large number of media representatives were barred from the island for the first two days and were left cooling their heels on a nearby island.(57)

The military justified the unusual steps because of the danger involved, concerns for operational security, and the desire to prevent the disclosure of new tactical and operational techniques.(58) None of those reasons had ever prevented the media from accompanying the first waves of invasion forces previously. Apparently, the media-military conflict which had festered in Vietnam and afterward had finally erupted into an open sore.

Recognizing the problem with Grenada, the Joint Chiefs of Staff convened a panel which was to study military-media relations. The panel was chaired by retired Major General Winant Sidle, a former Army public affairs officer, and studied the problem in early 1984 by meeting with several media representatives. The Sidle Commission Report stated that, "The optimum solution to ensure proper media coverage of military operations will be to have the military--represented by competent, professional public affairs personnel and commanders who understand media problems--working with the media--represented by competent, professional reporters and editors who understand military problems--in a nonantagonistic atmosphere."(59)

To accomplish this the panel recommended that: (1) Operational planning integrate planning for public affairs into the process; (2) a sound policy of media pooling be instituted to ensure adequate coverage of military operations within the constraints of reasonable security considerations; (3) accreditation of military correspondents be the responsibility of the media and the military to ensure that competent, qualified, and trustworthy personnel are covering operations; (4) a system of voluntary compliance with security guidelines be instituted; (5) a system of military support to the media in logistics, transportation, communications, and qualified public affairs personnel be provided; and (6) regular meetings between the military and the media be conducted to enhance understanding and cooperation.(60)

The Sidle Commission's Report and its recommendations are a start at healing the breach between the media and the military. However, the operational commander, the man on the ground, must understand that cooperation and trust are mandatory. It is his responsibility to insure that the breach is mended where the action is. Neither institution has a stranglehold on patriotism nor service to the country. Richard Halloran, a New York Times military correspondent, asserted that, "In a sense, soldiers and scribblers (correspondents) share a common mission. Under the Constitution, soldiers are charged with maintaining a vigil against external threats; journalists are charged with vigilance against internal enemies who would corrupt and destroy our way of life."(61)

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The framers of our Constitution wanted a free and unfettered press to oversee with a skeptical eye the doings of our government and military. An additional source of information and analysis not subject to the screening of the powers in office would serve the American people well in insuring that they remain the supreme source of power and influence. The will of the American people is the ultimate consideration in the pursuit of domestic and foreign policy. That is the intent of the First Amendment to the Constitution. An informed people must be able to examine all sides of an issue in order to arrive at a reasonable decision. The free press provides that information without the interference of government.(62)

The era of mass media and instantaneous electronic communications is upon us and it is doubtful that our forefathers would have predicted the influence that the media wields in defining the information flow within our nation and the world. It is dangerous to assume that a free press in the United States is incapable of being externally manipulated by our adversaries. In their incursion into Lebanon in 1982, the Israelis realized that the Palestine Liberation Organization had licensed its own "journalists" to cover the operations and present a biased and sympathetic view of their situation in Lebanon. By restricting access to approved journalists they could influence world opinion by denying a more balanced viewpoint.(63) The British in the Falkland Islands War attempted to completely restrict press access

and broadcasts from the war zone with the result that newspapers in England, whipped into a war frenzy, made wild speculations as to the conduct of operations as well as displaying a complete lack of discretion with any information that was gleaned from the British War Ministry.(64)

Censorship during all military operations is clearly not the appropriate answer. It may not even be feasible. It certainly would leave the initiative on information control to our enemies. The solution to the current antagonism between the military and the media lies in greater understanding, as the Sidle Commission Report asserts. However the theater commander in a military operation needs to take specific actions to accomplish this goal.

OPERATIONAL SECURITY: The history of the American media in the handling of truly sensitive information which threatens or endangers the lives of Americans in combat zones or risks the compromise of planned or ongoing military operations has been good. In other words, the American press has proven to be generally, trustworthy. If the theater commander wants sensitive information which, he feels, might threaten an operation to be withheld then he needs to enforce such close-hold restrictions within his own command and not leave it up to the media. However, reasonable requests to media representatives accompanied by careful explanations on the justifications have been successful in the past to prevent compromise of information which they might have gained. The Inchon landing was not a particularly well-kept secret, however, the media did not violate any trusts given it by MacArthur. Unambiguous guidelines for handling particularly

sensitive information must be provided by the commander and made clear to the media. Obviously, this is a two-way street. Public affairs officers and military officers must be familiar with what is sensitive and what is not. The British military was particularly upset with revelations in the press about Argentine bombs failing to explode during the Falkland Islands War. Nevertheless, the dispatch had been cleared by British military censors.(65) Operational security is not the responsibility of the media--it is the concern of the operational commander and he must take the steps necessary to prevent disclosures and develop trust.

DECEPTION: The credibility of the free media in our society is its lifeblood. In fact, such credibility is the lifeblood of all our democratic institutions. Nonetheless, the operational commander has a need to deceive the enemy as to the nature of his intentions, dispositions, and strength. Should the operational commander manipulate the media knowingly or unknowingly into assisting his deception campaign? In a word--no. The development of trust between commanders and media representatives is a fragile thing. Personalities and idiosyncrasies tend to dominate the development of mutual respect. Grant and MacArthur each developed warm, personal relationships with particular reporters whom they respected. General Westmoreland did not. However, a reporter who feels that he has been manipulated or lied to will have lost his credibility with his editor and his readers. It is unlikely that he will re-establish trust with the operational commander who deceived him. Losing his credibility is professional hari-kari in

our society. The recent case of a Washington Post reporter, Janet Cooke, who manufactured an entire story on drug addicts from her fertile imagination is a case in point. Although she received a Pulitzer Prize initially, when the artificiality of her story was uncovered she was drummed out of professional journalism.(66) The American media cannot afford to be represented as a tool of manipulation by the government or the military. Controlled media in dictatorial or oppressive societies carry very little credibility even within their own borders. As controls in the Soviet Union have waned, the credibility of Pravda and Izvestia, the Soviet news agencies, have grown gradually. The American media in our society has earned enormous credibility because it is not a likely tool of manipulation by the political and military apparatus. Deception is the commander's responsibility, however, it is the responsibility of the reporter to report the news. The media should not be a tool of deception against the enemy or the public.

ACCESS: Accreditation of correspondents has been an historically useful tool to limit the access of the media to war zones from the mid-Nineteenth Century to the present. Yet, the operational commander must seek an accommodation with the accreditation methods which have ranged from a successful interview with the Secretary of War in the First World War, to anybody with a letter and a visa in Vietnam, to nobody for the first two days in Grenada. The Sidle Commission's pooling of reporters appears to be a satisfactory compromise, however, the operational commander must do more to make it successful.

The selection of the pool itself is likely to be beyond the authority of the operational commander, however, the military and the media need to work together to ensure that experienced and qualified people are present. The operational commander will have the final decision on the continued presence or banishment of any correspondent who needlessly jeopardizes operations or ignores guidelines. It cannot be overlooked that sensitive and dangerous activities are being conducted and the commander must be able to control access to his theater.

The commander must take the time to insure that the appropriate support is given the press pool in logistics, transportation, and communications. The credibility of the entire effort is at stake when a pool is gathered and transported to a remote locale and no support is forthcoming from the military commanders to allow the reporters to get to critical scenes or file their reports. In such cases, the media would have better luck without any military cooperation and will attempt to cover the operation on its own. The operational commander, therefore, has the primary responsibility to provide the support necessary to enable the accredited media personnel to get to the scene and report the news.

In conjunction with the material means of support it would benefit the operational commander to insure that the media personnel receive a knowledgeable and trained escort within his area of operations. The escort can accomplish a great deal in demonstrating the commander's intentions and smoothing the path of the correspondent by answering questions, describing or explaining

military equipment, and providing the correspondent with the correct interpretation of whatever guidelines are in effect.

EVALUATION: It is a fact that it is not news when a dog bites a man. When the man bites the dog, however, that is news. Smooth, synchronized operations which go off without a hitch are likely not to appear as newsworthy. On the other hand, the hundreds of snarls which can and do unravel the best planned military operation will appear to the war correspondent as an important news item. The operational commander must provide the media with a reasonable evaluation of whatever military operation is being conducted. He should present the good, the bad, and the ugly and admit which is which. Whatever minor embarrassment (or major embarrassment) is covered up by being less than candid will be greatly outweighed by the embarrassment and the loss of credibility which occurs when the true story comes out.

Operational commanders and their public affairs personnel should attempt to be frank and honest with the media and point out the strong points of an operation as well as its risks and weaknesses. The media is not stupid nor are the American people. They are going to realize that a large or small operation is not necessarily going to go as planned and that there is a potential for mistakes. However, they also have a right to know if their sons and daughters are at risk unnecessarily due to the incompetence of their political masters and military officers. It is the media's role in our society to discover that and report it.

MORALE: In the conduct of a war the nation will harness its national will to its political, economic, and military power and

prosecute the war to gain its political goals. In the United States, the Congress has the power to declare that a state of war exists between itself and another nation or group of nations. When the entire nation led by its political machinery bends its will to the prosecution of a war then the media would appear to incur a certain responsibility to support the morale of the country in that endeavor. The use of military power to achieve political goals short of a declared war clouds the role of the media. The goals of military operations short of war can be narrowly defined (rescue of potential hostages in Grenada) or broadly ill-defined (Marines in Beirut). Nevertheless, it would not appear that the role of the media would be to drum up support for military operations wherever they are conducted and for whatever ill-defined purpose. The use or non-use of military forces in such operations is still debatable and the people have a right to be informed of the merits. The operational commander must take the time and make the effort to explain to the media what he considers are the goals and missions he has been assigned. Security considerations may limit or expand what he can relate, however, it is important that the soldiers and their families understand that he has attempted to define exactly why they are going in harm's way and what he is doing to reduce their risk. The morale of his soldiers and the American people will be well-served by such an analysis.

MEDIA RESPONSIBILITIES: The media is not without responsibilities in reporting on the conduct of military operations. First and foremost, the media has the responsibility

to provide reporters, journalists, and correspondents to cover military affairs with some rudimentary knowledge of what it is that they are reporting. Barry Zorthian of the JUSPAO in Saigon could not help but doubt the qualifications of correspondents who did not know the difference between platoons and brigades or mortars and howitzers. How were they to adequately comment on operations without such basic knowledge? Secondly, the media has a responsibility to demonstrate restraint. Hundreds of journalists in a war zone has proven to be a bit unwieldy. Reporters were trampled by fleeing Union troops in the First Battle of Manassas in 1861. Their competitiveness in Vietnam contributed to the blurring of the truth and prevented a sober assessment of military operations such as the Tet Offensive. Finally, the media has a responsibility to be skeptical of all sources, including the enemy. Visits to Hanoi and guided tours of devastation wrought by American bombers should have elicited questions concerning the location of Hanoi's air defenses in populated areas. The tendency of the media to be skeptical of the government and military versions of events and their embrace of enemy versions without question is irresponsible and does not serve the American people well.

Clausewitz drew a definite distinction between the perceived "costs" of a war and the "value" of that war. The nation-state trilogy, composed of the government, the military, and the people, is overwhelmingly dependent on the media to provide the information necessary to arrive at a decision regarding a comparison of those "costs" and "value". In American society, the

independence of the media permits it to perform that role with a degree of credibility that escapes manipulated or government-run media organizations in other nations. The operational commander must operate in an environment which is composed of an independent media. He must not concede the initiative on information to our enemies by hiding behind censorship; he must not destroy the credibility of his own institution and the media by attempting to ensnarl them in his deception campaign; nor should he expect the media to act as cheerleaders whenever he must act. He must present the facts as he understands them, educate his personnel on the media, and educate the media as much as possible on his operations in order to provide the information necessary to allow the government and the people to weigh the costs and the value of an operation.

The operational commander can do a number of things to make his relationship with the media acceptable. It will never be affable and it should not be. An adversarial free press is one of the great strengths of this democracy and it insures that the free flow of information provides the American people with the knowledge to make a reasonable decision regarding support for the government's courses of action. It may not be the "right" decision, but two hundred years of American history indicate that it has been right more often than wrong. To improve the military's relationship with the media, the military must act. The tortuous struggle in Northern Ireland between the British military and the terrorists operating there in recent history has been a prime example of the benefits of good media-military

relations. The British Army has pursued an aggressive media campaign designed to educate the press representatives on its strategy, operations, and tactics, as well as informing its own officers and men on press methods and the media's role in the national fabric. Such a campaign has enabled the operational commanders to pursue a long-term strategy in Northern Ireland and maintain the national will to sustain such a campaign.(67) "It is up to the soldier to create the best possible relationship by approaching the press within a framework of positive, constructive thinking, rather than as an unpleasant chore...Nothing must be too much trouble to give the journalist the facts, to win his respect, his confidence in the good, and to put the bad in perspective...Under the threat of the spotlight from an increasingly penetrating visual exposure, there is a need for a more outward looking mental attitude and readiness to explain."(68)--Major General D. W. Scott-Barrett, British Army.

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